

Getting Started with Fedora

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GETTING STARTED

In order to start using your system you will usually have to perform what is known as a user login. This procedure is necessary to identify yourself to the system. The system allows multiple users to use it concurrently and so it has to be able to identify a user in order to grant them the necessary privileges and rights to use the system and applications. Each user upon successful login will be assigned to his home directory (folder).

Some systems may have been set up so that upon power-on, a default user is logged in automatically. If this is so, then you will not be presented with a login screen or prompt as described in the section below. You may skip on to the section entitled "Basic Navigation using the Mouse on the Desktop".

Note:

There is a special user called the **root** or **superuser** (this user is usually created during the system installation) which has unlimited access and rights to all the system files and resources. You only need to login as root if certain system level administrative tasks are to be carried out. Otherwise there is usually no need for a normal user to login as root. This is to prevent accidentally damaging the system by deleting or modifying important system files.

LOGGING IN

Depending on how you have set up your system, you will either have a graphical login screen or a text-based login prompt for you to perform the login process.

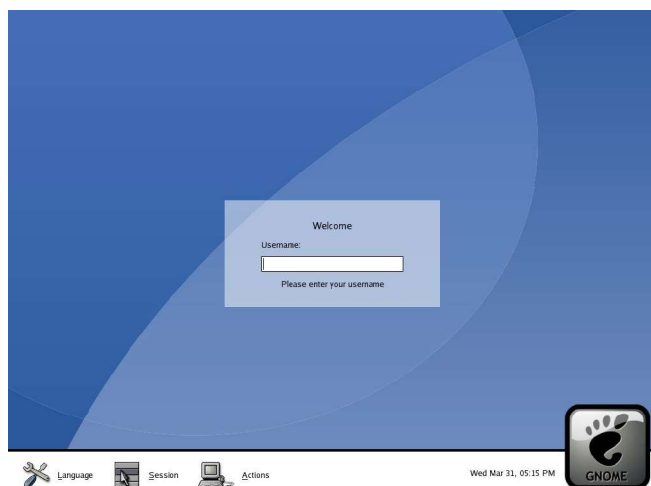


Fig. Graphical login screen

```
Fedora Core release 1
Kernel 2.4.22-1 on an i686

localhost login:
```

Fig Text-based login prompt

To login, enter the username followed by the ENTER key and when the password prompt appears, enter the password followed by the ENTER key.

STARTING THE GRAPHICAL DESKTOP

If you have logged in from the graphical login screen, the graphical desktop will be started automatically for you. If you have used the text-based screen login, you will have to start the graphical desktop manually by entering the command `startx` followed by the ENTER key.

```
[anita@localhost anita]$ startx
```

Fig Starting the graphical desktop

BASIC NAVIGATION USING THE MOUSE ON THE DESKTOP

Proper usage of the mouse is essential in order to have a rewarding and productive experience on the graphical desktop. Most Linux graphical desktops are designed for use with a 3-button mouse. If you are using a two-button mouse, during installation, it should have been configured to emulate the middle-button of a 3-button mouse by pressing both buttons simultaneously.

To click on a mouse the left button is depressed. (A mouse configured for a left-handed user will need to have its right button depressed.) The right (or left button for a left-handed mouse) and middle buttons are usually used to invoke special or specific features of the GUI and instructions to do so will be explicitly given.

To "select" an item means clicking it once with the mouse.

The term "drag and drop" means that you will have to click on an item and while continuing to hold the mouse button down, drag the item to another place and on reaching its destination drop it by releasing the mouse button.

MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE DESKTOP

The figure below shows a typical view of the graphical Linux desktop.

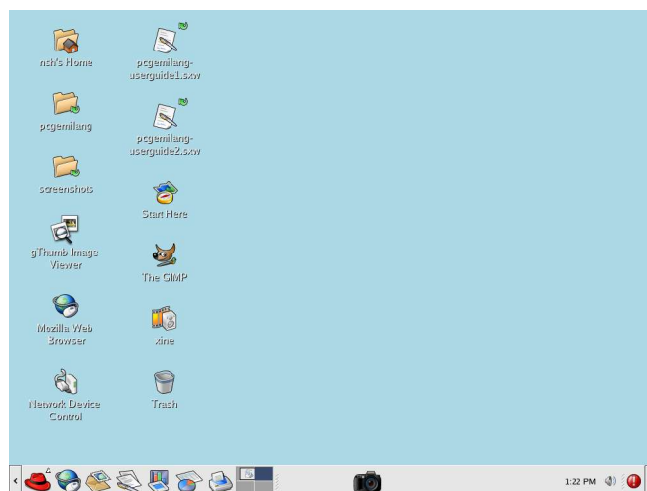


Fig. A typical Linux desktop

There are 3 main components on the desktop: the menu system, the panel, the desktop itself.

