

# Font use within Ubuntu

Version: 1.0  
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Supporting information. Sed ut perspiciatis unde omnis iste natus error sit voluptatem accusantium doloremque laudantium, totam rem aperiam, eaque ipsa quae ab illo inventore veritatis et quasi architecto beatae.

Change history

| Version | Date | Author | Comments |
|---------|------|--------|----------|
| 1.0     |      |        |          |
|         |      |        |          |

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Ubuntu

Ubuntu Light

Ubuntu

Ubuntu Regular

Ubuntu

Ubuntu Medium

Ubuntu

Ubuntu Bold

*Ubuntu*

Ubuntu Italic

Ubuntu

Ubuntu Mono Regular

Ubuntu

Ubuntu Mono Bold

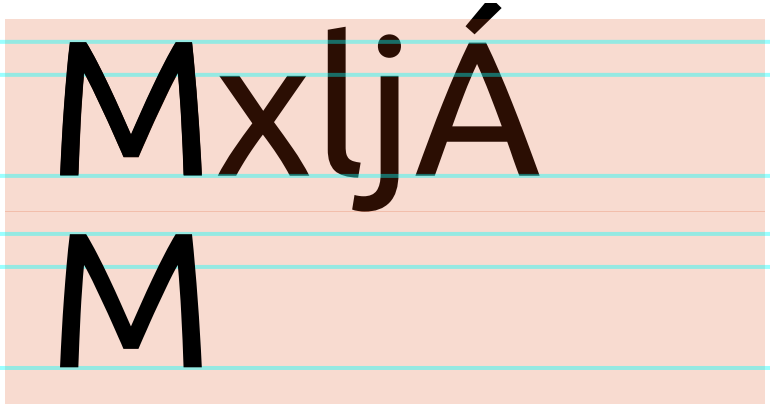
*Ubuntu*

Ubuntu mono Regular Italic

Ubuntu

