

A Beginners Guide to the GNOME[®] Desktop Environment



GNOME[™]

Interacting With a Graphical Environment

Your computer consists of several parts;

The monitor is a display. On a desktop, the monitor usually has to be turned on separately from the computer, while the monitor turns on automatically on a laptop.

The keyboard consists of many buttons that allow you to enter text, numbers, and interact with the computer, similar to a typewriter. While many keys work by simply pushing them, some special **modifier keys** change the function of other keys. For instance, holding the "Shift" key allows you to type capital letters, as well as symbols. The "Ctrl", or Control key, enables special functionality in applications. If a key has special characters that can be entered with the Shift key, they are usually printed on the top of the key. Some common functions that the Control key can perform are Ctrl+C to copy selected text, images, and more to the clipboard, and Ctrl+V to paste.

The mouse can be one of several devices:

- A traditional mouse, that is moved along a desk to move the mouse cursor. The faster the mouse is moved, the faster the cursor moves. If you run out of space, pick the mouse up by the sides, being careful not to touch the bottom, and move it into a position where it can be moved further. In between the buttons is a scroll wheel, which is used to scroll documents. The scroll wheel can be clicked in for a third button, called a "middle click".
- A touchpad, typically used on laptops. A touchpad is used by dragging one or more fingers across the surface. Using multiple fingers can perform different actions, such as scrolling a document by using two fingers, or tapping with two fingers to perform a right click. While many touchpads have buttons located underneath, some modern touchpads, such as the one pictured, use the surface itself as a button. Push down on these trackpads with one finger to left click, and two fingers to right click.
- A pointing stick, used on some higher end laptops. This is a small nub located in the middle of the keyboard, between the G and H keys, with buttons just under the keyboard. The mouse cursor is moved by resting a finger on the stick, and gently tilting it in the desired direction. The further the stick is tilted, the faster the cursor will move. Use the middle button, in conjunction with moving the stick, to scroll.



A touchpad on a laptop

Multiple Keys

When you need to push multiple keys at once, the keys are separated by a plus sign (+). Modifier keys can be held down before typing the other key to make the shortcut easier to enter

Mouse Cursor

The mouse cursor is a arrow that moves along with the mouse. The cursor can change shapes depending on what it is on top of, such as a I-Beam when over text



No matter what type of mouse your computer has, there are typically two buttons, a left button and a right button. The left button is used to select items, an action known as “clicking”. The right button is used to open a contextually sensitive shortcut menu.

What is GNOME®?

GNOME® Shell is a desktop environment that allows users to run programs in a graphical environment. GNOME® uses both traditional desktop metaphors, such as a Desktop, as well as unique ideas, such as the Activities Overview, which provides an easy way to launch applications and manage windows.

Starting the GNOME® Desktop Environment

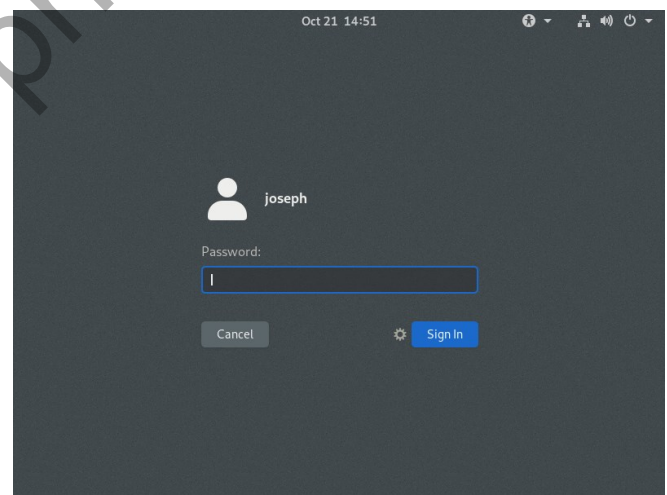
Users:

A computer can have multiple users. Each user has their own set of documents and customizations, but all users on a computer have access to the same applications.

When you turn on your computer with GNOME® properly installed and configured, you will be presented with the login screen. The login screen consists of a list of all users that have been configured on your computer.

