

[XFCE4 Screen Flicker Switching Desktops \[SOLVED\]](#)

By [Roger Keays](#), 5 March 2016

I just finished install Debian 8.3 on my new laptop. I'm using the XFCE4 desktop environment because I don't want any of that fancy 3D crap that is all the rage nowadays. All I need is a dozen workspaces, and shortcut keys to switch between them.

XFCE4 does the job perfectly. It's light and fast, and doesn't get in your way. One problem I found with the new installation, is a **screen flicker when switching between desktops**. Many users wouldn't notice it, but because nearly all my applications run in a black text terminal, that flash of white as the screen redraws is really disturbing.



[The problem is reported on the GTK mailing list](#) with no solution. I did figure out a workaround though. The flicker is caused by the window manager redrawing the window background. To do this, it uses the theme colours. All you need to do is select a black theme, and the redraw becomes barely noticable.

XFCE4 comes with one dark theme, called '**xfce4-dusk**' (select it in Applications > Settings > Appearance). It doesn't have a black window background, but it is close. I edited the theme to make it a pure black background, which reduces the problem as much as possible. Also, the dark theme is easier on the eyes when using Gnome-GTK applications.

To change the background colour, edit `/usr/share/themes/Xfce-dusk/gtk-2.0/gtkrc` as root, and look for the following block:

```
bg[ACTIVE]          = "#151515"
bg[INSENSITIVE]      = "#303030"
#bg[NORMAL]          = "#232323"
bg[NORMAL]           = "#000000"
bg[PRELIGHT]         = "#003263"
bg[SELECTED]         = "#002849"
```

You can see the change I made above.

This trick really makes a difference on my eyes. I spend about 9 hours a day looking at this screen. The last thing I need is things flashing at me.

I hope this helps you solve whatever problem brought you here.

About Roger Keays



Roger Keays is an artist, an engineer, and a student of life. He has no fixed address and has left footprints on 40-something different countries around the world. Roger is addicted to surfing. His other interests are music, psychology, languages, the proper use of semicolons, and finding good food.