Windows Newsreaders under Linux HOWTO

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Revision History

Revision 2.22 | 2004−02−07 | Revised by: dq

Updated to say that Xnews with a Windows 98SE configuration also works with Windows ME files. Thanks to Marty Hillman >mehillman@comcast.net< for discovering this.

Revision 2.21 | 2004−01−26 | Revised by: dq

Updated with more clear language as to what exactly would go wrong with older versions of Wine under more recent Linux setups.

Revision 2.2 | 2004−01−24 | Revised by: dq

Updated to say that Wine version 20031212 might be required for more modern Linux setups, but there will be more bugs. Updated each newsreader with its respective problems under 20031212, including the fact that Dialog will not work with Wine versions greater than 20030813.

Revision 2.11 | 2003−12−24 | Revised by: dq

Updated to say that Xnews event sounds work properly, and updated with instructions to get event sounds to work properly under KDE.

Revision 2.1 | 2003−12−12 | Revised by: dq

Updated to cover Forte Free Agent as well as Xnews and Dialog. Added a Dialog problem.

Revision 2.02 | 2003−12−11 | Revised by: dq

Updated "Window sizing problems" in Xnews and added another Xnews problem. TODO updated with what the document will not cover.

Revision 2.01 | 2003−10−24 | Revised by: dq

Updated with another Xnews problem and another Dialog problem. TODO now contains other newsreaders this document will cover. Update "Erasing sections of text" Xnews problem to say that the text is deleted but requires the Rewrap button to be pressed to fix it, as well as that it affects KDE also. Updated to say that Wine 20030813 is required, since later versions seem to cause problems.

Revision 2.0 | 2003−09−16 | Revised by: dq

Updated with new name "Windows−Newsreaders−under−Linux−HOWTO," since the document now discusses configuration and use of 40tude Dialog as well. Windows XP instructions updated for Xnews. Problems and Issues for Xnews updated. Acknowledgements updated. Xnews copying instructions updated for clarity. Xnews copying section renamed. Prerequisites updated to say that the standard unzip program might be necessary.

Revision 1.1 | 2003−09−07 | Revised by: dq

Updated with more Problems and Issues, including binary usage. Updated with more DLL files to copy and configure (when using a Windows 98SE configuration) for better results. Updated to say that a Windows

98SE configuration is preferred, since there are some problems with Windows XP "emulation."

Revision 1.0	2003−09−01	Revised by: dq
initial LDP release, some updates		
Revision 0.12	2003−08−31	Revised by: dq
conversion to XML (thanks to Greg Ferguson), various updates		
Revision 0.11	2003−08−22	Revised by: dq
various updates		

This document describes how to set up and use several different Windows Usenet newsreaders under the Linux operating system using the Wine "emulator." This document was formerly known as the Xnews under Linux HOWTO.

The latest version of this document is always available at http://www.geocities.com/core_dump_000/Windows−Newsreaders−under−Linux−HOWTO.xml

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

One of the problems with Linux today is the lack of variety and choice in newsreader software, where Windows has several newsreader programs with better features and better stability. Under Windows, three of the most popular newsreaders are Xnews, Dialog, and Free Agent.

Xnews, created by Luu Tran, is a freeware newsreader for Windows, available from the website http://xnews.newsguy.com. Here is a list of Xnews' features listed on the website:

- 100% GNKSA 2.0 (Good Net Keeping Seal of Approval) compliant.
- Plonk file (aka bozo bin).
- Quick filter (type in a regex and only articles whose subject/author match it will be shown).
- Score file for advanced filtering.
- Support for multiple servers/identities.
- Subscribed groups can be organized into categories.
- Remappable keyboard.
- Binaries handling (mime, base64, uuencode, what have you).
- Optional header and article caching; plus: folders for permanent archival.
- more...

Unfortunately, Luu Tran has decided neither to make his newsreader open−source nor to release a Linux version. However, there is a way to get Xnews to work under Linux, although it takes a bit of work.