Click your user name, and a password field will appear. Type in your password, then click the blue “Sign In” button.

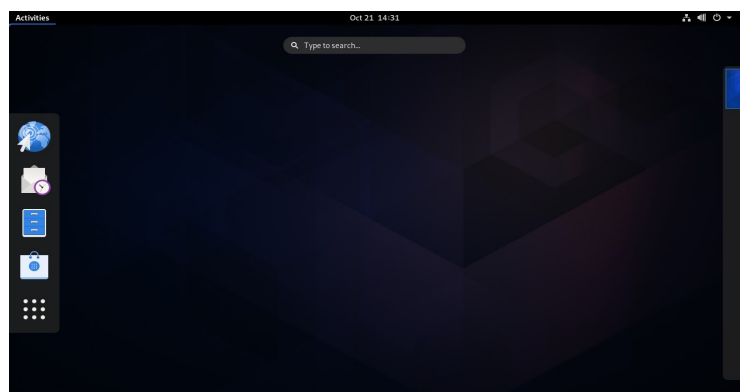
The GNOME® desktop will appear.



The login screen

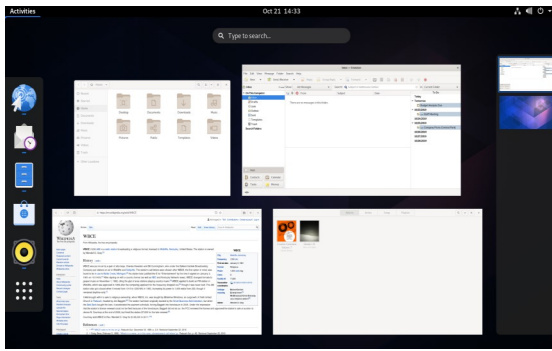
Navigating GNOME® and Starting Applications

At the top of the GNOME® desktop is the Top Bar, a black panel that shows the current date and time in the center, and a status area with network status, volume level, and battery charge.



The Activities Overview

To start an application, click the “Activities” button on the left edge of the Top Bar. The Activities




The Overview, with 4 application windows open.

Overview will open.

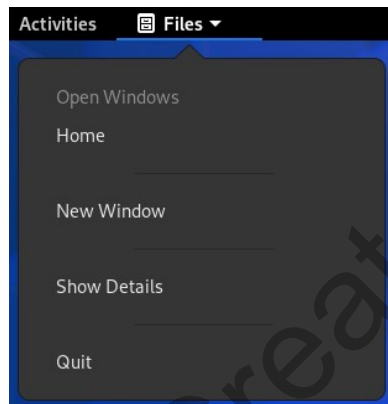
The Activities Overview consists of a dock, called the Dash, on the left side of the screen, showing open applications, as well as applications that were pinned to the Dash.

Opened applications will have a blue line underneath the icon.

To see a list of all applications

installed on the computer, click the "All Apps" button (). You can also enter the applications name into the "Type to search" bar, located at the top of the Overview.


Finally, there are multiple desktops, each of which can have its own set of applications open. Hover over the panel at the right edge of the screen to see a preview of all desktops. Applications can be moved between desktops by dragging the window preview to the desired desktop. New desktops will automatically be added when all desktops have applications on them.



The Application Menu for Files

Application Menus

When an application is in focus, a menu will appear in the Top Bar with the name of the application. Click this menu to view a list of options for the application.

Some applications will have an additional menu button () in their title bar. Click this button to view additional settings and functions for the application.

Viewing Notifications and the Calendar

Click the time and date in the middle of the Top Bar to open the Calendar.

The right side of the Calendar shows notifications from applications, such as a new email message. Click the "Clear" button at the bottom of the window to clear all notifications.

The left half of the Calendar shows the current date, as well as a calendar. Click on a date to view any events scheduled for that date in Evolution.

