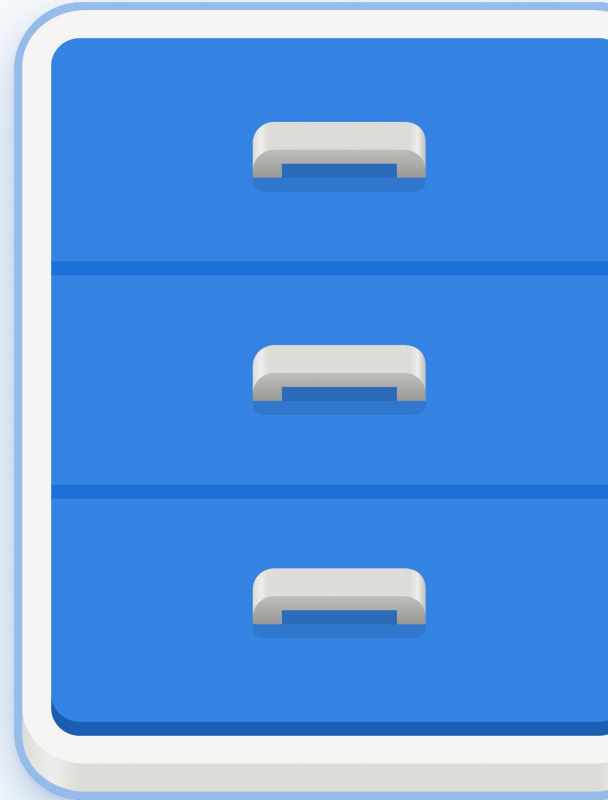


USABILITY TEST REPORT FOR

# GNOME's Files

... also known as Nautilus



# Table of Content

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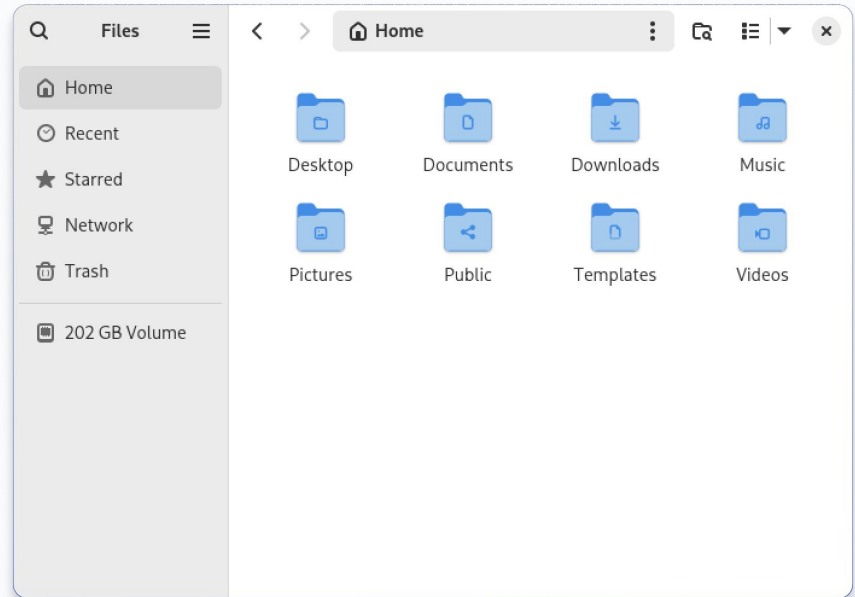
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# Study Introduction

**Files** is the default file manager of the GNOME desktop. It provides a simple and integrated way of managing files when running a Linux-based OS by supporting all the basic functions of a file manager and more.

With recent GNOME releases introducing significant changes to the Files user experience, the design team wanted to assess the effectiveness of these updates, and learn more about other aspects of the user experience.

To support these efforts, we executed a user research project to identify areas for improvement, and gather actionable insights from observed user behaviours that can inform design decisions when addressing identified issues.



