



MX-Fluxbox Documentation

The fluxbox implementation on MX Linux

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I. Fluxbox

What is Fluxbox?

Fluxbox is a [Window Manager](#) (unlike Xfce, which is a Desktop Environment) that controls the placement and appearance of windows. For history and overview, consult the [Wikipedia](#).

How do I start?

Right-click anywhere on the desktop to get a menu.

- The menu is set by `~/.fluxbox/menu-mx`. Alternative menus in `~/.fluxbox/menus_other/`
- For further menus, do a web search on "fluxbox menu example"

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What is that dock across the top?

That is called the toolbar, and it's not really a dock (see Docks, below). Its width and placement can be set with the options available by right-clicking or middle-clicking (=scroll wheel) the clock or pager on the toolbar—if that doesn't work for some reason, click Menu > Settings > Window and toolbar > Toolbar. Height is set in `~/.fluxbox/init/` :

```
session.screen0.toolbar.height: 0
```

If a zero is there, it means that the selected style will set the height. Otherwise, a value of 20 to 25 is often comfortable.

The toolbar contains the following default components (L-R):

clock

- To adjust the clock to 12h or 24h, right-click and click 12h or 24h, whichever shows. If that doesn't work, select "Edit clock format."
- 24h: `%H:%M`, 12h: `%I:%M`.
- The default is 12h time and date in day/short month format: `%I:%M %b %d`. Many other time/date options are available: <https://mxlinux.org/wiki/other/time-formats-in-scripts/>

pager

- Allows you to switch workspace; same as Control + F1/F2/ etc., or using the scroll wheel over an empty section of the desktop. Number and name are set in the `~/.fluxbox/init`. "W" stands for "Workspace."

iconbar

- Here open apps will show an icon, with various window options available by right-clicking the relevant icon (including the toolbar itself) > iconbar mode. Default for MX-Fluxbox is All Windows.



Window options available with a right click

systemtray AKA systray

- Equivalent of Notification Area in Xfce. Default components set in `~/.fluxbox/init`; apps that have a systemtray option will show there when launched.

You can move or delete any of the toolbar components in `~/.fluxbox/init/`, which by default are set up in this way:

`clock, prevworkspace, workspacename, nextworkspace, iconbar, systemtray`

How can I make it look like other legacy systems such as Windows?

Click Menu > Look > Toolbar > Legacy

How can I get rid of desktop items I don't want?

Menu > Out of sight > ...

The next time you log in anything enabled in the startup file will re-appear.

How can I change or add a menu entry?

Menu > Settings > Configure > Menu. The syntax is: [category] (name) {command} – be sure to use brackets, parentheses and braces correctly.

Example 1: change “Browser” to open Opera instead of Firefox

- Find the line with the word Browser (use Ctrl+F if necessary)

```
[exec] (Browser) {firefox}
```
- Double-click the word “firefox” in the command part so it is highlighted, then type “opera” and save, producing this result:

```
[exec] (Browser) {opera}
```

Example 2: add Skype to the menu

- Decide where you want it to show up; for this example, let's assume you want to put it under “Communicate” and that you want to label it as “video”
- Introduce a new line and follow the pattern: [exec] (menu entry) {command}
- The result will look something like this:

```
[submenu] (Communicate)
    [exec] (Email) {thunderbird}
    [exec] (Chat) {hexchat}
    [exec] (Video) {skypeforlinux}
[end]
```

NOTE: as the second example shows, the command to use may not always be obvious, so if necessary open All apps (F6), right-click the entry you are interested in > Edit and copy the correct full command for the menu.

What else should I know about the windows?

Properties

- Resize: Alt + right click near the corner you want to change and drag.
- Move: Alt + left click and drag.

