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What's Your Preference?

I have a little twitch. I'm not quite obsessive compulsive. I don't have to wash my hands constantly or make sure to turn light switches on and off a certain number of times. My twitch happens when I see someone else's desktop. I walk up behind you when you are using your computer and see the default desktop wallpaper, the default icons, the default task bar items, and all the same colors that came with your desktop environment.

"Rrraaowuuga!" I yell as I stand directly behind you.

You jump, startled, and turn around. I don't like the furious look on your face.

"What?" I ask.

"Why are you sneaking up on me and yelling?" you ask.

"I'm not," I claim.

You look at me with incredulous eyes and a fed-up grimace. "I just heard you. What do you mean, you didn't do it? What do you want?"

I'm thinking that you're a little testy today, but, hey, I'll cut you some slack. You are reading my book, after all. "It's a twitch, you know, a tick. It's like Tourette's syndrome."

"Wouldn't that mean that you should be cussing me out right now?" you ask.

"Oh no, Tourette's has many forms. In fact, it's a common myth that most sufferers of the syndrome swear. Noises are more common," I kindly inform you. I pull out a tote bag. "Here. Please take this informative brochure on Tourette's syndrome. Also, here is a video tape of an admirable piece done on ABC's '20/20' about Tourette's. Barbara Walters, a paragon and legend of the journalism community, hosted '20/20.' She can make people cry faster than hot lemon juice on a self-inflicted flesh wound. Isn't she great?"

You're giving me that grimace again. "What do you want?" you repeat.

"Well, I don't really have Tourette's, but I can't stand to see someone's desktop when the wallpaper isn't even changed. It hurts me."

"I could hurt you," you say.

Although I think that is a kind offer, I don't think that I will take you up on it. I remind you that, instead of hurting me, you are supposed to be out in the world spreading that rumor that I am a genius.

"Why would it matter to you if I customize my desktop?" you ask.

I take a deep breath and sit down beside you. "Pull up a chair." You look down at the chair you are already sitting in. "Okay, I guess you have a chair. It's just that there are so many options in Linux for customizing everything about your desktop, fonts, wallpaper, colors, window borders, icons. . . . When you don't change any of it, I can't help but think that you're not living life to the fullest. It's like not stopping to smell the roses. It's like not ever taking that trip to Europe you always dreamed of. It's like not hugging your teddy bear."

You scoot your chair a little farther away from me.

"It's okay," I say, "We will get through this crisis together. Let's start off by looking at all of the ways to customize your desktop environment."

You remove the arm that I put on your shoulder and continue to move your chair farther away from me. You're such a joker, always kidding around and pretending you think I'm creepy.

What Can You Change on Your Desktop?

There are so many preference options in KDE and GNOME that you can make your desktop look nothing like a traditional desktop (see Figure 4.1). You can change everything from your desktop wallpaper to themes for your Window Manager to fonts and icons. KDE and GNOME each have their own tools to help you customize your desktop and make it your own.

Figure 4.1

Everything seen here is an integrated desktop object or panel in GNOME.

KDE Control Center

Program Info

Fedora/GNOME menu	*Preferences > Control Center*
Mandrake/KDE menu	*System > Configuration > Configure Your Desktop*
Terminal command	`kcontrol`

One-stop shopping. Everyone likes that. The KDE Control Center makes configuring and customizing your desktop one-stop shopping. In the KDE Control Center, you can change most of the preferences for your desktop environment, from a simple task such as changing your desktop wallpaper to more complex jobs such as installing fonts and adjusting your screen resolution settings.

As we discussed in earlier topics, the KDE version in Mandrake is different than the KDE version in Fedora. Most of the changes were in an effort to standardize icons, themes, labels, and tools between GNOME and KDE with their "Bluecurve" theme. The KDE Control Center has a few different categories and items between Mandrake and Fedora. Let's look at the Mandrake version.

SETTINGS AND PREFERENCES

Don't just customize your desktop environment. Programs in Linux have lots of options, too. Whenever I try any new program, from a simple text editor to a whole new desktop environment, the first

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Fedora KDE users can still follow along, but you might have to poke around the expandable list choices to locate a few items that have been rearranged.

