

Linux desktop environments

On a Linux system, several desktop environments can be installed, and a user can choose which environment to use.

The default on most Linux systems is Gnome 3. However, this desktop has two drawbacks: it is quite different than other desktops, in use and looks. and it is quite heavy on the graphical hardware, making it less suitable for some of our older pcs. For new accounts on the Sterrewacht computers, the default has been switched to [Cinnamon](#)

Choosing a session

The graphical login screen has a “session” menu, where you can make your choice. Note that you will log in immediately after entering username and password, so make your choice before pressing enter in the password field. Your choice will be stored (in a file called `.dmmrc`) to be used as your personal default in later sessions, unless overridden by a new menu choice.

Available desktops

Cinnamon

A desktop with a traditional look, but based on the latest libraries and technologies, including 3d desktop effects, if desired.

[more information, tips & tricks](#)

Gnome

A desktop environment that attempts to integrate the look of mobile operating systems (tablets, smart phones) into the desktop.

Starting with [Fedora 21](#), the Gnome desktop is getting back some flexibility and might be a good choice to use, especially since it is once again possible to add back useful desktop features (menu, bottom bar with icons for running applications, etc) in stead of completely trying to emulate a tablet.

[more information, tips & tricks](#)

KDE

A feature rich desktop environment, ideal for users who want to be able to control all the details.

[more information, tips & tricks](#)

MATE

A fork of the old Gnome (version 2) desktop, with the conventional look of a desktop.

[more information, tips & tricks](#)

LXDE

A lightweight desktop environment, suitable even for the oldest, most limited computers (or for people who want the full cpu power of their desktop for computations, instead of eye candy). (not available on (most of) the computers of the Lorentz institute, but it can be installed if desired)

[more information, tips & tricks](#)

XFCE

Another nice and simple, lightweight desktop environment.

[more information, tips & tricks](#)

How to choose a suitable desktop

For the biggest part, it comes down to personal taste. But for a small part, some advice may be helpful.

- Do you want to have your desktop work like a tablet, and somewhat like Windows 8? Then try [Gnome](#)
- Do you want a desktop with nice looking 3D effects? Then try [Cinnamon](#), [\[KDE\]](#) or [Gnome](#), if your computer can handle it.
- Do you want a traditional desktop with a program menu, task bar etc? Try [KDE](#), [Cinnamon](#), [Mate](#) or [LXDE](#)
- Do you want good performance on an older or more limited computer (simple graphics card, or less than 3 GB memory)? Then [XFCE](#) and [LXDE](#) might be the best choice, and [Mate](#) might also do the job.
- If you like a very minimal environment, with an empty desktop, and everything under a right-click menu, try [Openbox](#)

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