

Using Gnome Shell



Screenshot of Gnome 2.8 desktop

I installed a beta version of the new [Gnome Shell desktop environment](#) on my Fedora Linux PC, and it seems to be very cool indeed! And it's free, not only free in the meaning of "freedom" but even free as in "free lunch."

[Gnome](#) is the standard desktop graphical environment for many [Linux distributions](#), including [Fedora](#), the Linux distribution I've been using on my PC since February 2005. Another popular Linux desktop environment is [KDE](#). Some people like it better than Gnome, because it looks a bit more like Windows®, but I found KDE buggy and unstable, at least it was 5 years ago, and stuck with Gnome. There are even more desktop environments besides these two.

The first screenshot shows my normal Gnome desktop using a top bar to show open applications, and a bottom toolbar showing the standard Gnome toolbar. The wallpaper contains a not so subliminal message.

By default the Gnome toolbars are on the opposite sides, but like to change them because it's more what I was used to when I worked in Windows®. Click any of the pictures to see an enlargement.

This screenshot is of the Gnome Shell after first running it. Notice the Gnome applets are now missing with the bottom toolbar gone. Maybe later I'll figure out how to add them again. Or possibly that feature is still not available in this beta version of Gnome Shell.



Gnome Shell after startup

Here's how it looks like after clicking on "Activities" in the top left corner!!



Gnome Shell after clicking on Activities

All open applications are in the right side of the screen. Just clicking on one of the icons show the application to a full screen! The area on the left shows all the folders I have for easily finding files.

When I click on the time display on the top bar, a calendar drops down and stays down until I click on the time display a second time. Cool! Click on the graphic below to see it more clearly.



Gnome Shell with dropdown calendar

Eat your hearts out, Windows® lovers!

[Nattou – fermented soy beans](#)



Nattou in the styrofoam package it comes in

Recently I've been eating a traditional Japanese food called [nattou](#) nearly every day for lunch. Nattou is also known as "sticky beans." Click the photo to see why! Normally people eat it on top of rice, but I often eat it right out of the package with chopsticks after sprinkling on the soy sauce that comes with it. Nattou is very nutritious and good for health.

When I first ate nattou shortly after coming to Japan, I didn't like it very much then, but I've grown fond of it over the years. It's an [acquired taste](#). I often ate nattou on the road in the early days because it's the cheapest protein available.

Not all Japanese eat nattou. The people in the Kansai area (Kobe / Osaka / Kyoto) don't eat nattou as much as the Kanto (Tokyo and surrounding area) people do because they don't like the smell.

Did you know there is a major difference in health benefits between fermented

and unfermented soy? Fermented soy like nattou and [Miso](#) are good for you, unfermented soy like tofu and soy protein power are not.

[Second hitchhike adventure 2010](#)



Hitomi (27) who took me back home

Princess the little Shih Tsu dog I am temporarily taking care of was taken to be shampooed, and this set me free from caring for her to do other things. It's a beautiful sunny day in normally cloudy Niigata and so I just had to grab the opportunity to get out again, hitchhike and meet people.

The first driver was a man who appeared to be in his upper 60s, maybe lower 70s. He drove at least 10 kilometers out of his way to take me to a convenient location from where to continue my trip. I left him with an Activated Magazine.

Usually, older Japanese people who pick me up have traveled abroad, or have had something to do with foreigners, but the man said he has never been out of Japan. Later he said that his daughter lived in England for 6 months as an exchange student and was hosted by a British family. Ah ha! Japanese have a deep sense of obligation when helped by others, or even if any member of their family was helped, and this man's motivation was probably to return the favor. It doesn't matter to the Japanese if the foreigner in question had nothing to do with helping his daughter, any Caucasian-looking foreigner will do. □

A single lady by the name of Hitomi took me back to the area where I left my bicycle not far from home. I gave her an Activated Magazine, one that had an article exposing [Darwin's delusion](#). The Japanese, as you may know, are not very religious people. In spite of that, their culture reflects very much in

many ways the teachings of Jesus such as being kind to strangers, helping those in need, etc. They hate falsehood. When I explain that Evolution is one of the falsehoods they have been fed since childhood, most of them receive it.

Snowy winter in Japan



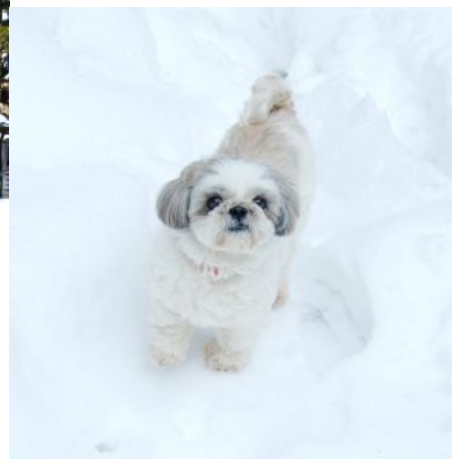
The photos below shows bamboo trees bent over with the tops stuck in the snow! The snow causes the trees to bend over till the top of the tree touches the snow on the ground. Further snow buries the top branches tying the top of the tree to the ground, and it will stay like that until enough snow on the ground melts, even though the original snow that bent the tree in the first place melts first like it did shown in the photos.