The kcontrol interface is similar to the help section of many KDE programs. There are three tabs in a left column, a brief menu above, and a content area to the right. Of the three tabs, you will spend the most time in the Index. The Index is where the tree-view list of expandable items is for accessing the many parts of the Control Center. The Search tab enables you to search by keyword for what you want and then displays the matching modules of the Control Center in a panel below. Searching for modules can be helpful when you are new to the Control Center, but I find it more useful to just start at the top of the Index and work my way down the list, adjusting everything I want along the way. Then, the next time I use the Control Center, I already have a good idea where the preference I want is located in the Index. I tend to be more of the "poke around and find things" type than the "search and destroy" type, so use whichever method fits you best. From the Help tab, you can access the Control Center manual or read help topics on whichever module you have open. Simply highlight one of the subitems on the list and then hop over to the Help tab to see the text for that item.

In the menu under View > Mode, you can find Icon View and Tree View. It's best to stick to the default tree view because the icon view is jumbled and confusing. Under the Settings menu are choices for shortcuts. The Help menu does the same thing as the Help tab, but the tab view is easier to look at and work with.

Back in the Index tab is where all the fun is. There are 11 items in the tree view, each with several subitems. All the choices might seem daunting at first. Take a little bit of time to work through the list, and you will learn more about the possibilities of your KDE desktop than regular use could give you in a week. Here is a brief description of each of the main categories.

Accessibility

Settings for people with disabilities are in the Accessibility module. You can adjust language preferences in Country–Region & Language, as well as how dates and money information are displayed. You can also adjust your keyboard layout by region. The Keyboard Shortcuts module is useful for power users as well as users with disabilities. Be careful when changing and adding keyboard shortcuts. You could inadvertently change a keyboard shortcut specific to another program or add a dumb keyboard shortcut, such as setting the spacebar to something that would make that action come up constantly while typing.

place I go is the Settings (or Options, or Configure, or whatever the customization menu item is in that program). Tweaking the settings is the best way to first poke around and see what a program can do, what you can do to make it your own, and learn some of the options that are available. When

Components

The Component Chooser and File Association modules are important to you if you plan to use programs other than those that KDE chooses as the default programs for e-mail, text editing, the terminal, and many document, image, and multimedia types. The Session Manager lets you adjust a few things that happen automatically when you log in and out of KDE.

Information

The Information section is just what it says it is: information. There aren't any settings to adjust here, but you can view info about your system status.

LookNFeel

This is the big one. The LookNFeel section has most of the fun options in it (see Figure 4.2). You can change almost everything about the look and feel of your desktop. Check out Table 4.1 for paths to some common settings. These are the settings for which it is better to just go through than to read about. Some KDE particulars include the Behavior and Window Behavior modules, where you can change things such as mouse focus, system behaviors, and how your windows behave when minimizing and closing. The rest of the modules mostly cover the look of your desktop environment, so have fun and play.

Figure 4.2

The KDE Control Center with the LookNFeel section expanded.

you're done looking around in the settings, use the program for a bit and then go back to the settings again when you know some things that you might want to change.

Network

Most of the modules in the Network section have preferences that you can also set in individual programs. The E-mail module settings apply only if you use KMail as your e-mail program. If you are on a local area network on which a common username and password is required to access shares on other network computers, you can set those in the Local Network Browsing module. The settings are effective when using Konqueror and Samba to browse network computers. You can play with the sliders in the Preferences module, but they can easily be left alone. The Proxy module settings require information about your network and firewall. If you are in an office environment, your network administrator should help you.

Peripherals

The Peripherals section can be useful for dealing with devices that are complex to make adjustments to and add with only command-line tools. You can change your screen resolution and gamma, and work with multiple monitors in the Display module. Be careful adjusting the refresh rate unless you know the proper range for your monitor. Keyboard adjustments include the repeat rate and delay, numlock, and key click volume. For your mouse, you can adjust right-handed or left-handed mode, clicking preferences, cursor themes, and speed. Printers is an important module with tools for adding printers, monitoring jobs, setting up network printers, and doing PDF conversion.

PowerControl

The PowerControl section has only one item in it. Here you can enable or disable power management. With power management enabled, you can adjust the amount of time before your computer goes into standby, suspend, or power-off when there has been no activity within the set time.

