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## [XChat Review](#)

*Not another IRC client.*

Is IRC dead? Opinions may vary from one person to the other. However, judging from the number of IRC clients available, one would think that IRC is still alive and kickin'. XChat is one of those clients, developed mainly for Unix-like systems but versions for Microsoft Windows and Mac OS X have also been made available. Being available on the most important platforms is one of the many reasons that XChat is one of the most popular IRC clients. Other reasons are tabbed or tree interface, DCC file transfer, support for multiple servers and a high level of configurability. XChat is available both as a command line and as a graphical program, although the graphical version far overtakes the command line version in many areas. Its interface was developed using the GTK+ toolkit and it's released under the GPL license which means that it's a free software. Over the years, I had the 'pleasure' of installing XChat from sources, as well as using RPMs and don't remember having problems with any of them. The sources will build on any system with GTK+ installed, while the RPMs require gtk2-devel. Once installed, you will either find XChat in the KMenu (KDE) or you'll have to type `xchat` in a terminal in order to run it. The first thing you will see is the Network List window. Here you can choose your nickname, a second choice (in case it's already taken), username and realname. The username can generally be anything you like, just make it up. The next step is to choose a network to join. This is a matter of personal taste, I can't really recommend one! Some are better than others, so you'll just have to experiment. However, there's a network mainly for Linux and it's called Freenode. You will find here the official IRC channels for most distros and applications. Great place to seek help! Just select the row and click Connect. If your Internet connection is working well, you will be connected in no time. Right after connecting, a dialogue will pop-up so that you can join some channels (chat rooms). If you know the channel name, type it starting with the character "#". If not, click on Open the channel-list and a window listing all the channels on the network will open. Depending on your connection speed and number of channels on the network, listing them could take from a few seconds to a few minutes. Once you've joined a channel, you will notice the network and its channels in the left, the discussions in the middle and the nicknames list in the right. Also, some things you may not notice at first, the channel topic is shown in the upper part of the discussions section, the number of total users and operators on the channel is displayed in the upper right. Your current lag is revealed under the nick list, using a meter. Lag turns up when latency (the time it takes to send/receive a packet along a network) gets annoyingly high. To type a message to everyone simply left click in the text box at the bottom of the window, type your message in, and then press enter. When you press enter, your message will appear in the middle of the main window. Every time you or someone else types a message, their name will appear in the left column beside that message. This is so everyone knows who said what. To start a private chat with someone, either right-click on his nickname and select Open Dialog Window or type `/QUERY his-nickname` in the chatting box. XChat supports auto-completion for both commands and nicknames so the above command can be written like: `/Q[TAB] his[TAB]` and it will magically complete. Once you've finished chatting or if you would like to join a different channel, you will need to leave & close the channel window you're currently in. To do this, you will need to type `/part` to leave the channel and then `/close` to close it and `/join #other-channel` to join another channel. To connect to another IRC server, open the Network List from the XChat menu, select the network and click connect. The new network will open separately so if you want to disconnect from the previous network, select it and type `/close` in the chat box. Other

commands can be found out by typing /help. Also, /help {command} will explain it. XChat can send and receive two types of DCC: active mode and passive mode. Generally, active mode should be used, because it works with almost all clients, but if you're behind a very restrictive firewall, you could have to resort to using passive mode. To send a file using active mode, use the command `/dcc send {nick} {file}`, while in order to use passive mode, use `/dcc psend {nick} {file}`. XChat can be customized from the Preferences window, found under the Settings menu. Here you can set its appearance, such as font, colors, how the nick lists is sorted and so on. Also, you can set XChat whether to log all conversations or to use a proxy. For advanced users, XChat offers the Plugin function which supports scripting in a number of programming languages: Perl, Python, Tcl and Ruby, which are available as external plugins and contain a binary module interface, usually for the C programming language.

**The Good**XChat is a full-featured IRC client available for all important platforms which offers a pretty nice and intuitive interface. It can be easily used by beginners, while experienced users can customize it through the plugins function.

**The Bad**Its interface needs a little bit more polishing so it will be even easier to use. Also, the close (X) button is missing in the "Tree" layout. Moreover, it won't hurt to have a little bit more documentation.

**The Truth**Even if IRC isn't used as much as it used to be, there will always be the need for good IRC clients. XChat is one of the best for users with any level of knowledge. However, it's far from being perfect as many useful features can be implemented. However, XChat is currently under active development so chances are we will see a better version of it in the near future. *Check out some screenshots below:*