THE MENU SYSTEM

The main menu can be accessed by clicking on the Main Menu button located at the lower left corner of the desktop. On a Fedora Linux system the default Main Menu button is a red fedora (a type of red hat). Clicking on this will bring up the menu system as shown in the figure below.

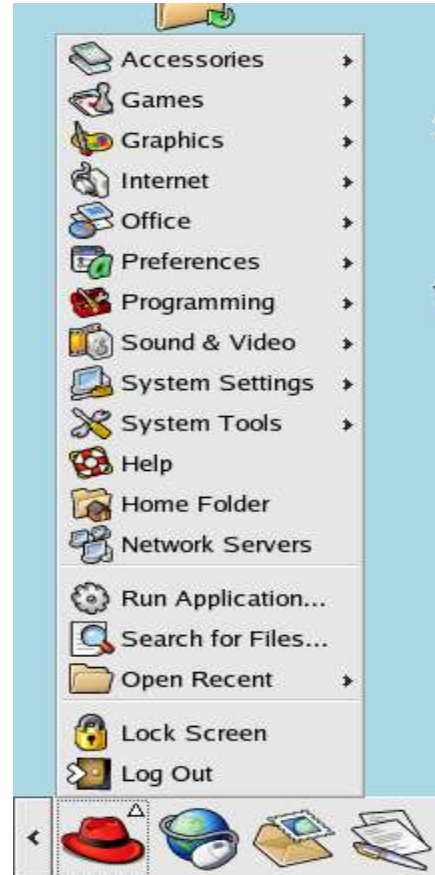


Fig. 3-5 The menu system

From the menu system you can start many of the applications installed on your Linux system. Note that the menu system consists of a main menu panel and sub-menu panels. Each entry in the menu system which has an arrow on its right means that it is an entry point to a sub-menu, and there can be sub-menus within each sub-menu. In this way applications in the menu system can be organised and categorised for easy reference and access.

To access a the sub-menu associated with a menu entry, move the mouse and rest it on the menu entry in question and a sub-menu panel will appear.



Fig. Main menu and sub-menu

Clicking once on a menu entry will cause an application associated with it to be launched, i.e. executed.

THE PANEL

The long bar across the bottom of the desktop screen is called the panel. The panel contains the main menu icon, the application launcher icons, a notification area and applets.



Fig. The panel

Installed by default are several application launcher icons on the panel. Clicking on one of these will run an application.

Commonly accessed applications can be added to the panel and those that are less frequently used can be taken off.

The notification area holds alert icons so that the user can be alerted to critical messages.

Applets are small applications that run on the panel. These usually perform useful and informative tasks like setting the sound level of the soundcard, monitoring whether the system software needs an update, etc. By default the following applets are run.

The Workspace Switcher

By default the user has 4 desktop workspace areas to work on. The workspace switcher represents each workspace as a small

square and shows the applications running in each of them. To access a workspace click on the square with the mouse.

The Taskbar

The taskbar applet is located next to the workspace switcher and shows the titles of all the running applications in a virtual desktop (a workspace).

THE DESKTOP

The desktop itself contains icons which are graphical representations of short-cuts to application launchers, file folders, files and peripheral devices like floppy disks, CD-ROM drives and printers. Double-clicking on an icon representing an application will launch or execute the application. Commonly used applications and/or files/folders are usually placed on the desktop space.

