

Gnome 3

Gnome 3 is a completely different desktop design, which makes the desktop look like a Tablet PC. Some people may like it, but if you don't, "Mate" is available as an alternative, to give you the experience of good old Gnome 2, or "Cinnamon", for a more desktop-like version of the new Gnome. Also, there is a "new" Gnome Classic session (was called "Gnome fallback" in the previous releases).

The main philosophy behind Gnome 3 is that the desktop has two distinct modes: application mode (showing the running application(s)), and action mode, which allows actions like starting an application, moving to another virtual desktop, etc). To switch between them, click the "action" menu in the top panel, or just put the mouse pointer in the top left corner of the screen, or use the "windows" key on the keyboard, or the Alt-F1 key combination.

Starting with [Fedora 21](#), it is possible to get the best of both worlds, since the [application menu](#) can be added back to the normal (application) screen, as well as a panel containing small icons of the running applications. With this setup, switching between the two modes is no longer necessary for the most common actions, making work a lot faster, smoother and more intuitive.

Some useful links:

- [Gnome handbook](#)
- [Gnome Shell cheat sheet](#) tips, keyboard shortcuts etc

Tweaks

If you want to use Gnome 3, but you do want some of the behavior you were used to in other desktops, here are some tweaks that can be set from `gnome-tweaks` (previously called `gnome-tweak-tool`)

- **Desktop** tab: "Icons on desktop": Switch this on to get a standard desktop with icons; other settings can be used to choose which icons you want (Home, Trash, mounted volumes)
- **Startup applications**: See below, here you can add and remove applications to start every time you log in.
- **Top bar**: "Show application menu". This will add the menu at the left of the top bar, similar to many other Linux desktop environments. Without a touchscreen, this makes it a lot faster to start a program.
- This tab also has settings for the clock that is displayed in the middle of the top bar. You can select to show the date as well, and if you want, to include the seconds. BTW, clicking the clock will bring up a calendar.
- **Windows**: "focus mode": By default, you have to click on a window before you can type in it, whereas the old default for most people was "focus follows mouse", ie: move the mouse pointer onto a window, and type in it. You can also select "Automatically raise windows", which will bring to the foreground the window in which you position the mouse.
- In this same tab, you can also select the "Window action key". This is the modifier key that works with the mouse for quick actions on the current window, e.g. with the middle mouse button, this key starts moving the window, and with the right mouse button, it pops up the

action menu. In almost any other Linux desktop, this action is bound to the Alt key, but at some point, Gnome changed this to “Super”, which is actually the Windows logo key. Starting with [Fedora 21](#), it is up to the user to choose between Alt and Super, or to disable this function.

- **Extensions:** You may want to enable the “topicons plus” extension, in order to see “status icons” that used to be in the system tray area (where still are on other desktops). This includes skype, dropbox, owncloud etc.

Starting with Gnome 40, Extensions has become a separate application, no longer part of gnome-tweaks.

There are many more settings, but this selection will probably be useful for many people.

Alt and Super keys

A rather annoying change: where you could always use Alt + mouse to move and resize windows, this functionality is now under the “Super” key, which is actually the windows logo key. A lot of other keyboard shortcuts have changed as well, many from “Alt” to “Super” (eg Super + L is now the shortcut to lock the screen). Luckily, starting with [Fedora 21](#), this can be configured using `gnome-tweak-tool`, and Alt-Tab and Super-Tab both work to switch between running applications.

As a rule of thumb (and to illustrate where this is coming from): if it is on the “Cmd” key on a Mac, it is now probably on “Super” in Gnome. als if it is on the “Alt” (also called “Option”) key on the Mac, it is on “Alt” in Gnome.

Status icons

Gnome doesn't display *notification area* aka *system tray* icons any more by default. The fix is, to enable the appindicator extension: open `gnome-tweaks`, and go to extensions to do that. After that, the icons such as status icons of dropbox, skype etc, will be in your top panel.

User menu

In the top right corner of the desktop, is a menu combining various settings: volume control, network, logout/switch user, power and preferences. At first, it may look strange, because the top bar displays separate icons for volume, power etc, but what you click in this area doesn't matter, in all cases you get a pull-down menu containing these settings:

- Volume: here you can select the audio volume
- Network: this should say “Wired” and “connected”. Please leave it like that!! There is nothing to be gained by messing up your network connection (but it is hardcoded into the Gnome shell, so not possible for us to remove this setting).
- Your name: Click your name to log out, or to switch user . Switch user brings you to a login window where another user can log in, while your session will be locked and keeps running. So this is useful to temporarily allow someone else to use your screen.
- A tool icon: this opens the preferences window, divided in personal, hardware and system preferences. Only the personal preferences should be changeable for you, although some hardware properties seem to be accessible in the current setup. Please be careful! It may be

easy to mess things up, and hard to fix.

- A power icon: this is for rebooting or powering down your machine. Please see our notes about [rebooting](#) Linux desktops!!

Gnome and VNC

Gnome 3 is too heavy for a VNC session in the current version. See the section about [VNC desktop issues](#). Gnome ≥ 49 is based on Wayland, and that windowing system doesn't have remote rendering capabilities, by design. So there is no need to try to run a Gnome session in VNC or other remote desktop solutions, it just won't work.

Gnome: missing mouse cursor

On some systems (or for some users) the mouse cursor becomes invisible, either after login, or at other times during the session. This bug seems to be caused by the cursor plugin of gnome-settings-daemon. To deactivate that plugin, execute this command (should only be needed once since it will be saved in your settings):

```
gsettings set org.gnome.settings-daemon.plugins.cursor active false
```

To execute this, if you don't have any terminals open after logging in, press Alt-F2 to get the run dialog.

Programs in default session

You may want to tweak what applications are started each time you log in. See [modify desktop session](#). Up to Fedora 20, you could do this in a program called gnome-session-properties; in [Fedora 21](#), it has been moved to gnome-tweaks.

Screensaver

At some point, the screensaver disappeared from the Gnome desktop (after the ability to run animated screensavers had disappeared earlier, leaving only a blank screen option). The gnome-screensaver command has been added back as a separate utility, and for some users, it continues to work, whereas for others, it's gone from the session. To add gnome-screensaver (or xscreensaver, which includes all the animated screensavers) to your session, run gnome-tweaks, and add an entry. When adding xscreensaver, you may want to make your own alias or shortcut to activate it; for gnome-screensaver, the Super-L keyboard shortcut should work as in previous versions of Gnome.

Logging out

Logging out of Gnome 3 is done from a non-intuitive entry in the interface. At the top right corner of the screen, click on the box that contains the volume symbol, power button symbol, and a downward pointing triangle. It doesn't matter which of these icons you click, they all open a menu which indeed offers a volume control, power control (shutdown, reboot), settings and the user's full name. Click on your name to open up additional menu entries for switch user and log out.

From:

<https://helpdesk.lorentz.leidenuniv.nl/wiki/> - **Computer Documentation Wiki**

Permanent link:

<https://helpdesk.lorentz.leidenuniv.nl/wiki/doku.php?id=linux:gnome&rev=1763639593>

Last update: **2025/11/20 11:53**