# What did we want to learn?

We wanted to be able to answer these questions about the following aspects of Files:

<b>A. Menu Structure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Is the current organization of the menus effective?</li><li>▪ Can people find the buttons they need for basic tasks when they need them?</li></ul>	<b>B. Search Experience</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Do people understand how to search in Files?</li><li>▪ Do people understand the search filters and how to use them?</li><li>▪ Are the search filters effective for their context of use?</li></ul>	<b>C. List View Layout</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Is it challenging for people to access the folder context menu in list view when they have a lot of files?</li><li>▪ Does the current design meet user expectations when accessing a folder context menu in list view?</li></ul>
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## Approach & Methodology

To answer these questions, we chose to conduct a **moderated task-based usability test**. Choosing this approach meant that we could simulate typical usage conditions and observe participants interact with the software. Which made it possible for us to easily identify and investigate pain-points and gaps in the specific aspects of the Files user experience that we were interested in.

To plan the study, we started by defining the ideal participant for our research goals. Next, we established an optimal sequence for the tasks we wanted participants to perform, then crafted a scenario for each, after which we designed the testing environment. Then concluded preparations with a pilot test to identify weaknesses in the study plan and implement revisions where necessary before testing with recruited participants.

To analyze the collected data, we summarized the participant experience for each task using **Jim Hall's Heat Map technique** and synthesized findings from our session notes through **Thematic Analysis**.

## Participant Overview

We recruited and tested with six first-time GNOME users aged twenty-one to forty-seven, from diverse backgrounds, with varying levels of computer expertise. This diversity in the sample helped us keep our findings inclusive by ensuring that we considered a broad range of experiences in the usability test.

Participant ID	Occupation	New to GNOME	Number of Computers	Current OS	Hours of Computer Use per Week
P1	Medical Doctor	Yes	2	Windows 11 Windows 10	25 Hours
P2	Program Analyst	Yes	1	Windows 11	40 Hours
P3	Computer Engineering Student	Yes	1	Windows 11	20 Hours
P4	Content Writer	Yes	1	Windows 10	60 Hours
P5	Legal Practitioner	Yes	1	Windows 11	60 Hours
P6	Teacher	Yes	1	Windows 11	15 Hours

# Findings

---

# Heat Map

The heatmap on the right summarizes the observed experience for all tasks performed in the usability test. It indicates the level of difficulty experienced by each participant for each task, as well as the completion rate for each task.

A cell is **green** if the participant completed the task without any difficulty, **yellow** if the participant completed the task with very little difficulty, **orange** if the participant completed the task with moderate difficulty, **red** if the participant completed the task with severe difficulty, **black** if the participant was unable to complete the task, and **gray** if the participant's approach was outside the scope of the study.





1.

## Icon Size Editors

---

We asked participants to change the size of the thumbnails in Files.

The goal of the task was to assess the findability of the icon size editors and the effectiveness of their design.

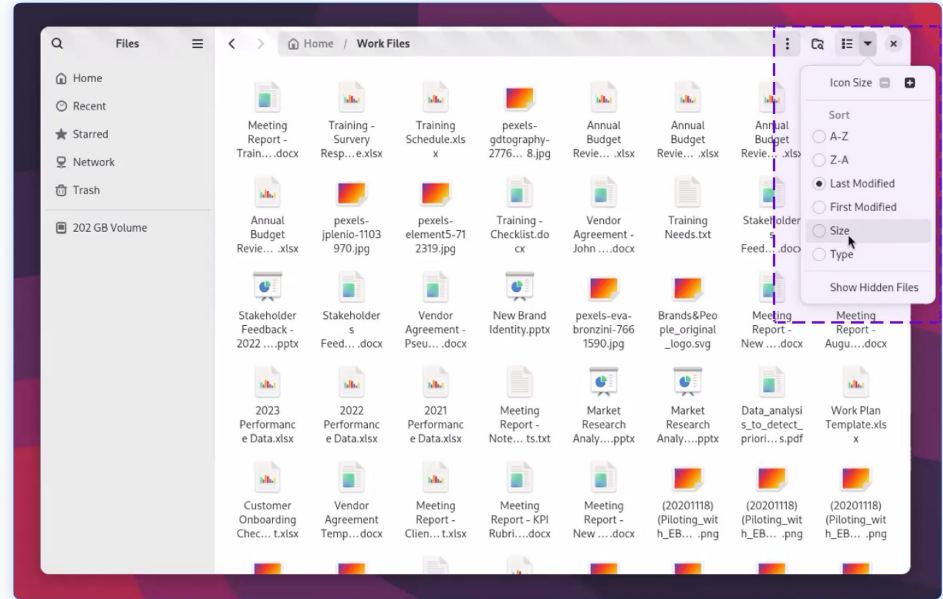
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Change the icon size						