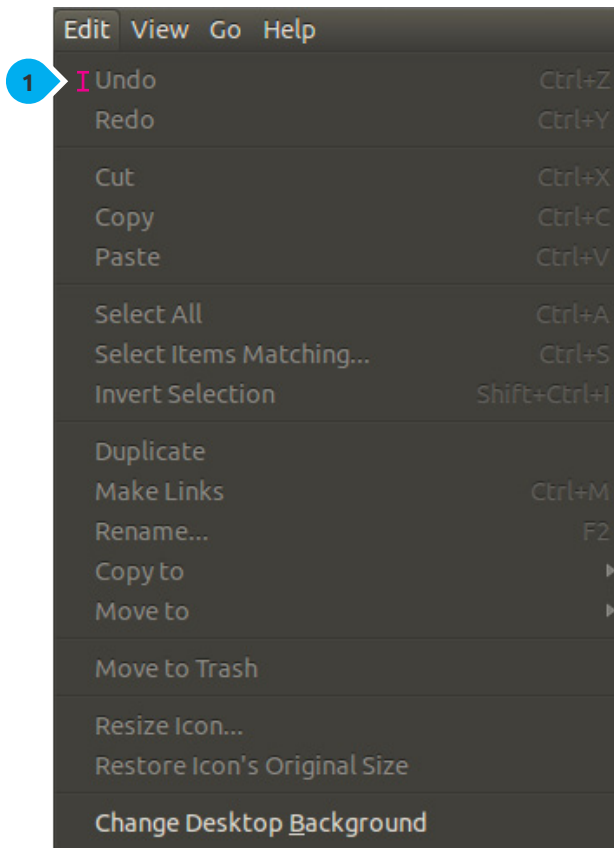
Ubuntu Condensed

as a line of text incorp



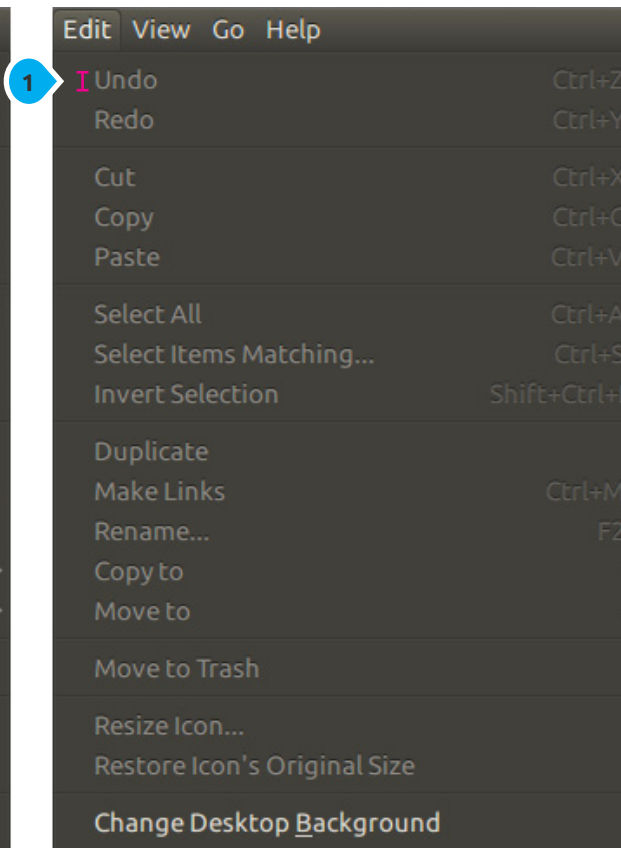
EM size

Auto-hinting: Medium



2

Auto-hinting: None



2

The base size of text, set at 15px, is currently being resized by the system's auto-font hinting, set by default to Medium, to 14.6px.

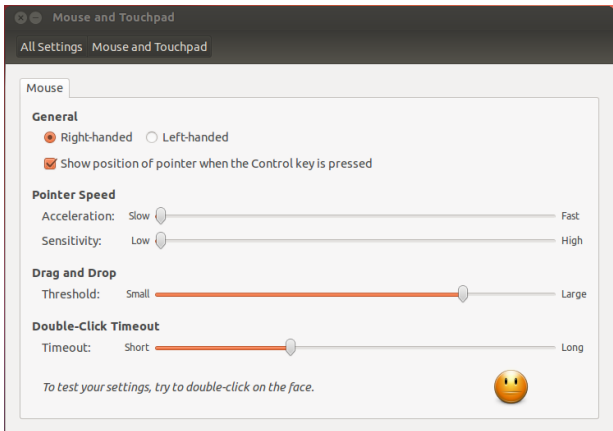
This has several effects on how the font is rendered, including changes to:

- Font size**  
Auto-hinting: Medium – 14.6px  
Auto-hinting: None – 15px
- Element width**  
Auto-hinting: Medium – 329px  
Auto-hinting: None – 338px

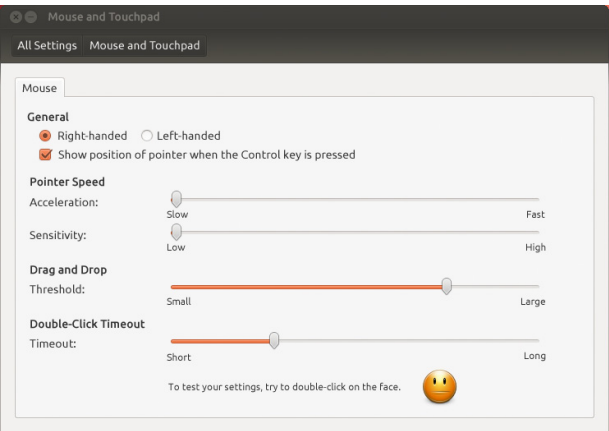
#### Recommendation

Turn off Auto-hinting, at least where the Ubuntu font is employed, thereby return the sizing and spacing to the intended values.