Dialog is a newsreader by 40tude. It is available at http://www.40tude.com/dialog/. According to the website, "it supports multiple servers and identities, has filtering/scoring support, integrated email functionality and binary support including support for multiparts." The newsreader is "shareware for commercial users and freeware for private users." It works excellently under Linux.

Free Agent is the feature−slimmed freeware version of Forte's commercial e−mail and Usenet client Agent. It is available at http://www.forteinc.com/agent/. According to the Features section of the website, the program has basic newsreader functions, message threading, multi−part binaries, translations, internal multi−tasking, and URL detection. It also has partial support for offline data storage, group properties, UI configuration, searching, and sorting. It runs with few problems under Linux after almost no extra configuration, except under Wine versions later than 20030813.

1.1. Prerequisites

This HOWTO assumes that:

- The InfoZIP utilities are installed on the Linux machine. These are available at InfoZIP's web site. The unzip program is required if the reader wants to install Xnews or Dialog without copying from an existing installation. This is a standard part of most Linux distributions, but may not be automatically installed.
- The Wine "emulator" is installed properly on the Linux machine. To download Wine, visit http://www.winehq.com. The version used at the time of this writing was 20031212. UPDATE (version 2.01): Wine versions later than 20030813 will not work. UPDATE (version 2.2): Wine version 20031212 may be required under more modern Linux setups. There are more problems with this version, and Dialog will not work, but older Wine versions will not "emulate" properly without it and will cause a crash upon trying to access NNTP servers. Try 20030813 first, and then try version

20031212 if you have problems.

- The reader of this document has access to a Windows machine. Certain files are needed from the Windows operating system. Access to Windows 98SE is preferred. This HOWTO covers Windows 98SE and Windows XP. Windows ME files will also work when running Xnews if a Windows 98SE configuration is used.
- Xnews stable version 5.04.25 is used (the beta version was not tested at the time of this writing). The website for Xnews is http://xnews.newsguy.com/
- Dialog version 2.0 Beta 28 is used. The website for Dialog is http://www.40tude.com/dialog/ Note that Wine versions greater than 20030813 will not work with Dialog.
- Free Agent version 1.xx is being used. The website for Free Agent is http://www.forteinc.com/agent/

1.2. Copyright and License

1.3. Disclaimer

No liability for the contents of this document can be accepted. Use the concepts, examples and information at your own risk. There may be errors and inaccuracies that could be damaging to your system, although any damage is highly unlikely. Proceed with caution; the author(s) do not take any responsibility.

All copyrights are held by their by their respective owners, unless specifically noted otherwise. Use of a term in this document should not be regarded as affecting the validity of any trademark or service mark. Naming of particular products or brands should not be seen as endorsements.

1.4. TODO for this document

This document may eventually contain:

- This document may be expanded to cover other Windows newsreaders such as MicroPlanet Gravity.

This document will not cover the following newsreaders: XanaNews (I cannot get this to work) and newsreaders included in web browsers (Outlook Express, Netscape/Mozilla Mail and News, etc)

2. Xnews

2.1. Setting up Xnews

2.1.1. Configuring Wine for Xnews

Wine is capable of "emulating" many different versions of Windows. Wine is not perfect, however; it runs slower than a normal Windows installation and it is not a stable product. Certain problems occur when running Xnews; these are discussed in the "*Problems and Issues*" section of the document.

Before Xnews can run under Linux, certain files from a Windows installation need to be copied to the Xnews root directory. Depending on which version of Windows you have access to, there will be different files to copy and different instructions for configuring Wine. This document currently covers a Windows 98SE/Windows ME and a Windows XP configuration. A Windows 98SE/Windows ME configuration is preferred, since there are some more problems with a Windows XP configuration. Below are the instructions describing how to configure Wine for Xnews.

2.1.1.1. Windows 98SE / Windows ME

If you have access to a Windows 98SE or Windows ME machine, you must set up the Wine configuration file (found at `$HOME/.wine/config`) according to these instructions.