## Task Performance

### Locating the icon size editors was generally challenging for the participants.

Four out of the six participants struggled with this task. Only one participant was able to complete it without any difficulty, and the others who struggled needed as many as six attempts to locate the icon size editors.

Based on how participants interacted when performing this task, our key findings are as follows:



Screenshot from a testing session, showing the icon size editors within the “View Options” menu

## Finding #1

### **The “View Options” menu was an intuitive choice for participants, but so was the “List/Grid View” button.**

Half of the sample started their search for the icon size editors by clicking on the “View Options” button and the other half began by clicking on the “List/Grid View” button.

Across all attempts, almost everyone clicked on both buttons at different points (except for one participant, who gave up on the task without checking the “View Options” menu), and it was mostly because some participants initially confused the “List/Grid View” and “View Options” buttons to be two parts of a single button, while a few others expected to be able to toggle between different icon sizes by repeatedly clicking the “List/Grid View” button.

Overall, these expectations quickly shifted for most of the participants as they revisited the “View Options” menu in subsequent attempts until they either found the icon size editors or gave up on the task.

*“ I believe the options for Grid View and View Options can be together. I expected to find some of the options here [View Options] under here [List/Grid View]. ”*

- P5

*“ Are those the only two views available or are there more? ”*

- P4

## Finding #2

### **The icon size editors were very hard to notice in the “View Options” menu.**

Although participants expected to find the editors in the “View Options” menu, almost everyone who looked here required multiple visits to spot the icon size editors. Some of the participants that eventually completed this task visited the menu on three different attempts before noticing the editors.

One of the participants who gave up on the task also visited “View Options” but just like most of the participants who completed this task, they missed the editors on their initial visit.

We also observed that while the participants repeatedly missed the icon size editors, most of them spotted and clicked on “Size” almost immediately after opening the “View Options” menu.

*“ When I saw it the first time I thought it meant more options. ”*

- P5

*“ I’m surprised I missed it. Maybe I wasn’t looking properly, I only looked down here and I saw size and went for size. ”*

- P1

*“ I see size there. I don’t really know if size will change it ... ”*

- P2

### Finding #3

**The state of the “Zoom Out [-]” button has a significant impact on the discoverability of the icon size editors.**

To further investigate Finding #2, we varied the states of the editors before the 3rd to 6th testing sessions.

Following this adjustment, we discovered that the icon size editors were much easier to find when the “Zoom Out [-]” button was enabled (for the testing sessions with P3 and P4), and conversely much harder to find when it was disabled, regardless of the state of the “Zoom In [+]” button in either case.

## Recommendation

### **Review design of the icon size editors towards retaining visual prominence regardless of their states.**

While there were two main usability concerns identified for this task, the most critical of these two was the observation discussed in Finding #2. To address it, we recommend revising the design of the icon size editors to make them easier for users to notice when scanning the “View Options” menu.

2.

## Properties

---

We asked participants to check how much disk space a folder was using.

The goal of the task was to assess the findability of “Properties” in the Files menu structure.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Find the size of a folder with Properties						