Security

In the Crypto module, you can adjust settings for, add, or delete Secure Socket Layer (SSL) certificates and authorizations. If that sentence just made your eyes glaze over in a moment of techno-ignorance, leave the Crypto module alone.

Frankly, most advanced users won't need to adjust these settings, either. The KDE Wallet System is a place to keep personal information handy for use on Web pages, to keep passwords, and to make your life easier. Anything designed to make your life of passwords and security easier puts that information in potential jeopardy, so use the KDE Wallet with care.

Sound

If you are familiar with sound card settings, the preferences in the Sound section will be useful for you. Newer users should leave the Mixer and Sound Settings areas alone. Check that box in the System Bell area only if you enjoy being annoyed by bells constantly.

System

You can install new fonts, add keyboard shortcuts and mouse gestures (movements to trigger commands or actions), change the look of your login manager avatar, change your system password, and adjust default directory paths all in the System section. You can also change the look of the login manager by choosing Administrator Mode and entering your root password. The KDE Performance module is another area to be careful with. You can adjust the amount of memory used by KDE, but keeping the default middle ground is the best choice.

WebBrowsing

Most of the preference settings in the WebBrowsing section are actually the settings for the Konqueror Web browser in KDE. Make adjustments to all of these preferences when you have Konqueror open so you can see what you are changing.

There are so many options in the KDE Control Center that you will learn much more by playing with the options yourself. Don't be afraid that you will horribly break things. If you are afraid, change only one or two things at a time and then click Apply to see the changes. You can also keep your mouse hand ready to click the Defaults button in each module to undo any changes that you make.

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Table 4.1 How to Find Frequently Used Preferences in the KDE Control Center	
Desktop wallpaper/color	LookNFeel > Background
	or
	Right-click your desktop and choose Configure Desktop
Window theme	LookNFeel > Colors to change individual colors or load and save color schemes
	LookNFeel > Style to change window controls using themes
	LookNFeel > Window Decorations to change the window frame and top buttons using themes
File associations	Components > File Associations
Default fonts	LookNFeel > Fonts
Screensaver	LookNFeel > Screen Saver
Keyboard and mouse settings	Peripherals > Keyboard
	Peripherals > Mouse
Printer addition and configuration	Peripherals > Printers
New fonts	System > Font Installer
Notification sounds	LookNFeel > System Notifications

TOOL KIT 4.1:

Change KDE Wallpaper, Theme, Window Decorations, and Colors

The best place to look for anything to do with the look of KDE is, naturally, *http://www.kde-look.org*. At kde-look, you can find icons, wallpapers, themes, splash screens, and everything else you need. You can still look for icons and themes elsewhere, but kde-look has the largest collection and is the safest place to download themes, to ensure that you don't get any oddly corrupted files.

Today we are going to grab a desktop wallpaper from the Web site. Plenty of good themes come with KDE, so we will use two of those for the style and window decorations.

1. Fire up a Web browser and head over to kde-look.org.
2. Under the category for Wallpapers, navigate to find one you like that fits your current screen resolution. If you don't know your current screen resolution, look

in the Control Center under Peripherals > Display. Save your wallpaper to your computer, somewhere you can find it, or create a folder such as /home/ [username]/MyLook/. I'm choosing the one called Spot the Fish.

3. Open the KDE Control Center and go to the LookNFeel section.

4. First choose Background. In the content area on the right, you should see two outlined sections, Background and Options. In Background, Picture should already be chosen. Use the file icon to browse for your new wallpaper image. Mine is in /home/susan/MyLook/2992-pinguinz_1024.jpg. If you chose a wall-paper image that is the right size for your resolution, you can click Apply and be done. If you have an oddly sized image, use the Position drop-down list to choose Scaled, Centered, or Centered Auto Fit. You can click Apply after trying each setting and then look at the wallpaper to see which you like best.

5. In the Control Center LookNFeel section, next go to Style. There are three tabs. On the Style tab, use the drop-down list in the Widget Style section to choose a style theme that you like. The whole bottom part of the tab previews each style for you. I'm going with Thememdk. Click Apply when you decide on one. The Effect and Miscellaneous tabs have features for visual effects such as trans-parency and tear-off menus. Some of the effects can be processor intensive for your computer, so don't enable too many until you see if they slow your com-puter's performance too much.