First, find the section "`[Version]`" in the `.wine/config` file, and make sure that "`win98`" is the version Wine will imitate:

```
[Version]
; Windows version to imitate (win95,win98,winme,nt351,nt40,win2k,winxp,win20,win30,win31)
"Windows" = "win98"
```

Second, update the "`DllOverrides`" section which will tell Wine to use certain files from Windows rather than Wine.

```
[DllOverrides]
; some dlls you may want to change
"shell"        = "native, builtin"
"shell32"      = "native, builtin"
```

Third, add an entry to the "`AppDefaults`" section which will also tell Wine to use certain files from Windows rather than Wine.

```
;; sample AppDefaults entries

[AppDefaults\\Xnews.exe\\DllOverrides]
"commctrl.dll" = "native"
"comctl32.dll" = "native"
"riched32.dll" = "native"
"shell.dll" = "native"
"shell32.dll" = "native"
"comdlg32.dll" = "native"
```

2.1.1.2. Windows XP

If you have access to a Windows XP machine, you must set up the Wine configuration file (found at `$HOME/.wine/config`) according to these instructions.

First, find the section "`[Version]`" in the `.wine/config` file, and make sure that "`win98`" is the version Wine will imitate:

```
[Version]
; Windows version to imitate (win95,win98,winme,nt351,nt40,win2k,winxp,win20,win30,win31)
"Windows" = "win98"
```

Second, add an entry to the "`AppDefaults`" section which will tell Wine to use certain files from Windows rather than Wine.

```
;; sample AppDefaults entries

[AppDefaults\\Xnews.exe\\DllOverrides]
"comctl32.dll" = "native"
"riched32.dll" = "native"
"riched20.dll" = "native"
```

2.1.2. Copying and/or Extracting Required Files

Several DLL files must first be copied to the root Xnews directory from an existing Windows installation.

If Xnews lies on a Windows partition on the same machine, you must copy the DLL files to the Xnews root directory. Xnews will be run from this directory on the Windows partition.

If Xnews is being run on a Linux−only machine, you must download Xnews to your fake C drive (usually `$HOME/c`) and extract it into a directory there. Open up a terminal window, navigate to your fake C drive, and type the following commands:

```
mkdir Xnews
mv xnews.zip Xnews
cd Xnews
unzip xnews.zip
```

Alternatively, you may copy an existing Xnews folder to your fake C drive. The root Xnews directory must include the DLL files mentioned in the following subsections.

2.1.2.1. Windows 98SE

If you have access to a Windows 98SE machine, copy the files `commctrl.dll`, `comctl32.dll`, `riched32.dll`, `comdlg32.dll`, `shell.dll`, and `shell32.dll` (usually in `C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM`) to the root Xnews directory.

2.1.2.2. Windows XP

If you have access to a Windows XP machine, copy the files `comctl32.dll`, `riched20.dll`, and `riched32.dll` (usually in `C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32`) to the root Xnews directory.

2.2. Running Xnews

Using a terminal window, navigate to the root Xnews directory and type:

```
wine Xnews.exe
```

Use Xnews normally, noting the exceptions in the next section, entitled "*Problems and Issues*" Note that these are problems with Wine's "emulation," not Xnews.

2.3. Problems and Issues

2.3.1. Fixed−width fonts and alt.ascii−art

ASCII art requires fixed−width fonts to view. Clicking the fixed font button above the message headers will simply lock the message so that the vertical scrollbar will not work.

The easiest way to deal with this is to go into "Special −> Setup Xnews −> Fonts and Colors" and select a fixed font for all types of text. The default "Fixed" will not work; use "Misc Fixed", size 12.

2.3.2. Erasing sections of text

Selecting sections of text with the mouse and pressing Backspace or Delete will delete the text from the screen, but for some reason it might still look like it's there when the message is sent or posted.

To solve this problem, press the "Rewrap" button below the message headers.

2.3.3. Window sizing problems

There are several problems relating to the sizing of the windows. When the CatchUp button is clicked, the main groups list window shrinks and must be maximized. These are mostly minor annoyances, except...

2.3.3.1. Closing Xnews

Depending on the window manager (Sawfish has problems with this), it may be impossible to close the Xnews window, and there is no "Exit" option in the main menu. To get around this, make sure that the window is sized so that the terminal used to launch Xnews is accessible, and close that terminal. Do not press **Ctrl−C**, etc as this will cause problems. Be sure to click the Save button to save the newsrc first.