Font size: 15px



Font size: 14px



Ubuntu 12.04 uses the largest base font size of the competitors analysed.

|                |      |
|----------------|------|
| Windows 8/7/XP | 11px |
| Mac OS X 10.7  | 13px |
| Google Chrome  | 12px |
| Ubuntu 12.04   | 15px |

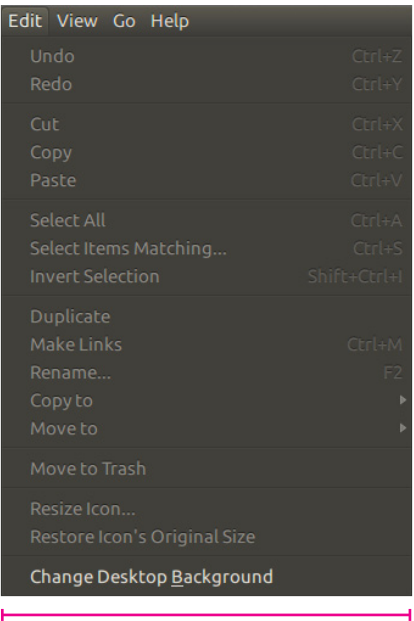
Recommendation

Reduce base font size by 1px to 14px to improve legibility by reducing visual clutter and increasing screen real-estate. For example, a menu using 14px can be significantly smaller while maintaining legibility:

- 1. Font size: 15px  
Width – 338px  
Height – 486px
- 2. Font size: 14px  
Width – 329px  
Height – 449px

Ubuntu is a robust font which benefits from wide leading – displayed at large sizes with tight leading leads to degraded legibility. A slightly smaller font size with wider leading optimises legibility in this instance.

Font size: 15px



1

Font size: 14px



2

## Current scale

XX-Large 30px

X-Large 20px

Large 17px

Medium 15px

Small 13px

## Recommended scale

Headline 17px

Body 14px

List 13px

Small 12px

Extra small 10px

Ubuntu 12.04 also utilises both the most font variations and oddly, the least in a given area of the comparison systems.

Nine variations in font size and weight can be identified within the Dash with up to six being in use at any one time. In contrast, a single font size is used throughout the desktop. Comparing this to the variations observed in the competitor analysis, deliberate and restrained use of font size can aid in creating greater visual rhythm, pattern and harmony.

Currently the following sizes are the guidelines for setting font sizes within Ubuntu:

|      |          |
|------|----------|
| 13px | Small    |
| 15px | Medium   |
| 17px | Large    |
| 20px | X-Large  |
| 30px | XX-Large |

On occasion, sizing falls outside these recommendations, hindering rhythm, hierarchy and visual harmony.

We can bring a visual harmony to the text used in an interface through the use of a ratio based system to create a typographic scale appropriate to the given project.

An online tool created by Tim Brown, Type Manager for Adobe Typekit, modularscale.com helps us to create a modular scale based on a key number relevant to the given layout or project and a series of established ratios.

Creating a modular scale using this system to give us an harmonious appearance when using 14px as the base font size and 12px, a suitable size for small text, as our important number with a ratio of 1:√2 – Aug. fourth/

dim. fifth or 1:1.414, creates the following scale when rounded to the nearest whole number: 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 17, 23...

By introducing an extra measure at the halfway point between Body and Small, thereby creating additional flexibility, we arrive at the following scale:

|      |             |
|------|-------------|
| 17px | Headline    |
| 14px | Body        |
| 13px | List        |
| 12px | Small       |
| 10px | Extra small |

The above uses 14px as the base font size, from which the remaining sizes are calculated. It could therefore be stated, in this instance, 14px is equal to 1em. If the remaining sizes are then calculated as ems, the following is true:

|       |             |
|-------|-------------|
| 1.212 | Headline    |
| 1     | Body        |
| 0.928 | List        |
| 0.857 | Small       |
| 0.707 | Extra small |

Using the above calculation, a consistent rhythm to font sizing can be employed regardless of the intended application. For example, design for TV requires much larger font sizes than that for desktop.

Employing the above scaling will allow for the creation of a typographic scale that is consistent to both TV and desktop regardless of the starting base size as the headline is always 1.212 em or 1.212 times larger than the expressed base.

## Recommendation

Assuming a reduced base sizing of 14px for the desktop, the following typographic scale should be employed, where sizes are rounded to the nearest pixel:

| Pixel | Em    | Name        |
|-------|-------|-------------|
| 17px  | 1.212 | Headline    |
| 14px  | 1     | Body        |
| 13px  | 0.928 | List        |
| 12px  | 0.857 | Small       |
| 10px  | 0.707 | Extra small |

Typographic sizes should be measured based on ems, rather than specified pixels.