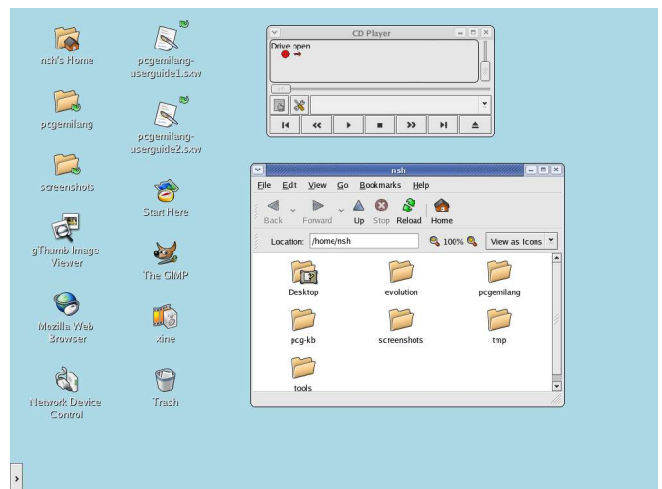


Fig. The desktop space

USING THE WINDOW MANAGER



Fig. An application window frame

THE TITLEBAR

When an application is started an application window opens and a frame (see figure above) is placed around the window of the application. The top edge of the frame has a titlebar that contains the title of the application.



Fig. The window titlebar

At the left hand corner of the titlebar is the Window Menu button. Clicking on this button will open up the Window Menu. You can perform operations such as minimise, (un)maximise, roll up, move and resize the window from this menu. At the right edge of the titlebar there are three buttons which allows you to minimise, (un)maximise and close the window.

MANIPULATING THE WINDOW

Some basic instructions to manipulate the windowing system is given here. More details can be obtained by running the "Help" application on the Main Menu. After running the Help application choose:

Desktop => Windows => Manipulating Windows

Focus

In order for a window to receive input from the mouse and the keyboard it has to be the window "in focus". Only one window can have focus at a time. Windows that are not in focus have their titlebars greyed-out. To focus on a window place the mouse on the titlebar and click on it. (You can actually click anywhere within the window, but it is safer to click on the titlebar since there is no possibility of accidentally clicking on some item selection or functionality of the application running within the window.) If the window is not visible you can click on the taskbar on the panel at the bottom of the desktop to bring into focus the window you want.

Maximise and Minimise

Maximising a window means that the window is expanded to cover the whole desktop while minimising it means that the window is taken off the desktop and it appears as an icon in the taskbar on the panel.

You can maximise a window which has focused from the Window Menu or by clicking on the maximise button on the titlebar. You can similarly minimise the window. If the window does not have focus bring it into focus first by clicking on the taskbar on the panel.

Resize

You can easily resize a window, i.e. change its size, by placing the mouse at an edge of the window and then drag the window to the desired size.

Move

To move a window to another place on the desktop, place the mouse on the titlebar, and drag the window to the desired location.

Roll Up and Unroll

To roll up a window allows you to "roll up" the window frame until what can be seen of the window is just the the titlebar. You can perform this operation from the Window Menu.

To restore the window back to its original shape, select the unroll option from the Window Menu.

Close

You can close a window which has focused from the Window Menu or by clicking on the close window button on the titlebar. If the window does not have focus bring it into focus first by clicking on the taskbar on the panel.

Note: Closing the window will terminate your application.

BASIC DESKTOP CUSTOMISATION

The desktop can be customised to your preferences and tastes in a variety of ways. Here we will explore some basic customisations. More details can be obtained by running the "Help" application on the Main Menu. After running the Help application choose::

Desktop => Basic Preferences

Desktop Background

The background image displayed on the desktop can be changed by running the Background application from the Main Menu (this is in the Preferences sub-menu).

Main Menu => Preferences=> Background

To change the background image, click on the square marked "Select picture". An image selector dialog is displayed. Choose an image from the dialog. If you want to choose an image from another directory, click the Browse button. When you have chosen an image, click OK.