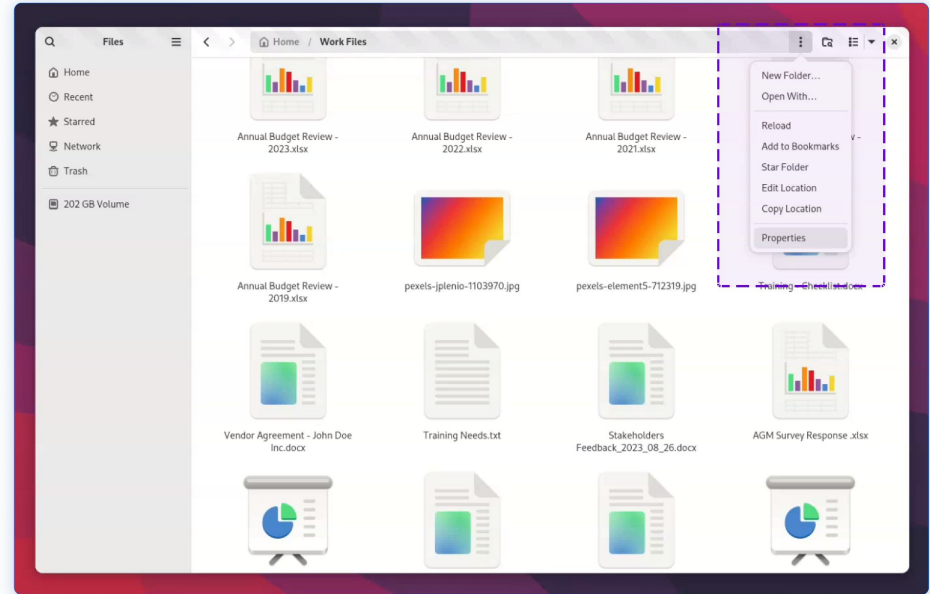
## Task Performance

**This task was generally easy for the participants.**

The majority of the participants instinctively turned to the folder context menu to find “Properties”. Only one participant checked the “Current Folder Menu”, another initially checked “Main Menu” but later found “Properties” in the folder context menu.

Overall, no one struggled to complete this task.

Beyond the findability of Properties, we also made the following observations during this task:



Screenshot from a testing session showing “Properties” in the “Current Folder Menu”

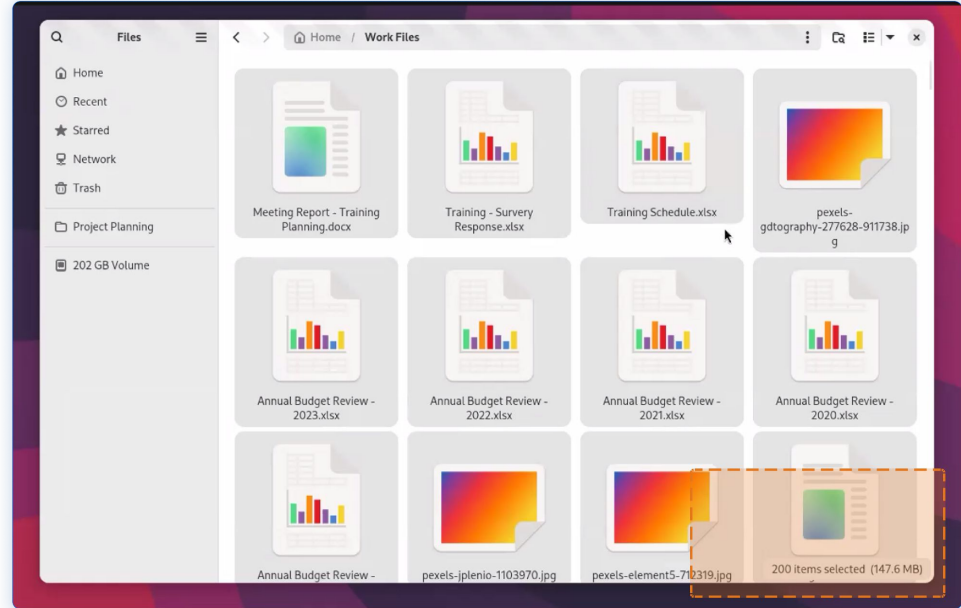


## Observation #1

A participant particularly liked that they could view the size of a folder at the bottom of the window, by selecting all items in the folder.