Focus:

A window or application is said to be "in focus" when it is the currently active window. The window in focus appears above other windows, and buttons, the title bar, and other elements will be more detailed than a window that is out of focus

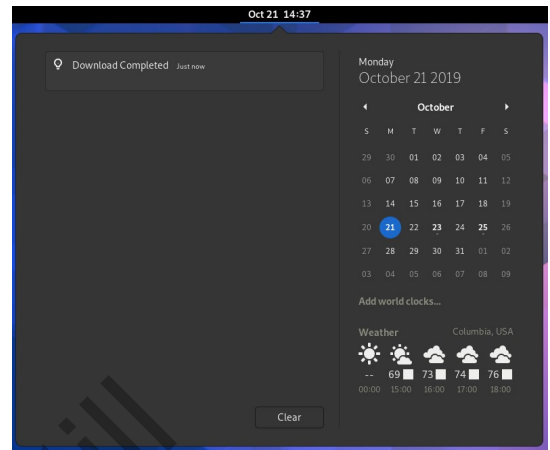
Notifications:

Some applications will display short messages. For instance, an Internet browser may send a notification when a download is completed. Notifications will appear in front of all other windows, located just under the clock in the Top Bar. They will disappear on their own after a few seconds, but can be reviewed in the Calendar if desired.

Events will appear in the notification area.

Dates that have events scheduled will have a small dot under the number, and the number will appear in bold.

Below the Calendar is a weather forecast for your current location. Configure the location in the Weather application.



The Calendar

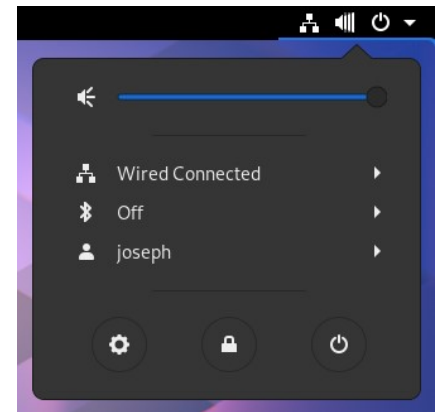
Shutting Down and Restarting:

Shutting the computer down turns it off, conserving power.

Restarting turns the computer off, then turns it back on again. This is often used as the first step in troubleshooting issues

The System Menu

Clicking the icon area on the right edge of the Top Bar to open the System Menu. At the top of the menu is a volume slider, which adjusts the volume of the system. The next section contains network, power, and user information. If your computer has wireless networking or Bluetooth, they can be configured here by clicking on the text or the triangle next to them.



The System Menu

Below the networks is your account name.

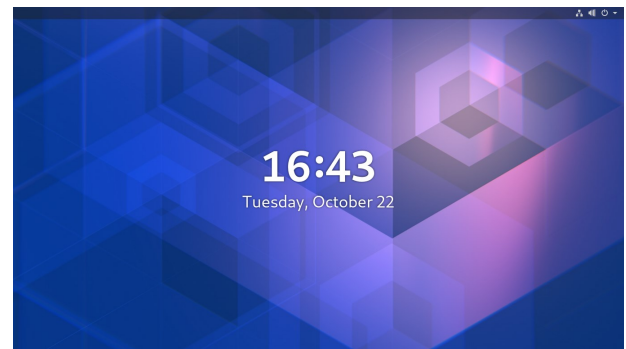
Click on the user name or triangle to open a sub menu, allowing you to sign out, or change your account settings

The bottom of the menu contains 3 icons. From left to right, they open the Settings application, lock the computer (See page 3), or shut down or restart.

The Lock Screen

Upon locking the computer, or waking up from suspend, the lock screen will appear. The lock screen prevents unauthorized access to the computer and files by requiring a password to unlock.

By default, the lock screen is hidden by the Curtain, a picture that shows the current date and time in the center. Raise the Curtain by pushing any key on the keyboard, or by dragging it up with the mouse. The picture displayed on the Curtain can be customized in Settings.



The lock screen Curtain

When the Curtain is raised, the lock screen will appear. Type in your password, which is the same password used to log into the computer, to unlock the computer. Click the "Log in as another user" button to change to another user account.

If desired, the lock screen can be disabled in Settings > Privacy > Screen Lock > Automatic Screen Lock.

Changing the Desktop Background

Changing the Desktop Background is one of the easiest ways to customize a computer. Each user can set their own background.