6. Go to the Window Decorations section of the Control Center's LookNFeel list. On the Window Decorations tab, use the drop-down list to choose which one you like. It will be previewed for you below. Click Apply when you are done. I will use the theme Glow.

7. Finally, you can change the colors to match. Go to Control Center > LookNFeel > Colors. You can choose a predefined scheme in the Color Scheme selection box or create your own scheme by using the Widget Color drop-down list to choose each widget type and then choose a color below. You can also change the con-trast. It is a good idea to save your custom scheme so you won't have to re-create it later if you try out some changes. Use the Save Scheme button below the Color Scheme select box. I am going to call mine Hoofooglers. Click Apply when you are done.

8. Close the Control Center and behold your creation.

You can download new KDE style themes and window decorations themes from kde-look.org. If you download a theme, pay attention to the install direc-tions on that theme's page. Installing a new theme is similar to installing soft-ware from the source code. You need to open a terminal and follow the install directions for that theme. Make sure you download a theme for your version of KDE. If you are not sure of your KDE version number, open the Control Center and, without clicking or highlighting anything, look in the content area on the right for the number next to "KDE version."

GNOME Control Center

Program Info

Fedora/GNOME menu	*Preferences > Control Center*
	or the Start Here icon on your desktop
Mandrake/KDE menu	*Applications > System > Configuration > GNOME > GNOME Control Center*
Terminal Command	`gnome-control-center`

GNOME doesn't really have a control center. I think they started calling the collection of preference modules a Control Center because that is what KDE calls it. Names aside, the GNOME Control Center is a view of icons in the Nautilus file manager (see Figure 4.3). Besides main menu and terminal command access, you can open Nautilus in file browsing mode and type `preferences:///` into the address bar to access the Control Center icon view. Of course, Mandrake and Fedora have a few differences in the GNOME Control Center. Most of the differences are in the icons used and the labels attached to each module.

Figure 4.3

The GNOME Control Center view has most of the same items found in the Preferences menu on your main menu.

With the GNOME Control Center merely consisting of a collection of icons, you can double-click on any icon to access the dialog box for that preference module. If you want quick access to any single module, you can choose it from the submenu in the main menu under Preferences. One theming option is not in the Control Center. You can find the preferences for changing GDM (your login manager) themes in the main menu under System Settings > Login Screen. Whereas the KDE Control Center contains a few items that could be considered system administration tasks, the GNOME Control Center has only personal preferences. GNOME keeps all the system administration tasks in the main menu under System Settings and System Tools. Let's look at the GNOME Control Center in Fedora.

Accessibility

The Accessibility option in the main menu is a submenu, so here it acts like a sub as well by opening a new icon view of two more module icons. The Accessibility module is where users with disabilities can adjust keyboard and mouse options to make access easier. Some of the keyboard settings are repeated in the Keyboard and Mouse modules. In the Assistive Technology Preferences dialog box, you find options for a screen reader, a magnifier, and an on-screen keyboard.

More Preferences

The More Preferences icon is another pointer that opens a new icon view of five other icons. Most of these options are advanced, are unnecessary to change, or can be accessed elsewhere.

About Myself

In case you didn't know your name when you were asked for it during the installation, you get a second crack at getting that question right. You can score bonus points for knowing your phone number and office information. None of that information is important to complete. Leave the Login Shell option set to /bin/bash.

CD and DVD

This module is a wonderful addition to GNOME. You can set what action is taken automatically when different types of CDs or DVDs are put into the drive. Sure, GNOME stole this idea from Apple, but it is still nice to have. Try the defaults before you decide to make changes.

Control Center

I cannot tell you why there is a Control Center icon in the Control Center. Because the Control Center view is just a copy of the main menu items under Preferences, this icon snuck into the view. You can click on it all day, but this icon isn't going to do anything but open the window you already have open.

Desktop Background

The Desktop Background module is the place to add pictures of naked farm animals—or whatever you like—to your desktop. The options are simple: Choose a picture, set the style, and pick a color.