*“ I noticed that from clicking a particular file it showed the size, so I selected all the files to see the total size. ”*

- P4



Screenshot from a testing session showing the size of all selected files at the bottom-right corner of the Files window

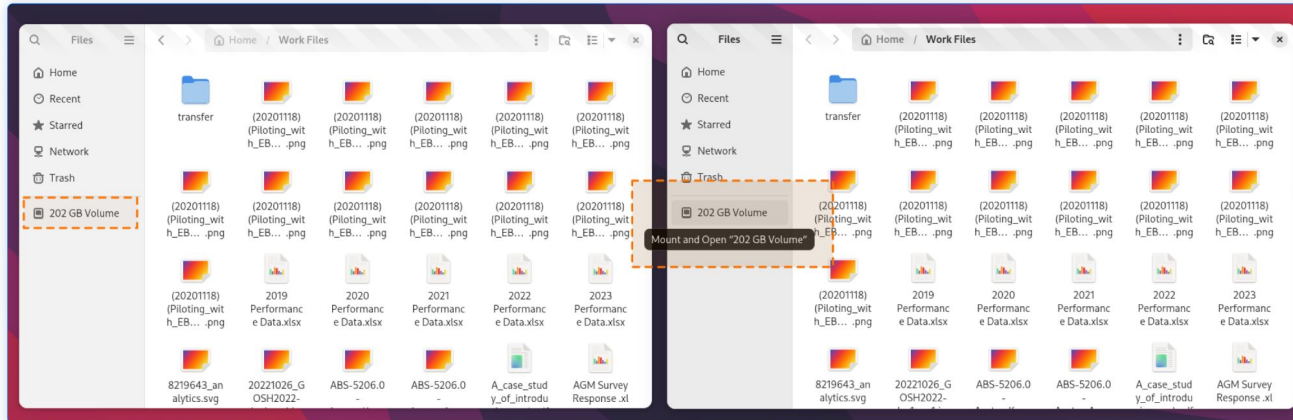
## Observation #2

### Participants were distracted by the “202 GB Volume” in the sidebar.

Half of the participants hovered over this UI element before making any attempt to find a “Properties” button. They reported doing this because although the element reads as a size, they couldn’t quite figure out what it might be communicating.

*“ I saw the 202GB and I wasn't so sure of what it was. ”*

- P1



## Recommendation

**Make it easier for users to correctly interpret the information represented by “202 GB Volume” in sidebar.**

The current placement of “Properties” in the menu structure was generally consistent with participant expectations and this made the task very easy for everyone. Therefore, our recommendation for this task is aimed at Observation #2.

To address the gap observed here, our recommendation is to consider providing a form of description that makes it easier for users to make sense of the information that appears in this section of the sidebar.

3.

## Select All

---

We asked participants to move all the files in a folder into a different folder.

The goal of the task was to assess discoverability of the “Select All” menu item.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Select all files in a folder with “Select All”						

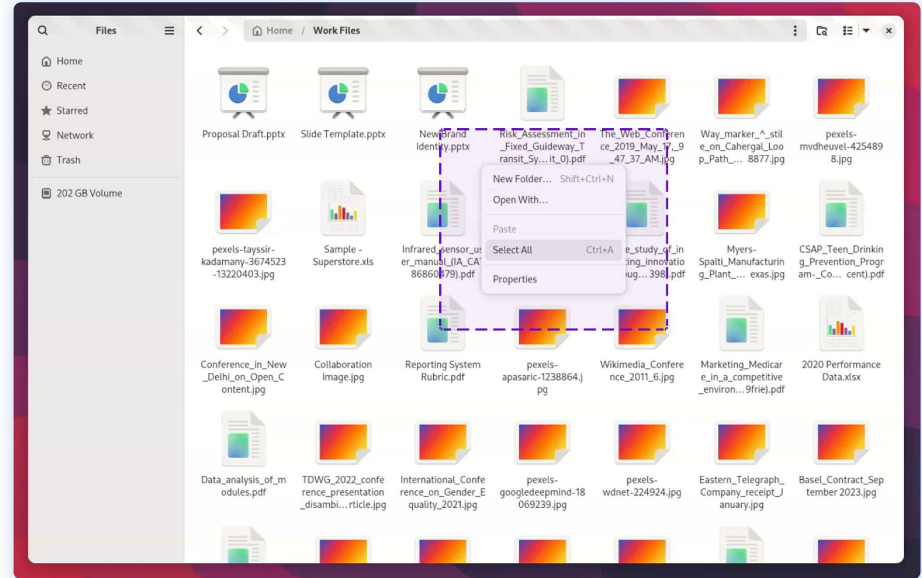
## Task Performance

### Majority of the participants struggled with this task.

This task produced contrasting outcomes in the usability test: two of the six participants found “Select All” without any difficulty on their first attempt, whereas three participants gave up on the task after multiple unsuccessful attempts.

