

might type `nohup gedit`. Try this now. Then close the terminal window, and see what happens (or, actually, what doesn't happen).

The reason Gedit doesn't quit is that `nohup` tells the new program to ignore any future "hangup signals," which is to say Gedit is told ignore requests to terminate that are sent to it when the terminal quits.

See also Tip 206, on page 219 of *Ubuntu Kung Fu*, which describes how to use the `screen` command to create a command-line login that's independent of any terminal window.

3

Use Ubuntu's Built-in Download Manager



Downloading big files that take a long time to arrive, such as new Ubuntu installation ISO images, can be fraught with difficulties. You'll need to have a perfect connection for the duration of the download (not always possible with wifi), and the remote server may sometimes drop the connection. Restarting from scratch to download a 670MB file when 669MB of it has arrived fine can be a very frustrating experience!

The solution is `wget`, Ubuntu's built-in command-line download manager. It runs at the command line, and all you need do is specify the complete URL for the download file, including the `http://` or `ftp://` components, as applicable. For example, at the time of writing, the Ubuntu 8.04.1 release can be found at <http://releases.ubuntu.com/hardy/ubuntu-8.04.1-desktop-i386.iso>, so to download this I would type the following into a terminal window:

```
$ wget http://releases.ubuntu.com/hardy/ubuntu-8.04.1-desktop-i386.iso
```

As the download progresses, you'll see a percentage figure progress display, along with figures showing how much has been downloaded and the speed of the transfer. If `wget` loses the connection for any reason, it'll automatically try again and attempt to resume where it left off. If you want to quit the download, type `Ctrl+C`. Don't forget to clear up the partially downloaded file.

Because large downloads can take a long time, you might want to use `nohup` with `wget` to avoid `wget` quitting when the terminal window that started it is closed. This will effectively invisibly download the file in the

background and will persist even if you log out (to stop the download if needed, type `killall wget` into a terminal window/virtual console). See Tip 299, on page 323 of *Ubuntu Kung Fu*, for more information. Alternatively, you might consider using `screen` to start the `wget` download in a background command-line instance that you can switch in and out of in order to check progress—see Tip 206, on page 219 of *Ubuntu Kung Fu*, for more information.

You might also be interested in `kget`, which can be installed using Synaptic (search for the `kget` package; don't install the KDE4 version) and provides a GUI front end to `wget`. It's officially a component of the KDE desktop and is designed to work with the Konqueror web browser but works fine under the GNOME desktop and Firefox of Ubuntu. Once installed, you'll find it on the Internet menu. You can drag and drop download links to its program window to start them downloading or click Settings → Show Drop Target for a small window onto which you can drag and drop the download links, like with some Windows download managers. (Tip: Right-click the floating window's minimize/maximize buttons, and select Always On Top; this will stop it from falling behind other program windows.)

4

Turn Your Desktop into Your /home Folder



Do you use your desktop as a dumping ground for files and pretty much ignore your actual `/home` folder, which is where you *should* store things? If so, you might be interested in this tweak, which effectively makes Ubuntu use your `/home` folder for the desktop, instead of the actual `/home/username/Desktop` folder. Anything saved to the desktop, such as files/folders dropped there, will be placed in your `/home` folder. Additionally, anything in your `/home` folder will appear on the desktop.

To try this, start `gconf-editor`, navigate to `/apps/nautilus/preferences`, and put a check alongside `desktop_is_home_dir`. Then log out and back in again.

Remember that the contents of your desktop haven't vanished. They're still in the Desktop folder in your `/home` folder.

5

Install the GNOME Wallpapers



The GNOME Project supplies the desktop technology used by Ubuntu, and the default installation of GNOME includes several very pretty wallpapers that sadly aren't included with Ubuntu. However, you can get them by using Synaptic to search for and install the `gnome-backgrounds` package. Once installed, just right-click the desktop as usual, and select Change Desktop Background. The new wallpapers will be included in the list.

6

Switch to a Lightweight File Manager



Thunar is the default file manager used in the stripped-back Xfce4 desktop of Xubuntu. It starts quickly and has a low-memory footprint, yet it is very powerful and provides all the features you are likely to need. In fact, it beats Nautilus in many departments when it comes to features.¹ It can be used to replace Nautilus within the Ubuntu desktop for some operations, although bear in mind that Nautilus windows will still appear sometimes, such as when using Nautilus CD-R/DVD Creator.

1. One feature of Thunar I particularly appreciate is the ability to rubber-band-select many files in list view, something Nautilus doesn't allow. Thunar also includes the ability to define your own right-click functions, something that is possible in Nautilus but only if you add the Nautilus Actions component, as described in Tip 295, on page 333.