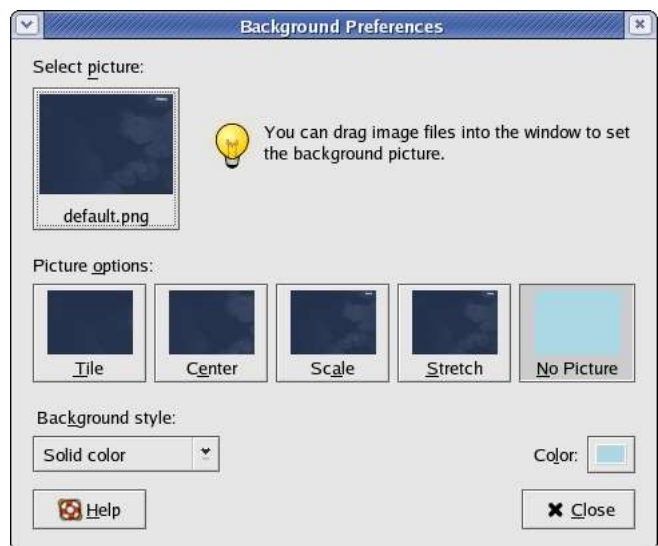


Fig. Selecting a new background image

Desktop Themes

The desktop theme specifies the visual appearance of the panels, applets, and windows. The desktop theme also may also specify the appearance of interface items in applications. For example, the theme affects the appearance of buttons, scrollbars, check boxes, and so on in the applications.

The theme used by the desktop can be changed by running the Theme application from the Main Menu (this is in the Preferences sub-menu).

Main Menu => Preferences=> Theme

An theme selector dialog is displayed. To change the theme, click on a new theme.

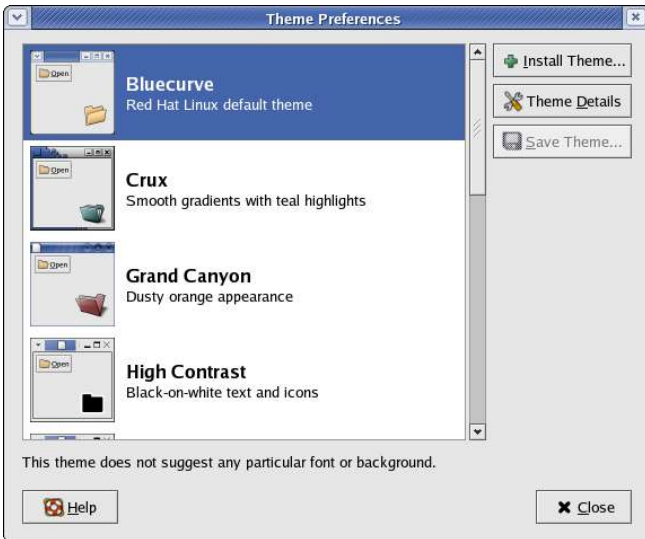


Fig. Selecting a new theme

Default Fonts

The default fonts used to display applications and the desktop background can be changed by running the Fonts application from the Main Menu (this is in the Preferences sub-menu).

Main Menu => Preferences => Fonts

A selector dialog for the application, window title, dialog and terminal fonts are displayed. To change the font for each category of usage, click on the spacelisting the font.

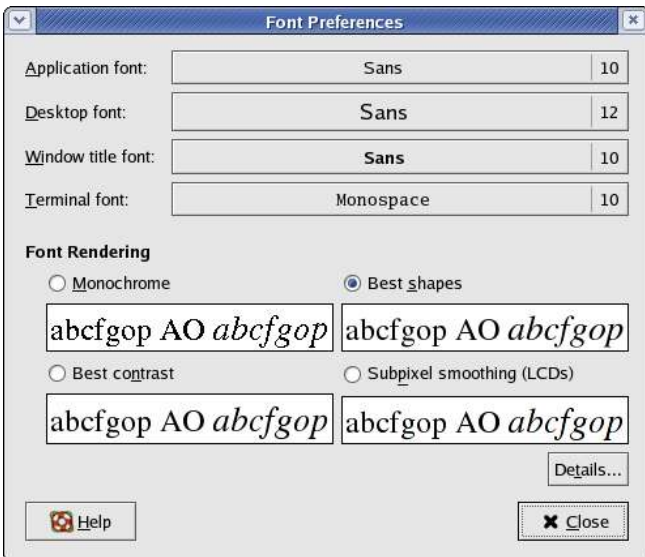


Fig. Selecting new fonts

Menus and Toolbars

The Menus & Toolbars tool is used to customise the appearance of menus, menubars, and toolbars. Again this can be run from the Preferences sub-menu in the Main Menu.