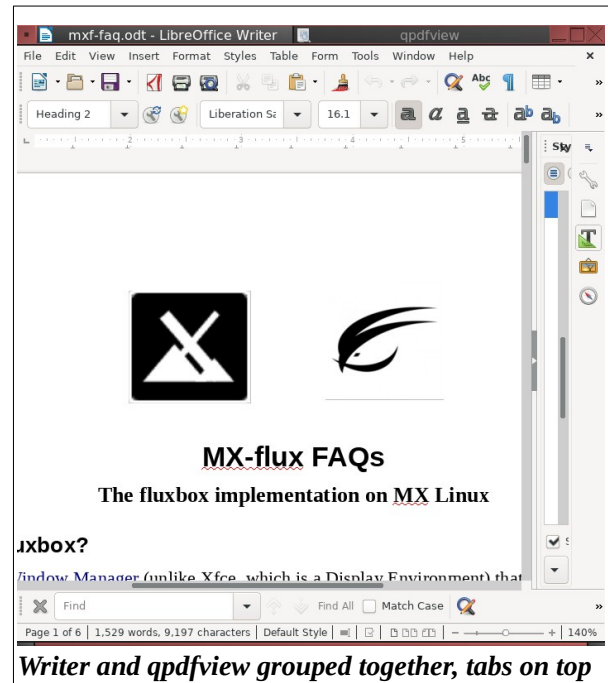
You can combine multiple windows into one window with tabs across the top by simply Ctrl-Clicking and holding the titlebar of one window and dragging and dropping it on another window. Reverse the procedure to separate them again.

More:

<http://fluxbox.sourceforge.net/docbook/en/html/chap-tabs.html>

I see styles in the menu, what are those?

Styles are simple text files that tell fluxbox how to generate the appearance of the window and toolbar components. Fluxbox ships with a large number in `/usr/share/fluxbox/styles/` that show in Menu > Look > Style, and many more can be found online with a web search on "fluxbox styles."



Styles can include a background image, but that is blocked in MX-Fluxbox by default with the top lines in Menu > Settings > Configure > Overlay. To allow the style to determine the background, place a hash mark in front to the line so that it looks like this:

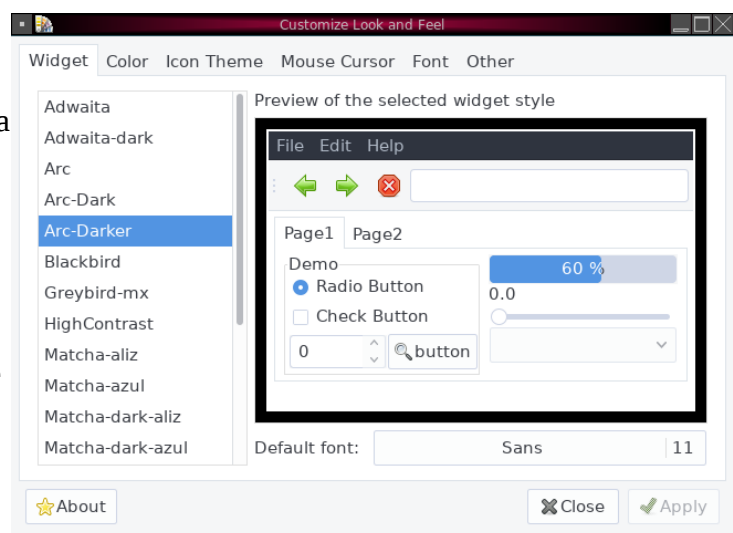
! The following line will prevent styles from setting the background.
`#background: none`

If you like a style but want to change certain traits, copy it to `~/fluxbox/styles/`, rename it, and make your changes (consult Ubuntu style guide under Links, below). One of the default styles for MX-Fluxbox in that folder, for instance, is a modified form of "Twice" copied and renamed "MX-Twice," then modified to center the window titles.

What are themes and how do I manage them?

Themes in MX-Fluxbox are GTK 2.0 themes; a number are installed by default and others can be found with a web search. A GTK theme controls items such as the panel color, the backgrounds for windows and tabs, how an application will look when it is active vs. inactive, buttons, check-boxes, etc. They range from very dark to very light.

The default theme for MX-Fluxbox is Arc-Darker. It can be changed by clicking Menu > Look > Theme, bringing up a theme selector (lxappearance) which makes it very easy to see and choose the other possibilities.



The theme selector showing the selection of Arc-Darker

I can't read some of the texts, can I do something about that?