However, a closer look at how the sample interacted revealed that the location of “Select All” was indeed intuitive, but only for a subset of the sample.

Our key findings for this task are:



A screenshot of Files from a testing session showing a participant's interaction with “Select All”

## Finding #1

**The current location of the “Select All” menu item was consistent with the expectations of participants who were already familiar with the feature.**

While almost everyone expected to find a “Select All” menu item, half of the sample gave up on finding one after at least three attempts. Only two participants checked the folder context menu, and for them, it was an intuitive interaction.

The participants who gave up on this task reported not knowing where to begin because they were unfamiliar with a “Select All” feature and typically used a keyboard shortcut (Ctrl + A) or “Click and Drag” when performing this task on their computers.

*“ If it was my computer I would use a keyboard shortcut. I use a keyboard shortcut for most of my actions. ”*

- P4

## Finding #2

**The participants who were unable to complete this task may have struggled a little less if “Select All” was also in “Current Folder Menu”.**

The participants who didn't find the “Select All” menu item mostly sought it in “Current Folder Menu” and “View Options” menu. But while the majority of these participants checked “View Options” menu before “Current Folder Menu”, in subsequent attempts, they generally revisited “Current Folder Menu” while no one returned to “View Options” after that initial visit.

Two of these participants would later discover “Select All” in the folder context menu as the session progressed and they were mildly surprised that they'd missed it during this task.

*“ Oh! There's a Select All when you right-click, how come I didn't see that. ”*

- P4

## Recommendation

### **Add “Select All” to the list of menu items in “Current Folder Menu”.**

The current location of the “Select All” button was consistent with the expectations of participants who were familiar with a “Select All” feature. But, based on how the sample interacted, our recommendation is to aid discovery of “Select All” for users who are unfamiliar with the feature by adding it to the list of options available in “Current Folder Menu”.



4.

## Undo

---

We asked participants to reverse the move action they completed in the previous task.

The goal of the task was to assess findability of the "Undo/Redo" button in Files.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Undo an action with the “Undo/Redo” button						

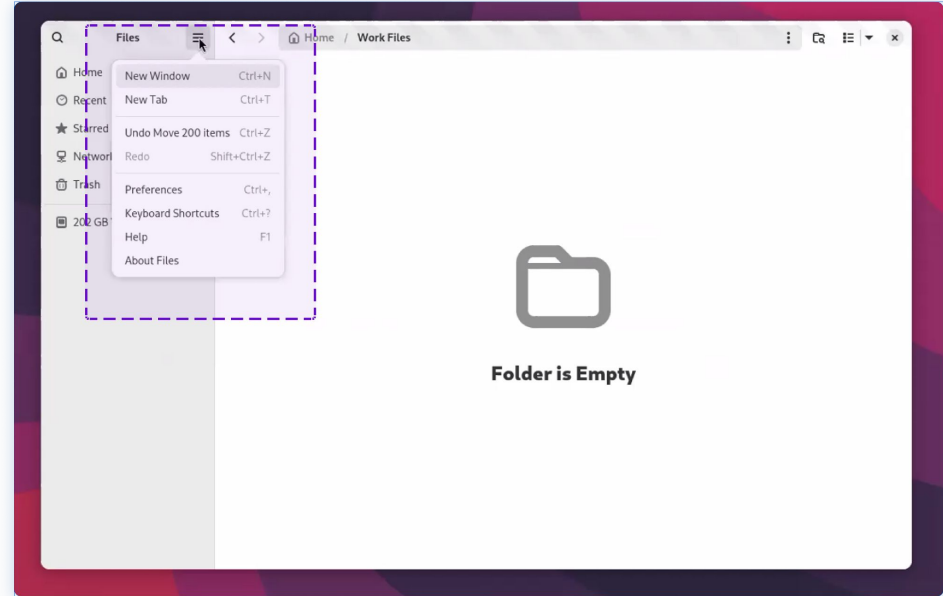
## Task Performance

**This task generated opposite outcomes across the sample.**

One half of the sample was able to find the “Undo” button, and easily completed the task in one to three attempts.