Main Menu => Preferences => Menus & Toolbars

Experiment on each of the settings to get the ones preferred.

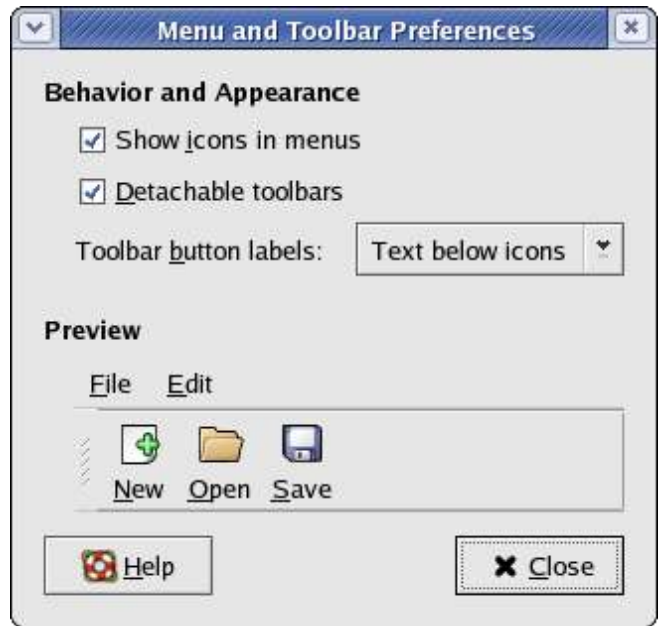


Fig. Customising menus and toolbars

DATE AND TIME

It is important that the date and time are set correctly in your system. This will make it easier to manage the system resources and files and also aid in troubleshooting any problems. To set the date and time, run the Date & Time application tool from the System Settings sub-menu under the Main Menu.

Main Menu -= System Settings => Date & Time

A dialog box asking for the root password will appear if you are not logged in as root. This is because the system date and time are important system parameters and so only the system administrator or root is allowed to do it. After entering the correct root password, you can change the date using the displayed calendar and the time in the boxes provided. Select the Time Zone tab and check to see that the timezone selected is correct. If not, correct it by selecting the appropriate timezone region. Usually the system uses the local time, so do not select the "System clock uses UTC" checkbox.

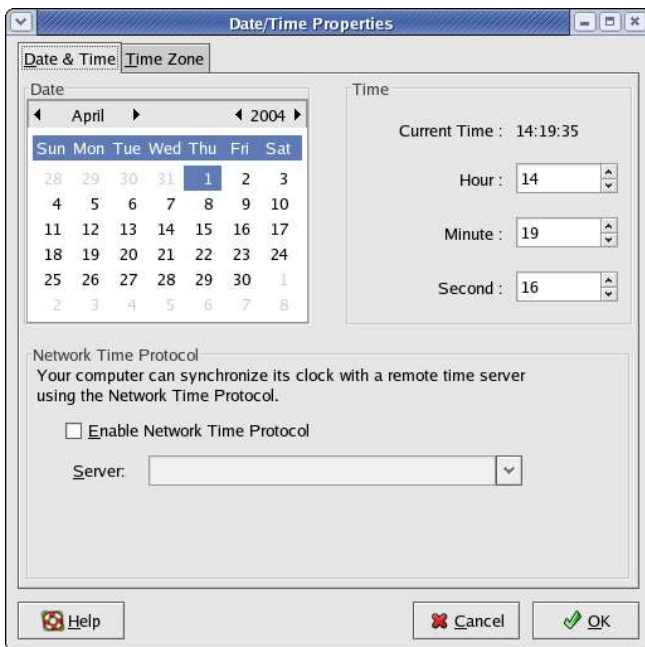


Fig. Setting the date and time

Click on the OK button after all is done to enable the new date and time. You can check for the new date and time by resting your mouse over the time icon displayed on the panel at the bottom of the screen.

USING THE DESKTOP

The desktop provides a useful metaphor for a modern office work environment. So on the desktop we find that the applications that we want to run can easily be started or launched and the information and data that we need can easily be located.

Applications that we can run from the desktop are to be found either from the Main Menu (and sub-menus therein), or as icons on the panel and the desktop itself.

To run an application from the Main Menu, open up the menu, select the application therein and click on the application listed in the menu bar.