You can adjust the font being used by a theme using the theme selector; default for MX-Fluxbox is Sans 11. More detailed control is available by using the `~/fluxbox/overlay` file. For instance, this set of commands might be tried to make the text generally larger:

```
# fonts-----
menu.frame.font: PT Sans-12:regular
menu.title.font: PT Sans-12:regular
toolbar.clock.font: PT Sans-11:regular
toolbar.workspace.font: PT Sans-11:regular
toolbar.iconbar.focused.font: PT Sans-11:regular
toolbar.iconbar.unfocused.font: PT Sans-11:regular
window.font: Lato-9
```

For other font options, consult the Links at the end of this document.

Can I change the background?

First make sure the overlay file is blocking the style from determining the background. Then click Menu > Look > Backgrounds to see the available choices. The list that pops up from the menu entry includes any user backgrounds (`~/fluxbox/backgrounds`) and system backgrounds (`/usr/share/backgrounds`), separated by a horizontal line. This setup allows you to put your preferred backgrounds in the user folder and be able to select among the group with a simple click.

Conky

MX-Fluxbox users can make use of the default conky set for MX Linux by clicking Menu > Look > Conky to bring up a selection box for MX-Conky. **NOTE:** using MX-Conky while in fluxbox instead of Conky Manager prevents the fluxbox settings from overriding the Xfce ones—and vice versa.

For more complicated conkies, you may need to make use of a compositor. Click Menu > Settings > Config > Startup, and uncomment the line about a compositor so it looks like this: *compton &*

Users on MX-19 will likely need to change a setting to gain transparency, and that setting may unfortunately not be the same for all conkies. One that often works is this: after opening the conky in MX-Conky, click on the Edit button and search the text that pops up for the line:

```
own_window_transparent no
```

and replace it with:

```
own_window_transparent yes
```

Another that works sometimes is to change (if present) *own_window yes* instead of *own_window no*.

Save any changed text with the ending “_fb” so that you will not override that conky for Xfce users.

To autostart a specific conky, open Menu > Settings > Configure > Startup, look for the line that starts with **conky -p 5** (it may be commented out), change the conky location to the one you want and uncomment if necessary.

What terminals are available?

- F4 (or Menu > Terminal) = Drop-down Xfce4-terminal
- F2 (or: Menu > Run...) = little command terminal (fbrun)
- F2, and enter *xfce4-terminal* to get a movable Xfce terminal.

Can I use my own keystroke combinations?

Yes. Many are listed by default in Menu > Settings > Configure > Keys, though not clear that [all of them work. The names of a couple of the keys are a bit obscure:

- Mod1 = Alt
- Mod4 = Logo key (Windows, Apple)

More: <http://fluxbox.sourceforge.net/docbook/en/html/c296.html>

There are 6 dedicated function keys in MX-Fluxbox (see top of *keys* file to change):

- F1: MX-Fluxbox documentation
- F2: Run command
- F3: File manager
- F4: Drop-down terminal
- F5: MX Tools
- F6: All apps

Are there options available for apps that I launch?

When an app is open, you can right-click the title bar and set any of the options available. For instance, you can select to remember workspace, size, location, etc. Your choices are recorded in *~/.fluxbox/apps* and allow you to control many window specifics.

What screen options exist?

- Brightness: right-click the battery icon in the systray
- Capture: if you have a Print Screen (AKA Print, PrtSc, etc.) key, try using that; if that doesn't work or exist, click Menu > Accessories > Capture
- Screensaver: Menu > Accessories > Screensaver

I have read about the slit: what is that?

The slit is a container for [dockapps](#) that can be located at various locations on the desktop:

- TopLeft, TopCenter, TopRight
- LeftCenter, RightCenter
- BottomLeft, BottomCenter, BottomRight

These small applications came originally from Window Maker and can fit into those areas. You can search the default repo for dockapps with this terminal command:

```
apt-cache search dockapp
```

Many available in the repos may not work well, but it's worth taking a look.



Gkrellm monitors

One very interesting and useful dockapp not found with that apt-cache search is the monitor stack [gkrellm](#), installed by default in MX-Fluxbox. It is available by clicking Menu > System > Monitors and has many configuration options (right-click on the top label or on one of the charts), [many skins](#) and [many plugins](#). A few skins are installed by default, and can be reviewed and selected by clicking Shift-PageUp

A handy plugin can be installed from the repos **gkrellweather**, which works well when the version in the MX repos is installed (the Debian one is broken at the moment).

A new and powerful command-line app for creating desktop launchers in the slit called **wmalauncher** is available. For details consult Section III of this document.