2.3.4. Binary newsgroups

The posting of binaries to newsgroups does not currently work. An attempted post will lock at 1% completion and give an error message when the post is aborted, posting only the text portion of the message. However, the combining and decoding of binaries works with no problems at all.

2.3.5. Text on some tabs are indented

If Windows XP is "emulated," certain tabs will have text indented, leaving some of it out of visibility. The solution is to use Windows 98SE files instead of XP files. It isn't that important. UPDATED: Version 2.0 of this document includes new instructions which solve this problem when Windows XP files are used.

2.3.6. No sample text in font selection dialog

If Windows XP is "emulated," the font selection dialog will not show sample text. According to a Wine mailing list message, there are certain un−"emulated" functions in Windows XP "emulation." Version 1.1 of this document was updated with new files to copy and configure when using Windows 98SE "emulation" in order to solve this problem. Until the Wine developers implement these Windows XP functions, use a Windows 98SE configuration to get around this issue. If a Windows 98SE computer is not available, just apply changes and look at the main window.

2.3.7. Web links can not be executed

Web links can not be executed from within the Xnews message window. This is pretty obvious as there is no integrated Web browser in Wine. However, Wine's clipboard works with no problem. Select the link and copy and paste into an open web browser window.

2.3.7.1. Web link doesn't always copy

When you try and copy a Web link to the clipboard, it may not copy. This occurs when the link as a whole is copied rather than selected text. The solution to this is to make sure that as you are selecting the text, the rest of the link is not automatically selected. If this continues, select the blank space before the link and copy with the preceding blank space.

2.3.8. Sound does not work

Event sounds in Xnews do not currently work. Updated instructions for this may be included in future versions of this document.

UPDATED (version 2.11): Event sounds work properly. If you run KDE, you first need to turn off the aRts soundserver by going into Settings −> Control Center −> Sounds & Multimedia −> Sound System and unchecking "Start aRts soundserver on KDE Startup" (instructions were tested on version 3.1.3; may be different for other versions). Note that this will disable event sounds for KDE applications which depend on the aRts soundserver. Xnews sounds work properly under the Gnome sound server.

2.3.9. "Compose" message body does not automatically wrap

In some cases, the message body of a Compose window does not automatically wrap. Simply clicking "Rewrap Text" as this happens will fix the problem.

2.3.10. XFaces are not visible

When a Wine version greater than 20030813 is being used, the XFace is not visible when a message is being composed or read, and the box where the XFace would be is colored black. Ignore this, since the correct XFace is being posted anyway. Try to use Wine version 20030813 if you can.

3. Dialog

3.1. Setting up Dialog

3.1.1. Configuring Wine for Dialog

Wine is capable of "emulating" many different versions of Windows. Wine is not perfect, however; it runs slower than a normal Windows installation and it is not a stable product. Certain problems occur when running Dialog; these are discussed in the "*Problems and Issues*" section of the document. Note that Wine versions greater than 20030813 will not "emulate" Dialog properly.

Before Dialog or its installer can run under Linux, certain files from a Windows installation need to be copied to the directory containing Dialog's installer, and after installation, Dialog's root directory. Depending on which version of Windows the reader of this document has access to, there will be different files to copy and different instructions for configuring Wine. This document currently covers a Windows 98SE and a Windows XP configuration. Below are the instructions describing how to configure Wine for Dialog.

3.1.1.1. Windows 98SE

If you have access to a Windows 98SE machine, the Wine configuration file (found at `$HOME/.wine/config`) must be set up according to these instructions.