To run an application from the panel, click once on the icon representing the application.

To run an application from the desktop itself, double-click on the icon representing the application.

Sometimes it is more handy to have the application as an icon on the panel or desktop where you can launch it more easily by just clicking on it, rather than in the Main Menu, especially if it is buried deep within several sub-menus. To achieve this open the Main Menu and select the application item listed in it by clicking with the *right* mouse button. Click on the selection "Add this launcher to panel" and a copy of the application icon will be placed on the panel.

To make a copy of this on the desktop, you can drag the icon from the panel over to the desktop.

To delete an application icon from the panel *right-click* on it and select the "Remove from Panel" option.

To delete an application icon from the desktop, *right-click* on it and select the "Move to Trash" option.

USING THE FILE MANAGER

One of the most powerful features of a modern computer system is the ability to store data in a form which can be easily retrieved and transported or copied across to other computer systems or media. Data created and accessed by a user in the computer is stored in what is called a *file*. This concept of an electronic file to store electronic data mimics the physical world usage of a file to store data written on paper. This mimicry is carried further by the organisation of these electronic files into electronic folders or directories. Like a physical folder, an electronic folder can contain very many files. A folder may also have sub-folders or sub-directories.

Note:

Within this document we shall be using the terms folder and directory interchangeably, unless stated otherwise.

Files and folders can be created, copied, moved (i.e. transferred) and deleted. The folders themselves are organised in a hierarchical manner starting at the root of the file system. Each user is given a home directory and upon logging in, the user is placed in his home directory. As it is possible for a user to create and store hundreds and thousands of files and folders, a file manager is needed to assist the user to manage and manipulate these files and the file system on which it resides.

In this section a brief description of the file manager and how to use it is given. For more details you should consult the "Help" application on the Main Menu. From the Help application choose:

Desktop => Nautilus File Manager

To start using the file manager double-click on the home directory icon on the desktop. (This may be named "*username's* Home" where *username* is the username of the user currently logged in.)

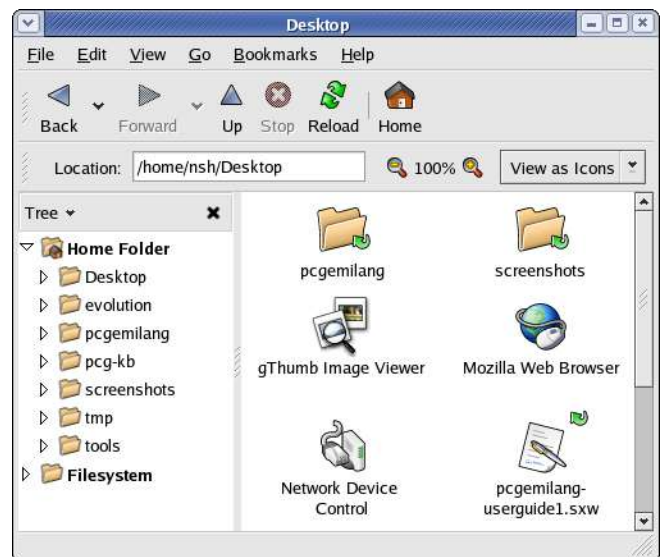


Fig. The file manager

By default, the file manager consists of a side pane and a main view pane. At the top of the window just under the window titlebar, are the menu bar and the location bar.

The view pane displays the files and folders contained in the current directory that the user is in. These can be displayed as icons (default) or changed to display them as a listing of filenames.

The side pane contains an icon that represents the current file or current folder. The side pane also contains information about the current file or current folder. A hierarchical (tree) view of the file system on the computer can be obtained from the side pane. By navigating through this, you can access files and folders outside your home directory (provided of course that you have the authority to do so).