File Types and Programs

When you double-click a document, media file, archive, or image in your file manager, Nautilus, a default application, attempts to launch. If you don't like the default program that Nautilus uses for a particular file type, you can change it here. You can also add file types that are not already defined and set applications for file types that do not have an associated application. This module gets better with each release, but File Types and Programs is still one of those preferences that you should be careful with. If you set an application for a specific file type and then change your mind later, taking out the association can be frustrating.

Font

The Font Preferences dialog box is another way to make your desktop look all your own. You can change the default fonts used for applications, desktop icons, window titles, and the GNOME terminal.

Keyboard

You can change the keyboard speed settings and regional layouts in the Keyboard module. A very groovy new feature in this dialog box is the Typing Break tab. If you are someone who forgets to take frequent breaks to move around, give your eyes a rest, and stave off carpel tunnel fun, use the typing break options to enforce breaks.

Keyboard Shortcuts

You know what keyboard shortcuts are. GNOME has a lot of keyboard short-cuts set up already for you, but you can adjust them here. Be careful that you

do not use a keyboard shortcut that will interfere with one being used by an application. Also make sure that you don't set any keyboard shortcuts that will activate too easily when you are working on something else. For instance, Enter would be a bad keyboard shortcut.

Login Photo

Use the Login Photo module only if you have set your login manager, GDM, up to use the face browser option. If you did that, you can choose a picture for it here. With all of the cool themes for GDM, you don't really need the face browser.

Menus & Toolbars

This is a simple dialog box with only a few choices for how you want to view the menus and toolbar in different applications.

Mouse

In the Mouse module, you can change your click speed, decide whether you are left-handed, and adjust cursor and mouse speed options. You know, they used to burn left-handed people as witches. I'm not saying anything about you—I'm just telling you that. (*ehem* witch! *ehem*)

Network Proxy

In an office environment, you will need your network administrator to help you with your proxy settings. If you have a proxy server in your home, then you, or whoever set it up for you, will know what to do with the Network Proxy module.

Password

To change the password for your username, open this dialog box, enter your current password, and then enter your new password. This is not the place to change your root password. To change your root password, go to the main menu and choose System Settings > Root Password.

Preferred Applications

Fedora and GNOME choose default applications for you, but once you decide on your favorite programs, you will want to visit the Preferred Applications module. You can choose a preferred Web browser, mail reader, text editor, and terminal application.

Screen Resolution

Here you can change your screen resolution and the refresh rate for your monitor. Don't mess with the refresh rate unless you know the range your monitor allows. Check any paperwork that came with your monitor or search online for documentation to find out the capabilities of your monitor.

Screensaver

The screensaver in GNOME is the XScreenSaver program, so this module brings up the XScreenSaver preferences. You can choose from a bazillion already installed screensavers, have random screensavers or only one, and set the time for the screensaver to activate. The Advanced tab has lots of picky settings for using desktop images in screensavers, diagnostics, and color maps. You might want to check out the Display Power Management section for standby and sleep options.

Sound

These preferences handle the sound server, Sound Events (system notification sounds), and the System Bell. Each option is pretty clear just by reading the description. You won't break anything by trying out these options, but you might annoy yourself with a few of those sound choices.

Theme

The Theme module (see Figure 4.4) is one of the most important, as far as my fun factor is concerned. Themes are where you can radically change the look of GNOME. There are four types of themes: large overall themes, window controls themes, window border themes, and icon themes. The last three are in a subdialog box that shows up when you click the Theme Details button. When you make changes in the subdialog box, your overall theme shows up as a custom theme. You can then save your custom theme.

Windows

Open this one, and you see the Window Preferences dialog box with options for focus follows mouse (Select Windows When the Mouse Moves over Them) and other options for window behavior and moving windows.
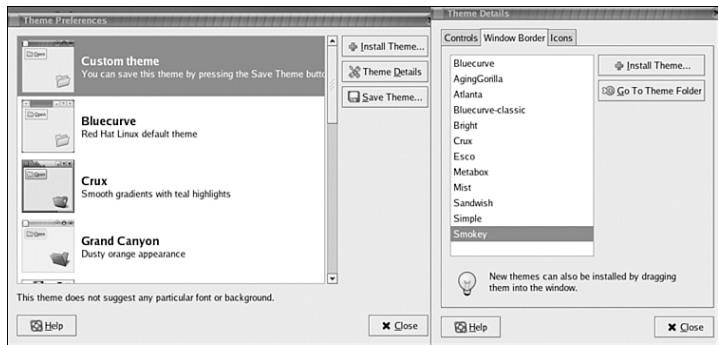
Figure 4.4

The GNOME Control Center's Theme Preferences and Theme Details dialog box.