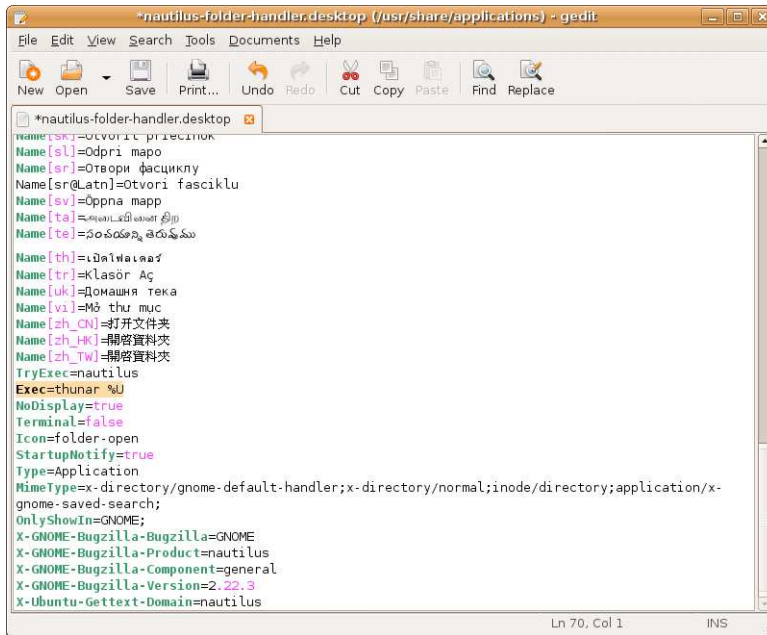


Figure 1.1: Configuring the system to use an alternative file manager (see Tip 6)

Follow these steps to switch to Thunar:

1. Start Synaptic, and search for and install the thunar and thunar-archive-plugin packages. After installation, you can run Thunar by typing thunar in a terminal window.
2. To cause Thunar to open whenever you click an entry in the Places menu, you'll need to edit a configuration file: open a terminal window, and type the following:

```
$ gksu gedit /usr/share/applications/nautilus-folder-handler.desktop
```

Scroll to the bottom of the file, and look for the line that reads `Exec=nautilus --no-desktop %U`. Change it so it reads `Exec=thunar %U`. For an example taken from my text PC, see Figure 1.1.

Then save the file and test the changes by selecting Places → Home.

This tip works equally well for any alternative file manager. Others you might like to try are Konqueror (KDE's file manager), Dolphin (KDE4's file manager), and Rox-filer, a stripped-down file manager that is extremely lightweight. Just use Synaptic to search for and install `konqueror`, `dolphin`, or `rox-filer`, respectively. When altering the earlier `nautilus-folder-handler.desktop` file to make Rox-filer the default, change the line to read `Exec=rox-filer`, without the `%U`; Dolphin and Konqueror still require the `%U` after the command. Note that Rox-filer's configuration is carried out by right-clicking a blank spot in its program window. It doesn't use a traditional menu system, like most application windows.

If you want a lightweight command-line file manager, install Midnight Commander (search for and install the `mc` package using Synaptic). Then type `mc` at the prompt to start the program. Once it's started, hit `Alt+1`, use the cursor keys to highlight Contents, and then hit `Enter`. This will display the help file explaining how to use the program. If you ever used Norton Commander back in the days of DOS, you'll find Midnight Commander very familiar, because it's modeled on that product.

To go back to using Nautilus after installing Thunar (or Konqueror/Dolphin/Rox-Filer), just edit the `nautilus-folder-handler.desktop` file again, and change the line you edited to read `Exec=nautilus --no-desktop %U`. Then save the file, and log out and back in again.

7

Play MP3/Ogg Files at the Command Line



So, you've tweaked Ubuntu into a state of disrepair. Any hope of a GUI is a pipe dream, at least for the moment. While you hack away fixing things, wouldn't it be nice to have some music to console you at the console?

Just switch to an unused virtual console, log in, and type `sudo apt-get install vlc`. VLC is the GUI media playback application mentioned in Tip 230, on page 249 of *Ubuntu Kung Fu*, but it can also run with a text-mode interface—just start it with the `-l ncurses` command option (note that's a capital *I*, not *L*). For example, to play back `filename.mp3`, I would type `vlc -l ncurses filename.mp3`. Multiple files can be specified one after the other, thus creating a playlist, or a wildcard can be used to play