The other half of the sample was unable to find it, and abandoned the task after two to eight unsuccessful attempts, without any interaction with the “Main Menu” button.

Based on how the sample interacted during this task, our key findings are:



A screenshot of Files from a testing session, showing the “Undo” button within “Main Menu”

## Finding #1

### **Some participants didn't expect to find "Undo" in "Main Menu" because of how they assumed controls were organized within the Files layout.**

While one participant found the current "Undo" location to be intuitive, some of the other participants reported not considering "Main Menu" earlier (or at all) because they assumed it would only contain options that were relevant to the items in the sidebar. So here's where they looked instead:

- Across all attempts, the participants mostly checked the following menus: Folder context menu (five total clicks); View Options (four total clicks); Main Menu (three total clicks); Current Folder Menu (two total clicks from a single participant).
- For half of the sample, the first menu they checked was the folder context menu, and one participant gave up when they didn't find "Undo" in this menu.

*" I went there because it's a common place to check. "*

- P5

*" I didn't think there would be anything on this side (sidebar) that I can use. "*

- P2

*" I have no idea where to check next. "*

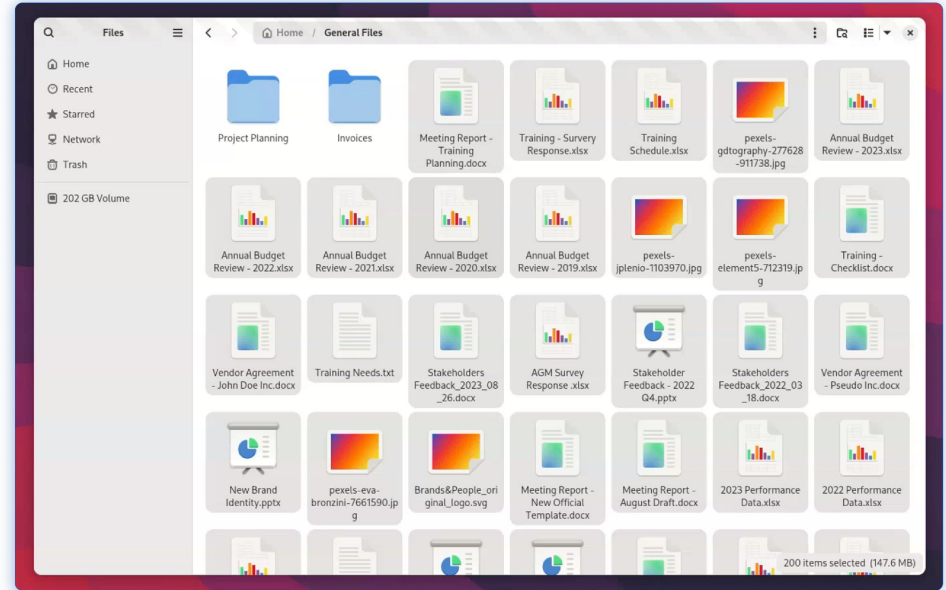
- P6

## Observation #1

**Files's sustained highlight for recently moved items was a delightful discovery for the participants who got to see it.**

Participants remarked on this being a very helpful feature because it made it a lot easier for them to act on the files they'd just moved without having to identify them individually.

*“ When I had to move the files, I liked that I got into the new folder and they were all pre-selected. That was nice. ”* - P4



Screenshot from a testing session showing the pre-selected files that a participant transferred into the folder

## Recommendation

### **Include “Undo” in the “Folder Context Menu”.**

In line with our findings for this task, we recommend considering adding the “Undo” menu item to the menu items in the folder context menu to improve its findability as this is where the majority of the participants instinctively went to look for it.