Are docks possible?

External docks such as plank often do not work easily with fluxbox. But three ready-made docks created with wmalauncher are available by default: Menu > Look > Docks. Those ready-made docks come in small (3 launchers), medium (5) and large (7)--you can just right-click the ones you don't want to remove them. Furthermore, you can easily make your own using the Dock Template: Menu > Look > Slit launchers > Create. This template exploits the ability to use simple application names (pointing to the desktop files in /usr/share/applications). A new tool, MX Dockmaker, is in development for this task.



Premade dock (medium)

There are many possible dock options which are covered in Section III of this document.

TIP: if you want the individual launchers to remain in the same order, add a small time delay “**sleep 0.1**” after the final “**&**” of each line. (Thanks to user PPC for this solution!)

Can I make use of bluetooth devices?

Yes. It is disabled by default, but to set it up click menu > Settings > Bluetooth. An icon will appear in the systray that you can right click to see a menu with many options, including Exit.

II. iDesk

This document makes use of material in the README file in /usr/share/idesk.

Idesk is a program developed in 2005. It draws desktop icons for users of minimal window managers such as fluxbox. Each icon will execute a shell command on a configurable action. The icons can be moved on the desktop by dragging them, and the icons will remember their positions on start-up.

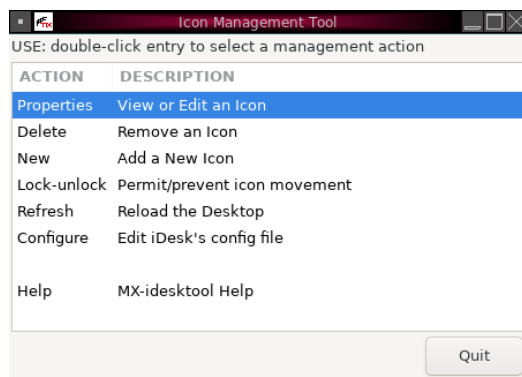
It is distinguished from **wmalauncher**, also installed by default, in that the icons can be located anywhere on the desktop, not just in a slit position, and moved at will.

Usage

iDesk requires a configuration file ~/.ideskrc, which is installed and configured by MX-Fluxbox. Many options are available, see details [in the Wiki](#) (from the README file).

Each icon created is defined in a *.lnk file located in ~/.idesktop. There are many options available such as tooltips, colors, etc. (> Wiki). For the general format, consult the default Home link.

Though icons can be set up manually, MX Linux Devs and users have modernized and adapted an old tool to produce mx-idesktool.



mx-idesktool dashboard

Using this tool greatly facilitates the use of iDesk on MX-Fluxbox. It is very straightforward and should raise no questions about its use.

Dragging

Basic use of a desktop icon (set up in ~/.ideskrc) is as follows.

Action	Mouse
Execute	Left click
Drag	Right click hold, release to stop

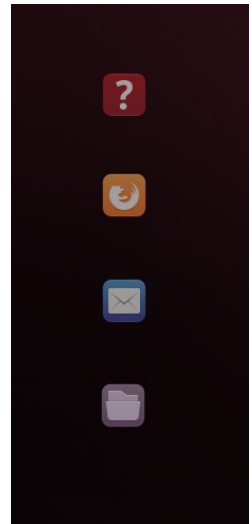
Locking

Though individual icons can't be locked, all icons can be.

For example, the default desktop contains four icons in the upper left corner. It is easy to move them by mistake when clicking, and then the symmetry is ruined. So they are locked in place.

There are two ways to do this. The original X,Y values for the default icons can be restored manually by editing them in ~/.ideesktop:

FAQ	90, 60
Firefox	90, 160
Thunderbird	90, 260
Thunar	90, 360



Default icon group

Alternatively, the user can click Menu > Look > Desktop icons and double-click the entry "Permit/Prevent icon movement." Double-click the entry again to unlock.

III. Wmalauncher

This document is based on an excerpt from the README file in the installation folder and also material from the man file (in a terminal: *man wmalauncher*).