To change the background, right click on an empty area of the desktop. A context menu will appear. Click "Change Background...". Settings will open, and present a list of pictures to choose from. To use your own picture, click "Add Picture" in the Title Bar.

Select the desired picture, and a menu will appear. The image can be set as the desktop background, the lock screen Curtain, or both. The desktop background can be a different picture from the Curtain.



The menu that appears when changing the Desktop Background

Ending the GNOME® Session

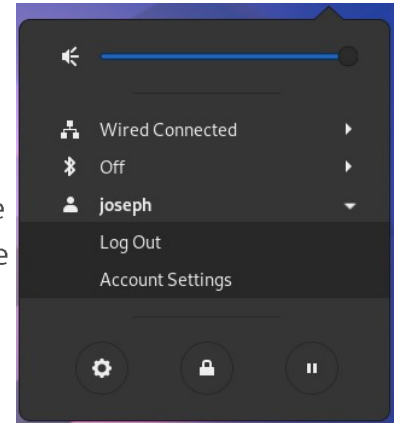
There are several ways to protect information on your computer, and save energy, when you are not using it.

The easiest and fastest way to protect information is to lock the computer using the Lock button (🔒) in the System Menu. This keeps the computer running, but prevents anybody without a password from using it. Background processes, such as downloading files, will continue while the computer is locked. When the computer is unlocked, it will be exactly as it was left.

The next way, which helps to conserve power, is Suspending the session. Click the Lock button in the system menu to lock the computer, then open the System Menu on the Lock Screen. Click the Suspend (⏻) button to suspend the computer. Suspending puts the computer into a low power state. Background tasks will be paused while the computer is suspended, but everything else will remain as it was left. Upon waking the computer from Suspend (by pushing the Power button, or opening the lid on a portable computer), the computer will be locked, preventing unauthorized access. Portable computers will also suspend automatically when the lid is closed.

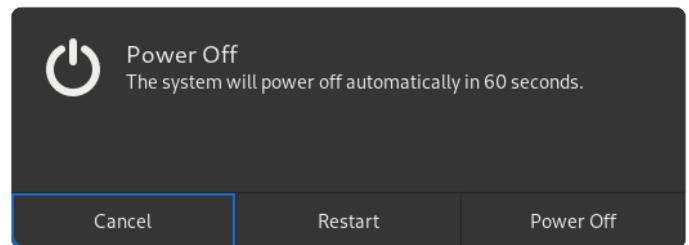
The computer can also be suspended by holding the Alt key on the keyboard while the System Menu is open, and clicking the Suspend button that appears.

To switch users, click your username in the System Menu, and click "Log Out". All applications will be closed, and the login screen will appear. Background tasks will be cancelled upon logging out.



Logging out of GNOME®

The last way to end a session is to shut down the computer. Shutting down completely turns the computer off, so power use is negligible. Click the Power (⏻) button in the System Menu, then click Shut Down. If you are planning to move or unplug a computer without a battery, it must be shut down first to avoid damage. Before shutting the computer down, make sure to close all open applications to avoid losing unsaved work. Upon turning the computer back on and logging in, the GNOME® desktop will be empty, with no applications running. Background tasks will be cancelled upon shutdown. Your files will still be present where they were saved, however.



The Shutdown dialog box

Restarting the computer shuts the computer down, then turns immediately turns it back on. Restarting is used to help troubleshoot issues that may come up, and is often the first step in troubleshooting a computer.