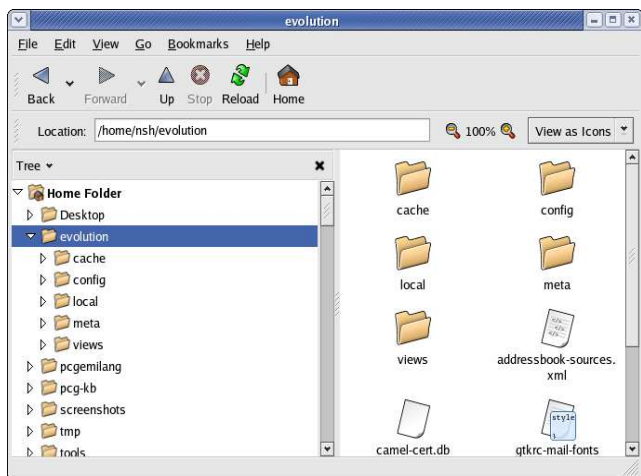


Fig. The side pane with a tree view of folders

Accessing Files and Programs

From the view pane of the file manager, you can open files as well as run (launch) executable programs by double-clicking on the icon representing them.

Creating New Folders

To create a new folder under the folder you are currently in, move the mouse to the menu bar at the top (just beneath the titlebar of the window) and click on File and then click on Create Folder. A new folder will appear on the view pane and you will have to type in the name of the new folder.

Copy Files and Folders

To copy a file, click on the file in the view pane to select it. Then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit => Copy File

Next open up the folder in which you want to copy the file to and then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit => Paste Files

Another way to copy a file is to right click on the file icon and then select "Copy File". Then navigate to the icon of the folder where you want the copy to be placed in and then right click on the folder icon and select "Paste Files into Folder".

The procedures above can be done with folders too.

To copy more than one file or folder at a time, select multiple files/folders by holding down the CTRL key while clicking on the files or folders.

Moving Files and Folders

Moving a file or folder is different from copying in that a copy of the file/folder is not made, i.e. only one copy of the file/folder exists, and the file/folder is transferred from one folder to another.

To move a file, click on the file in the view pane to select it. Then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit => Cut File

Next open up the folder in which you want to move the file to and then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit => Paste Files

Another way of moving a file is to drag and drop the file into the destination folder.

The procedures above can be done with folders too.

To move more than one file or folder at a time, select multiple files/folders by holding down the CTRL key while clicking on the files or folders.

Renaming Files and Folders

To rename a file, click on the file in the view pane to select it. Then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit => Rename

and then type in the new name.

Alternately you can also right-click on the file and then select "Rename".

The procedures above can be done with folders too.

Deleting Files and Folders

To delete a file, click on the file in the view pane to select it. Then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit => Move to Trash

Alternately you can select the file and then use the DELETE key on the keyboard to delete the file. This has the same effect as above of moving the file to the Trash folder.

It is still possible to salvage a deleted file from the Trash. To do this double-click on the Trash icon on the desktop to open up the Trash folder. Then you can move the file you want to salvage to the desired folder. Note that if you delete the file from the Trash then it cannot be recovered anymore.

The procedures above can be done with folders too.

To delete more than one file or folder at a time, select multiple files/folders by holding down the CTRL key while clicking on the files or folders.

THE TRASH CAN

The trash can icon on the desktop contains files and folders which you have deleted using the file manager or an application run from the desktop. As noted above it is a special folder in which it is still possible to move back the deleted items to another folder so as to “undelete” them. However over time, the trash folder will be filled up as many files and folders get deleted through usage. So it is a good idea to periodically empty or delete the items found in the trash.

To empty the trash, right-click on the trash icon and select “Empty Trash”. Otherwise you can open the trash by double-clicking on it and then select to delete all the items in the trash folder using the file manager functions described above.

LOGGING OUT

When you have finished working on the system, you will need to logout. To logout, at the Main Menu select:

Main Menu => Logout

and at the dialog window select logout and click OK



Fig. Logout dialog window

SHUTTING DOWN THE SYSTEM

When you have finished using the computer and want to power it off, you will have to perform a system shutdown.

Note:

It is very important that a proper system shutdown is made. You should not just turnoff the power switch of the computer to shut it down. Failure to observe this may lead to system software and data corruption and failure.

To shutdown, at the Main Menu, perform a logout. Then at the graphical login screen select the “Shut down” option at the bottom of the screen. Sometimes (depending on the login screen chosen) the Shutdown option is available as a sub-option under the Actions option at the bottom of the screen.

Alternatively you may also perform a shut down by performing a log out operation as described in the previous section but instead of selecting “Log out”, select the “Shut down” option from the Logout dialog.