

# 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-drake`.
- [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.

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```
sh-2.05b$ uname -a
Linux xiando.homelinux.net 2.4.20 #9 man mar 24 08:40:04
CET 2003 i686 AMD Athlon(tm) XP 2000+ AuthenticAMD GNU/Li
nux
sh-2.05b$ █
```

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 loose 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:

```
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 `tlpd: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:

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```
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 (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-*-*-*-iso8859-1
aterm*boldFont:*-*-fixed-bold-r-normal--*-*-140-*-*-*-iso8859-1
```

## 2.1. Making aterm transparent

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

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shaded/lightened copy of the background - it's more memory consuming 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
aterm*boldFont:*-*-fixed-bold-r-normal--*-140-*-*-*-iso8859-1
```



- 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)
```

### 2.1. Making aterm transparent

### 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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