GNOME makes changing your preferences painless. Most of the options in the modules need little explanation. You can try them without fear that you will mess up anything very important. The modules don't have a Defaults button as the KDE Control Center does, so remember what you change, in case you want to undo your actions. I often find it easier to access the modules in the GNOME Control Center through the main menu, especially for changing only one or two preferences.

Table 4.2 **How to Find Frequently Used Preferences in the GNOME Control Center**	
Desktop wallpaper	Desktop Background
Window theme	Theme > Theme Details > Controls
	Theme > Theme Details > Window Border
Window colors	You can change window colors only by changing the window control and window border themes.
File associations	File types and programs
Default fonts	Font
Screensaver	Screensaver
Keyboard and mouse settings	Keyboard
	Mouse
Printers	[Main Menu] > System Settings > Printing (root password required)

continues

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Table 4.2 How to Find Frequently Used Preferences in the GNOME Control Center (*Continued*)	
New fonts	Installing new fonts is not in the Control Center but is easily done. Open Nautilus, type `fonts://` in the address bar (or use File > Open Location if Nautilus is in spatial mode), and then drag and drop TrueType font (.ttf) files into the directory.
Notification sounds	Sound > Sound Events

TOOL KIT 4.2:

Change GNOME Wallpaper, Theme, and Window Decorations

Desktop wallpapers are all over the Internet for you to download. When you want a GNOME- or Linux-related image, you can head over to *http://art.gnome.org* or *http://gnome-look.org*. Besides wallpapers, you can download window control themes, window border themes, GDM (login manager) themes, icon themes, individual icons, tutorials, and more.

Let's download a wallpaper image to use. Then we can change the window border and control themes using some of GNOME's already installed choices.

1. Open a browser, such as Mozilla, GNOME's default browser, and go to *http://art.gnome.org*.
2. Click on the link for either Backgrounds > GNOME or Backgrounds > Other. Choose a background image that you like and download it. The background images on art.gnome are not arranged by resolution, so download one that is at your resolution or larger. If you don't know your current screen resolution, look in the Control Center under Screen Resolution. Save the image to your computer somewhere you can find it, or create a folder such as /home/[username]/MyLook/. I'm choosing the one called Big Munkey (Blue).
3. Open the GNOME Control Center and click the Desktop Background icon.
4. In the Desktop Background dialog box, click the Add Wallpaper button. Browse to the directory where you saved your wallpaper image, select the image, and click Open. Use the drop-down choice next to Style to choose the placement style that works best for that image. Click Close when you are done.
5. Now we want to change the themes. In the Control Center, double-click the Theme icon. You'll see a list of themes. Click any of them, and the theme immediately takes effect. Like one? Just click the Close button. Like only parts of a theme? You can mix and match by clicking the Theme Details button.
6. To change the window controls theme, click any of the themes in the list on the Controls tab. The theme changes right away.
7. To change the window border theme, use the list on the Window Border tab. Select different themes to see them applied.

8. Click the Close button when you are done with the theme details. Back in the main Theme dialog box, your theme now is listed as Custom. If you want to save the current theme choices, click the Save Theme button. You can fill in a name and description for your custom theme. Click Close when you are done.
9. Check out your new desktop, resplendent in its pulchritude—you know, pretty.

Installing new window border and control themes in GNOME is easier than it is in KDE. All you need to do is download the compressed file from a Web site with GNOME themes, such as *http://art.gnome.org* or *http://gnome-look.org*. Open the Theme dialog box in the Control Center and click the Theme Details button. Go to the right tab for the type of theme that you downloaded and click the Install Theme button. Select your downloaded file, and you are done. You should see the new theme that you installed in the list on the appropriate tab.