First, find the section "`[Version]`" in the `.wine/config` file, and make sure that "`win98`" is the version Wine will imitate:

```
[Version]
; Windows version to imitate (win95,win98,winme,nt351,nt40,win2k,winxp,win20,win30,win31)
"Windows" = "win98"
```

Next, add an entry to the "`AppDefaults`" section which will also tell Wine to use certain files from Windows rather than Wine.

```
;; sample AppDefaults entries

[AppDefaults\\dialog.exe\\DllOverrides]
"commctrl.dll" = "native"
"comctl32.dll" = "native"
"riched32.dll" = "native"
```

3.1.1.2. Windows XP

If you have access to a Windows XP machine, you must set up the Wine configuration file (found at `$HOME/.wine/config`) according to these instructions.

First, find the section "`[Version]`" in the `.wine/config` file, and make sure that "`win98`" is the version Wine will imitate:

```
[Version]
; Windows version to imitate (win95,win98,winme,nt351,nt40,win2k,winxp,win20,win30,win31)
"Windows" = "win98"
```

Second, add an entry to the "`AppDefaults`" section which will tell Wine to use certain files from Windows rather than Wine.

```
;; sample AppDefaults entries

[AppDefaults\\dialog.exe\\DllOverrides]
"comctl32.dll" = "native"
"riched32.dll" = "native"
"riched20.dll" = "native"
```

3.1.2. Copying and/or Installing Required Files

Several DLL files must first be copied to the root Dialog directory from an existing Windows installation.

If Dialog lies on a Windows partition on the same machine, you must copy the DLL files to the Dialog root directory. Dialog will be run from this directory on the Windows partition.

If Dialog is being run on a Linux−only machine, you must download Dialog to your fake C drive (usually `$HOME/c`). You must then use the supplied installer according to the instructions in the subsection below entitled "*Using the Installer*." Alternatively, you may copy an existing Dialog folder to your fake C drive. The root Dialog directory must include the DLL files mentioned in the following subsections.

3.1.2.1. Using the Installer

To extract the archive which contains the Dialog installer, open up a terminal window, navigate to your fake C drive (where Dialog was downloaded to) and type:

```
unzip 40td2b28.zip
```

The name of the file may be different depending on the version of Dialog downloaded.

In order for the installer to work correctly, certain DLL files from Windows need to be copied to the directory where the installer is located. If you have access to a Windows 98SE machine, copy the file `riched32.dll` to your fake C drive. If you have access to a Windows XP machine, copy the files `riched20.dll` and `riched32.dll` to your fake C drive.

Finally, to install Dialog, open up a terminal window, navigate to your fake C drive, and type:

```
wine SETUP.EXE
```

Installation of Dialog should work fine from here. Be sure to copy the DLL files mentioned in the rest of this section to your Dialog root directory before running the program.

3.1.2.2. Copying required files − Windows 98SE

If you have access to a Windows 98SE machine, copy the files `commctrl.dll`, `comctl32.dll`, and `riched32.dll` (usually in `C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM\`) to your root Dialog directory.

3.1.2.3. Copying required files − Windows XP

If you have access to a Windows XP machine, copy the files `comctl32.dll`, `riched20.dll`, and `riched32.dll` (usually in `C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\` to your root Dialog directory.

3.2. Running Dialog

Using a terminal window, navigate to the root Dialog directory and type:

```
wine dialog.exe
```

Use Dialog normally, noting the exceptions in the next section, entitled "*Problems and Issues*" Note that these are problems with Wine's "emulation," not Dialog.

3.3. Problems and Issues

3.3.1. Dragging the vertical scrollbar's placeholder doesn't work

Dragging the vertical scrollbar's placeholder within the message list will cause it to bounce back to its original position. To get around this, hold down the mouse at the down arrow of the scrollbar, or use your mouse's wheel if it has one.

3.3.2. Strange error message about fontinfo.dat

You may occasionally get an error message about the file `fontinfo.dat` needing to be rebuilt. Ignore this, as it doesn't seem to affect the program in any way.

3.3.3. Window sizing problems

Depending on the window manager used, the window may need to be re−maximized after switching to another window. Other sizing problems might be present as well.

3.3.4. Fixed−width fonts and alt.ascii−art

ASCII art requires fixed−width fonts to view. Only the font "Misc Fixed" will work.

To change the font, go into Settings − General Settings − Fonts/Colors. Change the "Bodies (monospaced)" font to "Misc Fixed."

