

aterm guide - make the aterm terminal look good

v2.0.1, en.

A guide to aterms basic usage and settings

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1. What is aterm?

A terminal emulator (also known as console) is the most basic Linux tool. It simply gives you a nice command prompt where you can do your 'work' by issuing cryptic shell commands like `ls`. There are many terminals for xfree available. Most people know `xterm`, the default terminal installed with xfree. kde comes with a nice terminal called konsole. But there are other alternatives. Let's have a look at aterm.

Aterm is a vt102 terminal, meaning you can use `alt+left/right/up/down` to move between windows in irssi - user guide. It is highly customizable and can be set to look, feel and behave according to most desires. More importantly: it is lightweight, requires close to nothing and depends on few libraries, making it the ideal choice for a light and simple desktop.

1.1. Installing aterm

- Mandrake Linux: aterm is included on the Mandrake Linux install CDs, install as usual using `rpm`.
- Gentoo Linux users can install aterm with the command `USE="-cjk" emerge x11-terms/aterm`. (If you compile aterm with `+cjk` (support for Multi-byte character languages) Scandinavian chars like `æøå ÆØÅ` are screwed! Asia/Japan/civilized part of the world: Go for `+cjk`).
- Packages for Debian, Red Hat, SPARC and Alpha are available on aterms homepage.

2. Aterms basic command line and configuration options

The default terminal window you get from **aterm &** is very dull, and many people are fooled by this to believe aterm is just another useless xterm clone.

aterm can be configured in the files `~/ .Xdefaults` and `~/ .Xresources` or by running it with command line parameters.

You really should configure aterm if you plan on using it. Transparency is good as long as you are running a workstation, thin client users should stick with a plain background color.

The most important basic settings are:

`-ls , +ls` Start as a login-shell/sub-shell; resource `loginShell`.

Aterm defaults to starting in a sub-shell where you lose your environment (your nice command prompt, aliases and other variables) and you get a dull `sh-2.05b$`. Use **aterm -ls** to make aterm inherit your systems settings.

Example `~/ .Xdefaults` setting:

```
aterm*loginShell:true
```

If your distribution did not provide a lovely prompt, then try adding one of the following to your login-script:

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```
export PS1='\[\033[01;32m\]\u@\h \[\033[01;34m\]\W  
\$ \[\033[00m\]'
```

or

```
export PS1='\[\033[01;32m\]\u@\h \[\033[01;33m\]\W  
\$ \[\033[00m\]'
```

(Refer to [tldr:Bash-Prompt-HOWTO](#) for more information)

To make Aterm (and others) display your current path in the windowtitle, add:

```
export PS1=$PS1"\[e]0;\H:\w\a\"
```

Please note that this does not work well with Midnight Commander!

`-sl number`

Save number lines in the scroll back buffer; resource `saveLines`.

The default setting is rather low, you probably want to be able to scroll back a higher number of lines. After some experimenting I found the maximum setting is **32767** lines. Setting 32768 gave jumped back to aterms default setting (`aterm -sl 32767`).

Example `~/.Xdefaults` setting:

```
aterm*saveLines:32767
```

`-bg colour` Window background colour; resource `background`.

`-fg colour` Window foreground colour; resource `foreground`.

If you do not like the default black on white setting, use **-fg** and **-bg** to change the colors. Use the plain color names (like White, Black, Orange, Green, etc). Add Light or Pale in front of the color names for variations

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(PaleGreen, LightSlateBlue, LightSkyBlue, etc).

```
aterm -fg white -bg black
```

Example `~/.Xdefaults` setting:

```
aterm*background:Black aterm*foreground:White
```

Setting up nice default fonts

The syntax for font configuration (from the aterm manpage):

`-fn fontname` Main normal text font; resource font.

`-fb fontname` Main bold text font; resource boldFont.

`-fm fontname` Main multicharacter font; resource mfont.

Use the utility `fontsel` (included in [openmotif](#)) to find a nice font. You can also use `xlsfonts` (included in [xfree](#)) to view all fonts and sizes available on your system:

```
xlsfonts | less
```

Example settings in `~/.Xdefaults`:

```
aterm*font:*-*-fixed-medium-r-normal--*-140-*-*-*-isc
```

```
aterm*boldFont:*-*-fixed-bold-r-normal--*-*-140-*-*-*-*
```

2.1. Making aterm transparent

Turn on/off pseudo transparency mode. In this mode aterm will use part of root background as it's own background, emulating see-through effect; resource transparent

```
-tr , +tr
```

-trsb , Turn on/off pseudo transparent scrollbar. Works the same as **-tr**;
+trsb resource transpscrollbar.

This option allows for darkening/lightening of the background image amount is the %value of the desired brightness, where 100 is the original. if amount is less then 100 - image will be darkened. if amount is less then 0 or more then 100 - image will be lightened. Lightening can cause some strange looking effects if applied on bright image. This option causes aterm to create shaded/lightened copy of the background - it's more mem-ory cosuming as the result. It does not make much difference, though, if applied on non transparent background image.
resource shading.

These settings go hand in hand. **-tr** makes aterm transparent, **-trsb** makes the scrollbar transparent aswell. **-sh** lets you shade your root background image in order to keep the actual text in the image visible no matter how light or dark your background image is.

```
aterm -tr -trsb -sh 60
```

Example **~/.Xdefaults** settings:

```
aterm*transparent:true aterm*transpscrollbar:true  
aterm*shading:60
```

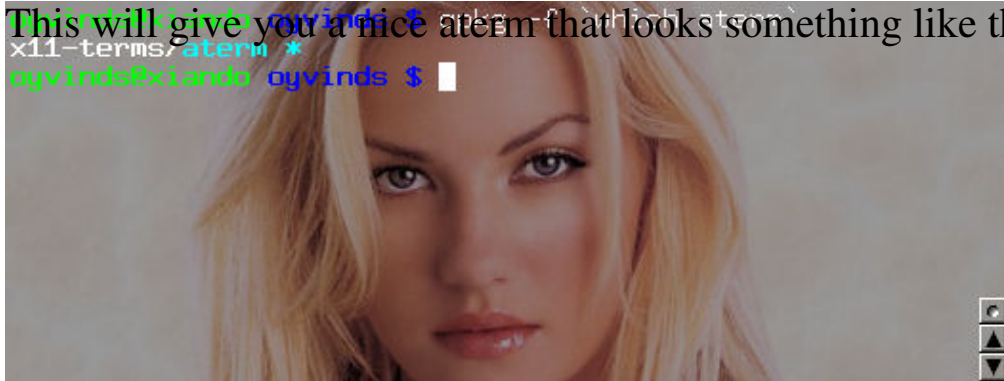
You could use these settings in your **~/.Xdefaults**: [Xdefaults.aterm.txt](#)

```
aterm*loginShell:true  
aterm*transparent:true  
aterm*shading:60  
aterm*background:Black  
aterm*foreground:White  
aterm*scrollBar:true  
aterm*scrollBar_right:true  
aterm*transpscrollbar:true  
aterm*saveLines:32767  
aterm*font:*-*-fixed-medium-r-normal--*-140-*-*-*-*--iso8859-1
```

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```
aterm*boldFont:*-*fixed-bold-r-normal--*-*140-*-*--*--iso8859-
```

This will give you a nice aterm that looks something like this:



- Elisha Cuthbert:
 - ◆ [elisha-cuthbert-1.jpg](#)
 - ◆ [elisha-cuthbert-3.jpg](#)
 - ◆ [wallpapers](#) ([elisha-cuthbert.com](#))

graphix wants you to know: You can fade your aterms

`-fade x%` makes not atvice aterm windows fade. graphix really likes to start aterm like this:

```
aterm -ls -tr -trsb -fg gray -fade 60 (hmm why doesn't  
-trsb work wonders graphix)
```

3. True Border-less aterm terminal

The borders surrounding aterm are placed there by your window manager. Check your window manager to find out how you can make windows border-less.

aterm running in fluxbox, a theme with only borders on the top and bottom
KDE 3.2+ users can turn off the borders by selecting `Advanced -> No Border` in the window menu. You can activate the window menu with the keyboard shortcut `Alt+F3` or by right-clicking once on the window decorations.

Aterm version 1.00.beta3+ has a `-bl` switch that tries to ask the window manager to create the aterm window borderless. This works with Fluxbox version 0.9.12 and the latest versions of aterm.

Thanks to Gerikes Markholm

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