A Visual Overview of the GNOME® Shell

Application Menu:

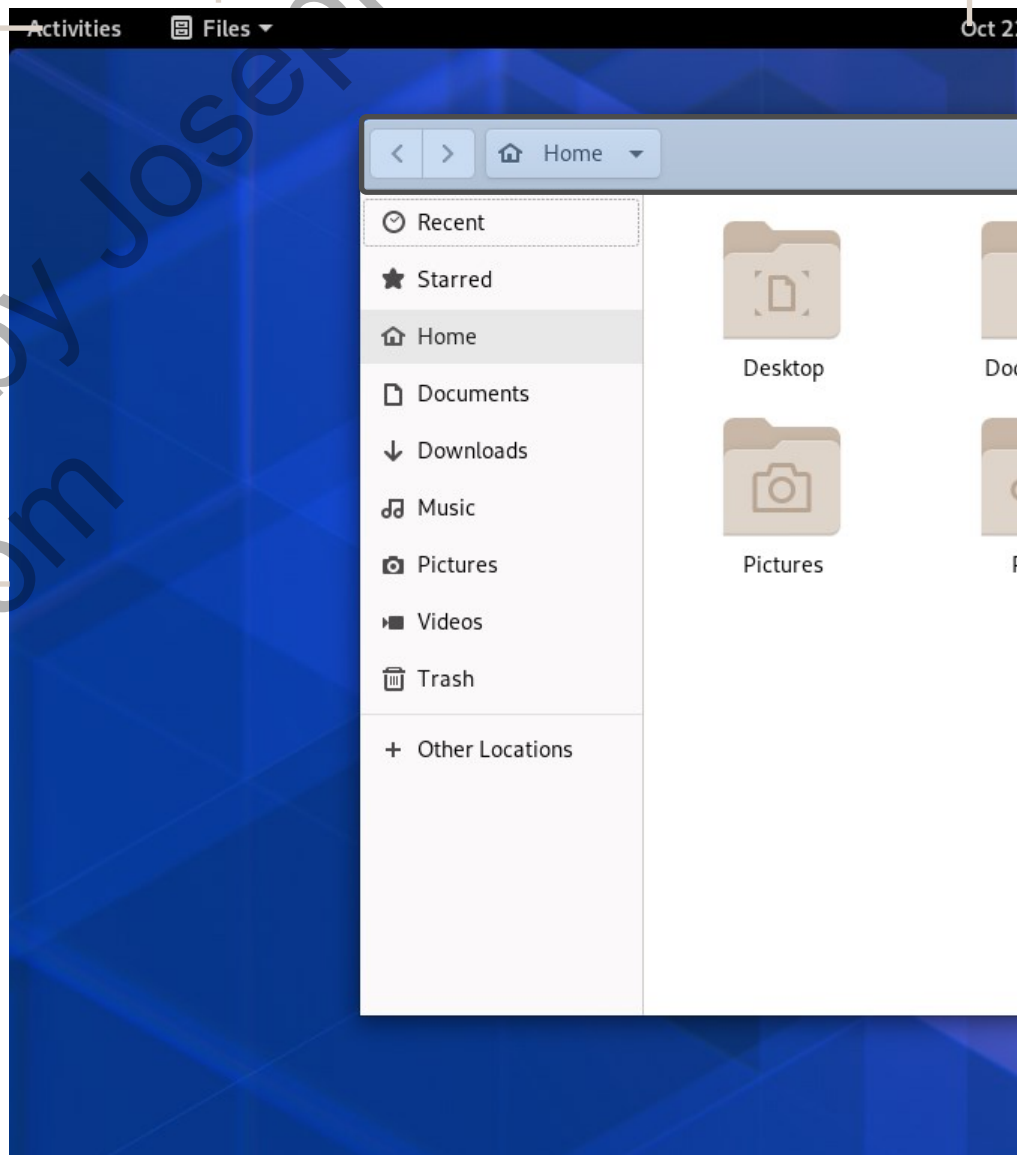
A small list of options for the application.

Calendar:

Shows the weather, a calendar, and the notification area

Activities Menu:

Shows all applications running on the computer, and start new applications



Desktop:

Application windows will appear here.