Bamboo bowed over
with snow



Princess in snow



Princess

This winter of 2010 has the most snow I've seen in the Niigata area of Japan since moving here in January 2002. A couple days ago it snowed again, and the trees were covered with snow, but it melts in the daytime. Only at night the temperature will drop before freezing. In spite of the snow, I consider the

winters in Niigata to be pretty mild compared to that Siberian like city in America where I grew up – Chicago. And to think that a few newspapers in the United Kingdom ten years ago ran a story that snow would be a thing of the past by the year 2010. Ha!

WordPress power



I realized today it's been a little more than a year since I started to use [WordPress blogging software](#). My first post was on January 7, 2009. I've grown used to it and think it's probably better overall and easier for me than the HTML / CSS hand coding coding method I used to use. Not that it's not good to learn HTML and CSS. Because I know these technologies, I can do things with WordPress that others cannot who do who do not know them.

WordPress blogs are easy for me to keep up with. Since my friend in Taiwan started to use WordPress for his [Paradise Post](#) blog, I can now keep up with him much better than when he used his former method of making web pages. What that was I do not know, but my Firefox browser didn't seem to like it. It would freeze up on his older web site – on my Linux PC with near state of the art technology, a CPU not even a year old, (AMD Phenom II) and 4 gigs of DDR 3 RAM!

I consider the Weaver II theme to be the best theme for WordPress ever! The free version is much more powerful and tweakable than most of the paid version's I've seen, and it even has a pro version to boot! So far I haven't seen the need to upgrade to the pro version.

PC security issues



I noticed the performance of a certain Windows XP PC was down again, even though I cleaned it from malware only a few months ago. I installed and ran [Super Anti Spyware](#) and it found over **1500 security issues!!** The browser was hijacked and a **fake anti-virus** program called [Antivirus 2008](#) was installed. [SuperAntiSpyware](#) cleaned it up and its running fine again.

The particular user of that machine is a young adult who uses a peer to peer file sharing application known as [Bearshare](#). I'm sure she affected her PC again as a result of poor Internet browsing habits. I certainly do not recommend file sharing networks and software such as Bearshare but recommend [Bittorrent](#) instead for downloading large files. My favorite Bittorrent client is [Deluge](#). It's better security, and especially so in Linux, Mac, or a Windows PC when the user is logged in with limited privileges, and not as the Administrator.

Did you know that the [German government has warned web users to find an alternative browser to Internet Explorer](#) to protect security? I highly recommend [Firefox](#). It's much better security, open source, and heavily supported by software developers from around the world, and not just by a single cooperation like Microsoft whose bottom line is always money. I believe they have often put the priority on user convenience, and to do that, they sacrificed the user's security. Not requiring the user to always log in with limited access (as in Mac / Unix / Linux) is one example of this.

First hitchhike adventure of 2010



Kevin and Yuriko

Jan. 10: I had to make an emergency trip to Oyama city in Tochigi prefecture to fix a PC. Oyama city is a good 270 kilometers from home. It was snowing this morning, not a particularly good day to hitchhike! In order to save time and avoid hitchhiking during the snowfall, I took a train to a station about 30 kilometers away from where I hoped to walk to the Sakae parking area on the Hokuriku Expressway. Later I found it was way too far to walk to Sakae parking, but a kind man who was going to Kashiwazaki took me to Ozumi Parking which was even better for me.



Snow piled up 3 meters next to a service station in Yuzawa

This winter Niigata has had 3 major snowfalls so far, about twice as much snow as was last year. The traffic moved slowly at points on Kan'etsu expressway due to the snow and following the snowplows at only 40 kilometers an hour. It promises to be a good season for the ski resorts. The mountain of snow in the photo on the left is way over my head or about 3 meters (9 ft.)

Kevin from America and his Japanese wife Yuriko took me to Komayose parking area which is just before the junction of the Kita Kanto expressway that goes east toward Oyama.

The last driver was Mohammad from Pakistan. Most Pakistanis who live in Japan are in the used car sales business, and Mohammad is no exception. He was quite surprised that I would hitchhike, and asked me why I didn't come by train. I usually tell people it's more fun to hitchhike. Mohammad was interested to hear my views of the world, and especially about American

foreign policy. I told him that it's easier for me to better understand politics and policy living outside of the U.S.A., but there are Americans living in America, albeit a small percentage (5~10%?) who have not succumbed to [mass media mind manipulation](#).