Icons

Most distributions try to design a nice icon set for the default desktop. You could use the default set of icons, but then you would be default. Default is mediocre. You don't want to be mediocre, do you? Do you want to be mundane? Unexciting? I think better of you than that. I think you want to put your own personal stamp on every aspect of your desktop. We spend so much time in our desktop these days that we should make ourselves at home there. I might be badgering you, but I think it's really fun to find new icons and design the desktop I live in.

Desktop and Panel Icons

Changing icons for items on your desktop and panel is easy. Whether you are in KDE or GNOME, you just have to right-click the item and choose the new icon that you want.

To change icons for desktop and panel items in GNOME, right-click the item and go to Properties on the right-click menu. Click the icon in the Launcher Properties dialog box. You will be in a dialog box to browse the icons in the directory where the current icon lives. Select a new icon from one of the icons displayed, or use the address bar to type in or browse for a different directory. Click OK when you are done.

CHANGE THE MAIN MENU ICON
A simple right-click on your main menu icon doesn't give you a way to change the icon for the main menu. Neither Mandrake nor Fedora wants to encourage you to take its logo off your desktop. If you

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In KDE, the method to change icons for desktop and panel items is almost the same as in GNOME. Right-click the item, choose Properties from the menu, and click the picture of the icon in the dialog box. The difference in KDE is that you have two categories to choose the new icon from, system icons and other icons. The system icons are the ones that come with KDE. Clicking Other Icons brings up another available directory full of icons, such as /usr/share/pixmaps, as well as a Browse button. Use Browse to go to another directory of icons that you choose, such as one you might have downloaded an icon image to.

File Manager Icons and Emblems

Your file manager need not be the plain sea of folders that you see by default. You can change many aspects of the look of Nautilus and Konqueror, including icons, emblems, and background colors and images. Personally, I tend not to mess with these customization options too much because I don't spend a lot of time in my file manager. However, you might be a file-browsing fool who wants green camouflage backgrounds and tiny kitty icons.

You cannot directly change the icon for each item in Nautilus. You can, however, add an emblem to any item. An emblem is a small icon that sits next to the item denoting a category or whatever you want to use it to denote. To add an emblem to an item in Nautilus, right-click the item, choose Properties, and then go to the Emblems tab. You will see a whole bunch of small icons. You can check as many as you like and then click OK when you are done. You can change the icons for file types in Nautilus by installing Nautilus themes that you can download from the Internet. Nautilus toolbar icons are affected by your choice of window control theme, but not all window control themes include Nautilus icons with them.

In Konqueror, there are no emblems. You can right-click any item in Konqueror to change the icon for that item, just as if it were a desktop item. Icons for different file types and for the Konqueror tool bar are often changed when you install a new desktop style theme.

Both Nautilus and Konqueror give you the option to change the background of your file manager. You can choose from preinstalled patterns, add your own pattern image, or choose a solid color. In Nautilus, go to Edit > Backgrounds and Emblems in the menu bar. Nautilus has options for patterns and colors, and a place in this dialog box to add new emblem images. In Konqueror, you go to View > Background Color or View > Background Image from the menu bar. Both file managers allow great flexibility for the look of your directories, but they also provide a couple hideous choices to steer clear of.

cannot fight the desire to change the main menu icon, you have to find the image file itself, rename it, and then copy the image you want to the original name and location of the main menu image file. The image locations change depending on your distro, version, and other factors, but two good places to

Finding and Creating New Icons

You can never have too many icons. Although both KDE and GNOME come with lots of good icon choices, you will have to look online to find more unique icons. There are lots of Web sites for icons, including the same great sites we looked at for themes, kde-look.org and art.gnome.org. You can find icons on non-Linux Web sites as well. Good sites such as *http://www.deviantart.com/* and *http://www.wincustomize.org/* have mostly Windows icons, but you can grab them for use in Linux as well. The Links section at the end of this topic has more URLs for desktop customization sites. Just download any file and then convert it to a .png file to use it as an icon.

To create icons in Windows, you have to use programs that will work with the special .ico file type. To create icons in Mac OS X, you have to use a special file type as well. To create icons in Linux, you don't need any voodoo—just a graphics editor. Most icons in KDE and GNOME use the .png file type. Unlike .ico files, PNG files are common and can be created by most graphics editors. When creating your own icons remember a few general rules of thumb:

- Keep your image square.
- Size your image as 32×32 pixels or 45×45 pixels, for the most flexibility.
- Make the surrounding space of your icon transparent.
- Keep the image simple. Complexity doesn't come through well in such a small image.