4. Free Agent

4.1. Setting up Free Agent

4.1.1. Configuring Wine for Free Agent

Wine is capable of "emulating" many different versions of Windows. Wine is not perfect, however; it runs slower than a normal Windows installation and it is not a stable product. Certain problems occur when running Free Agent; these are discussed in the "*Problems and Issues*" section of the document.

Before Free Agent can be run under Linux, a certain file from a Windows installation need to be copied to Free Agent's root directory. The instructions are similar for both Windows 98SE and Windows XP configurations. Below are the instructions describing how to configure Wine for Free Agent.

First, find the section "`[Version]`" in the `.wine/config` file, and make sure that "`win98`" is the version Wine will imitate:

```
[Version]
; Windows version to imitate (win95,win98,winme,nt351,nt40,win2k,winxp,win20,win30,win31)
"Windows" = "win98"
```

Next, add an entry to the "`AppDefaults`" section which will also tell Wine to use certain files from Windows rather than Wine.

```
;; sample AppDefaults entries

[AppDefaults\\agent.exe\\DllOverrides]
"comdlg32.dll" = "native"
```

4.1.2. Copying and/or Installing Required Files

Several DLL files must first be copied to the root Free Agent directory from an existing Windows installation.

If Free Agent lies on a Windows partition on the same machine, you must copy the DLL files to the Free Agent root directory. Free Agent will be run from this directory on the Windows partition.

If Free Agent is being run on a Linux−only machine, you must download Free Agent to your fake C drive (usually `$HOME/c`). You must then use the supplied installer according to the instructions in the subsection below entitled "*Using the Installer*." Alternatively, you may copy an existing Free Agent folder to your fake C drive. The root Free Agent directory must include the DLL files mentioned in the following subsections.

4.1.2.1. Using the Installer

To install Free Agent, simply download the installer to your fake C drive, open up a terminal window, navigate to your fake C drive, and type:

```
wine installer.exe
```

(where `installer` is the name of the installer). Installation should work fine from here. Be sure to copy the

DLL files mentioned in the rest of this section to your Free Agent root directory before running the program.

4.1.2.2. Copying required files

The Windows DLL file `comdlg32.dll` needs to be copied to the Free Agent root directory. Under Windows 98SE, the file is usually located in `C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM\`. Under Windows XP, the file is usually located in `C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM32\`.

4.2. Running Free Agent

Using a terminal window, navigate to the root Free Agent directory and type:

```
wine agent.exe
```

Use Free Agent normally, noting the exceptions in the next section, entitled "*Problems and Issues*" Note that these are problems with Wine's "emulation," not Free Agent.

4.3. Problems and Issues

4.3.1. Fixed−width fonts and alt.ascii−art

ASCII art requires fixed−width fonts to view. Only the font "Misc Fixed" will work.

To change the font, go into Options −> Display Preferences −> Fonts −> Fixed−Pitch Body. Make sure the font "Misc Fixed" is being used.

4.3.2. Cannot post binaries

If a Wine version greater than 20030813 is being used, an attempt to add an attachment to a message will not open a file dialog box. Try to use Wine version 20030813 whenever possible.

4.3.3. Cannot save messages or binary attachments

If a Wine version greater than 20030813 is being used, an attempt to save a message or binary attachment will not open a file dialog box. Try to use Wine version 20030813 whenever possible.

5. Acknowledgements

First of all, I'd like to thank the creators of these newsreaders for keeping Usenet alive. Hopefully they will release their products open−source.

I'd also like to thank Vancouverite and the other people in the Gentoo forum message who described how to run Xnews under Wine using Windows 98SE files. I built this whole HOWTO on that information.

I'd like to thank Greg Ferguson, Tabatha Marshall, and Mark Garboden of the Linux Documentation Project for helping me submit my first HOWTO. Greg Ferguson translated my first document from plain text to XML.

Also, thanks go out to the people in news.software.readers for working with me on this HOWTO, and to Usenet users everywhere for keeping the protocol alive in the midst of ad−filled, license−binding, scattered Web forums.