Description

Developed by Sébastien Ballet, *wmalauncher* is an easy-to-use and highly configurable command-line application launcher especially designed for fluxbox, but which also works well under blackbox, openbox and windowmaker. Features:

- Provides support for
 - PNG, SVG, XPM icons
 - .desktop files
 - Configuration files
 - Mouse hover event
 - Icon color/grayscale mode
 - Color gradient
- Permits customization of
 - Button appearance
 - Icon brightness/contrast/gamma
 - Tooltip

It creates one or more icons in the slit, whose location is defined in the *init* file.

Usage

There are three ways to create a launcher for a given application with *wmalauncher*:

1. Probably the easiest for everyday use is to pass the .desktop file of the target application on the command line :

```
$ wmalauncher --desktop-file mozilla-firefox:firefox &
```

In the example above, *wmalauncher* will use the first .desktop file found in the "desktop file search path" that matches mozilla-firefox.desktop or firefox.desktop. Note: as in the above example, it easier is to omit the extension (i.e., just *firefox* instead of *firefox.desktop*).

2. Pass the command to execute and the icon to display on the command line, as in example below :

```
$ wmalauncher --command /usr/bin/firefox --icon firefox.png &
```

In the example above, *wmalauncher* will use the first icon found in the "icon search paths" that match firefox.png (note: the extension can be omitted).

3. Pass a configuration file (details below) containing the settings for the target application on the command line :

```
$ wmalauncher --config /usr/share/wmalauncher/lighting.conf \  
--prefix mozilla-firefox &
```

In the example above, wmalauncher loads the settings from the configuration file /usr/share/wmalauncher/lighting.conf, then, configures the command, icon and tooltip-text according to the settings dedicated to the application firefox.

MX-Fluxbox

To facilitate everyday use, a template is made available (~/.fluxbox/scripts/wml-dock-template). With this template, users can easily create a single launcher as well as a string of them to serve as a “dock.”

For instance, MX-Fluxbox uses the template to create a default menu icon when the toolbar is in legacy mode using this command:

```
wmalauncher --command xfce4-appfinder --icon /usr/local/share/icons/mxfcelogo-  
rounded.png -w 48 -x &
```

That produces this launcher which, when clicked, opens the menu:



A launcher may be deleted by right-clicking it, if created by including the switch “-x” as above, or by clicking Menu > Out of sight > Slit launcher (in a terminal: *killall wmalauncher*). Details on that new delete feature can be found [in the Wiki](#).

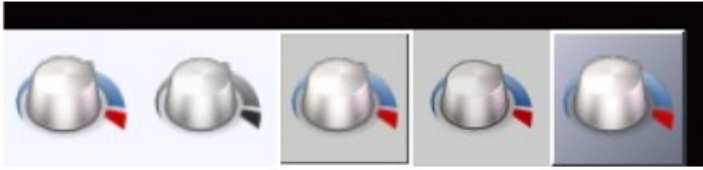
Configuration files

For more about wmalauncher configuration files, see the section "CONFIGURATION FILE FORMAT" in the man page.

Wmalauncher comes with the following pre-defined configuration files in /usr/share/wmalauncher:

- lighting.conf
- multi-effects.conf
- old-school.conf
- frame-onthefly.conf
- wmaker-style.conf

Applying those in the order above to Pulse Audio Volume Control (pavucontrol) gives these different looks:



Each of the predefined configuration files includes a global section for visual settings, along with entries for a large group of applications (details in the Wiki).:

IV. Links

The man files (in terminal or <https://linux.die.net/man/>):

- fluxbox
- fluxbox-keys
- fbrun
- fluxstyle
- fluxbox-remote

<http://fluxbox.sourceforge.net/docbook/en/pdf/fluxbook.pdf>

Basic handbook, somewhat dated but still useful

<https://bbs.archlinux.org/viewtopic.php?id=77729>

Some good general explanations with examples

<https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/Fluxbox>

Some commands are Arch-specific

<https://wiki.ubuntu.com/HowToFluxboxStyles>

<https://ubuntuforums.org/showthread.php?t=617812>

Excellent thread on fluxbox keys

<https://wiki.debian.org/FluxBox>

<https://wiki.debian.org/FluxboxIcon>

<https://github.com/jerry3904/mx-fluxbox>

The GitHub repo of MX-Fluxbox

<https://mxlinux.org/wiki/help-files/help-mx-fluxbox/>

The MX-Fluxbox Wiki entry