Fonts

Fonts used to be one of the big "issues" in Linux. You couldn't tell anyone that Linux was ready for the desktop while they were making faces at the weird, jagged fonts on your screen. I made those faces, too. A few versions back, we got the ability to use TrueType fonts and antialiased fonts. No one makes faces anymore.

The default fonts that come on most Linux distributions are much nicer than they used to be. The fonts in the Lucida and Nimbus families can be used in place of a favorite sans serif font such as Arial. In addition to the Linux font families, you can download fonts from the Internet to use in Fedora and Mandrake. Download almost any .ttf font file (.ttf files are usually Windows fonts) and then install it.

start the detective search for the main menu icon image file are these:
Fedora: /usr/share/icons/Bluecurve/48x48/apps/gnome-main-menu.png
Mandrake: /usr/share/icons/mandrake.png
Alternatively, you can search for the filenames to find out what super-secret place they are hidden in.

Install Fonts in Fedora/GNOME

Open Nautilus, type `fonts://` in the address bar (or use File > Open Location, if Nautilus is in spatial mode), and then drag and drop TrueType font files (.ttf) into the directory.
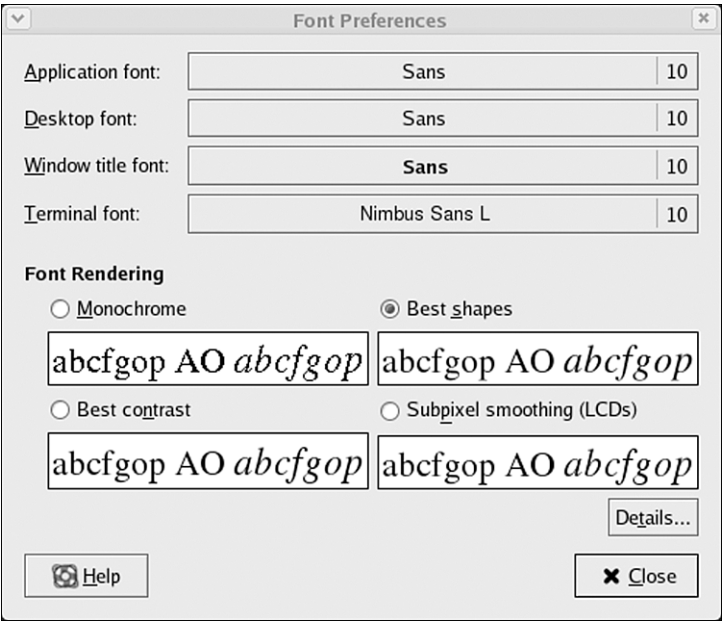
Install Fonts in Mandrake/KDE

In the KDE Control Center, go to System > Font Installer.

Some TrueType fonts found online are copyrighted material or for purchase only. There are lots of free font sites online to download from. Look up something such as "free font download" in your favorite search engine to get lots of hits. Make sure you have your pop-up blockers on in your browser, and prepare yourself for blinking text. The free font sites are heavily saturated with ads.

Both KDE and GNOME give you a place in their Control Center to change the fonts used for window titles, menus, the terminal, and more (see Figure 4.5). Some programs also offer their own font choices.

Figure 4.5

A custom font for everything—the Font preference in Fedora.

AVOID THE ICON FILE TYPE TANGLE
Yes, you can convert Windows .ico files and Mac icon files to .png files to use as icons in Linux. You can also easily convert GIF and JPG files to PNG. Why bother with all that mess? If you see an icon

Links

GNOME's theme sites:

http://art.gnome.org

http://gnome-look.org

KDE's theme site:

http://www.kde-look.org

Other Linux theme sites:

http://www.themedepot.org/

http://themes.freshmeat.net/

http://www.wincustomize.org/

http://www.deviantart.com/

you like online, just take a screenshot. Then open a graphics editor such as the
GIMP and open the screenshot image. Crop the image of the icon you liked,
clean it up, and save it as a .png file. You're done converting the icon, and you
didn't have to worry once about what file type the original icon was in.