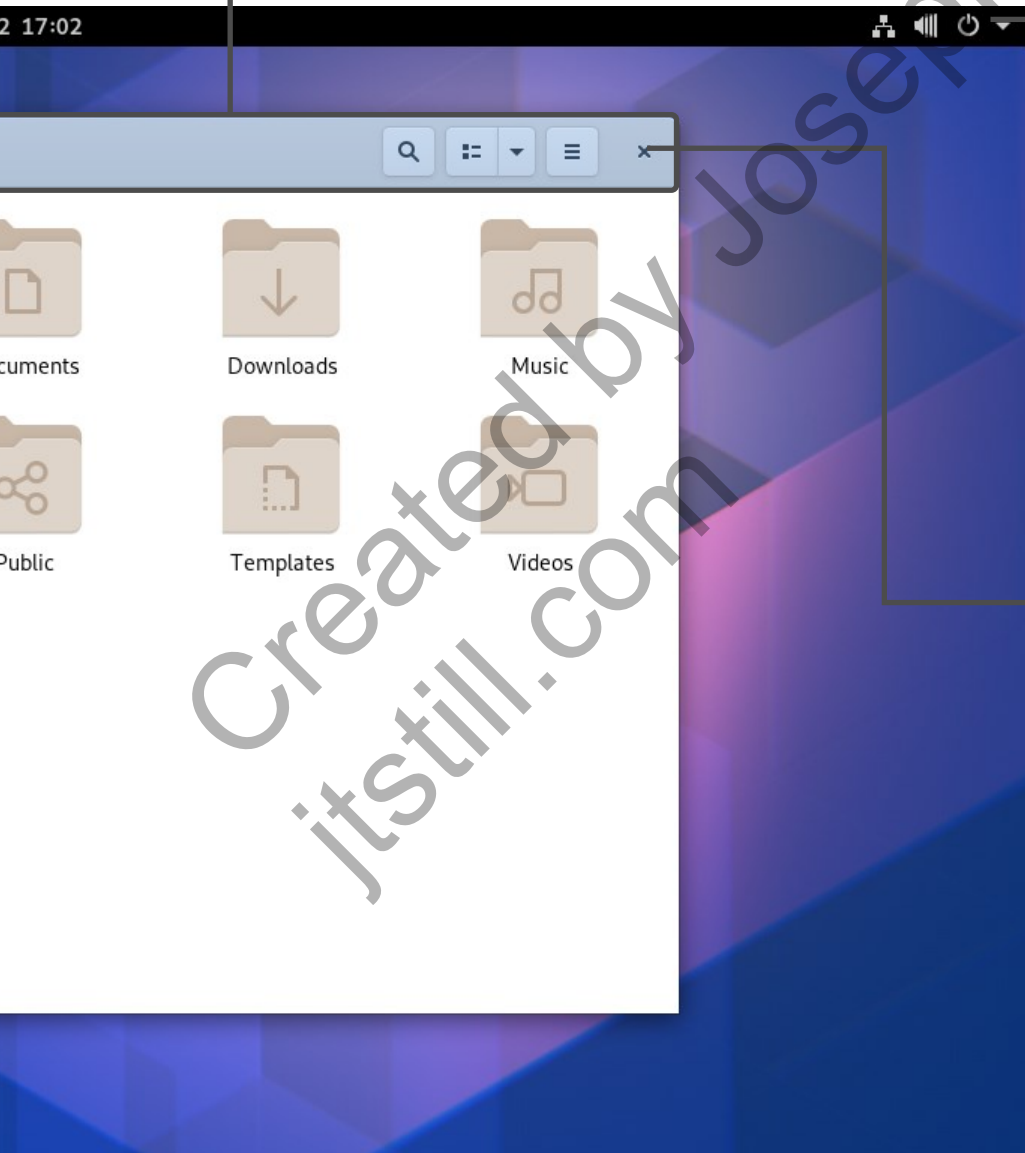
If any files are saved to the Desktop folder, they will appear here as well.

The image can be changed by right clicking the Desktop and selecting "Change Background"

Title Bar

Many applications have buttons located on the title bar other than the Close button. These buttons are specific to the application. Refer to the applications documentation for more details on it's functionality.

Right click an empty area of the title bar to view additional options for the window, such as Minimize (hides the window on the Desktop, but not in the Activities Overview), and Maximize (Makes the window take up the entire screen). A window can also be maximized by double clicking the title bar.



Power Menu:
Configure network and sound. Also allows shutting down and logging out.

Close Button:
Closes the window. A window will cease to exist when closed, and will not appear on the Desktop or in the Activities Overview.