5.

## Sort

---

We asked participants to make Files display the contents of a folder in alphabetical order.

The goal of the task was to assess both the findability and the usability of Files's "Sort" feature.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Change the sort order						

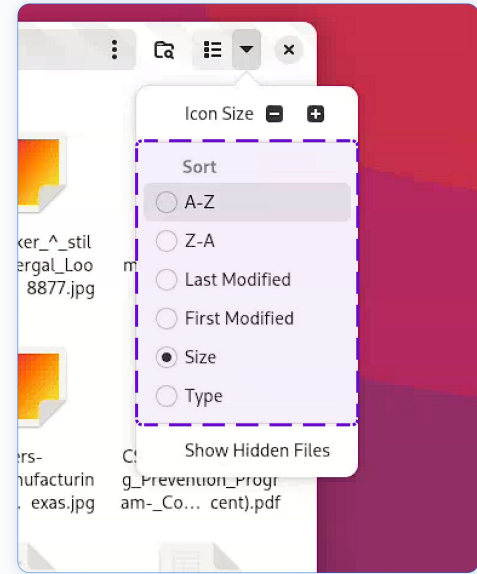
## Task Performance

### **This was the best performing task of the study.**

Every participant completed this task on their first attempt without any difficulty.

Although some participants reported noticing the Sort feature in earlier visits to the “View Options” menu, the interaction was equally as intuitive for a participant who had not visited the menu until this task.

Generally, they all cited familiarity with the design pattern as the reason they were able to complete the task so easily.



A screenshot from a testing session showing the “Sort” feature as a participant performs the task

6.

## List View/Grid View

---

We asked participants to get Files to display the contents of a folder in list format.

The main goal of the task was to transition from grid view to list view in preparation for the next task, but we also took the opportunity to investigate the intuitiveness of the interaction.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Change Files display from “Grid View” to “List View”						



## Task Performance

**This task was generally very straightforward for the participants, and they completed it with ease.**

Generally, the participants easily completed this task and almost everyone did it on their first attempt. Only one participant clicked on “View Options” and scanned the menu before clicking “List View”.

We identified two main reasons behind the success of this task:

- Participants' familiarity with the “List/Grid View” icon.
- The limited scope of the button's functionality, which made it easy for participants to memorize its function from earlier passing interactions with the button while performing other tasks.

*“ Oh sorry! There is a button there that can easily change the view. ”*

- P2

*“ It was because of the icon. ”*

- P1

*“ I knew to click on List View because in my previous interactions I had already used that to toggle between List view and Grid view. ”*

- P4

7.

## Open Item Location

---

We asked participants to go to the location of a file they'd found through search.

The goal of this task was to assess discoverability of the “Open Item location” menu item.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Go to a file's location from search results with “Open Item Location”						

## Task Performance

### **The majority of the participants completed this task with ease.**

The usability test produced mixed outcomes for this task. Half of the sample instinctively checked the file's context menu for a menu item to execute the instruction. For these participants, the interaction was seamless, and they completed the task on their first attempt without any challenges.

For the other half of the sample, their first instinct was to memorize the file's location as displayed below the file name in the search result (or as shown in Properties), so they could navigate to it.

All participants in the second half of the sample reported being unfamiliar with an "Open Item Location" feature prior to the task. But, when prompted to try a different approach, one out of the three, instinctively checked the file's context menu and easily completed the task, while the other two made a few more unsuccessful attempts and eventually gave up on it. No clear pattern emerged from the subsequent attempts of the participants who gave up on the task.

*“ I will look at the file path for this file and then just use that next time. ”*

- P3

*“ I was looking for the location of the file. I don't think I've seen a button like that in any other application before. I just go a step back and find my way from there. ”*

- P1

*“ If I had done it on my computer I would have tried, but I haven't done it before. ”*

- P2

8.

## Show Hidden Files

---

We asked participants to reveal the hidden files in a folder.

The goal of the task was to assess findability of “Show Hidden Files” within the Files menu structure.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Reveal hidden items in a folder with “Show Hidden Files”						

## Task Performance

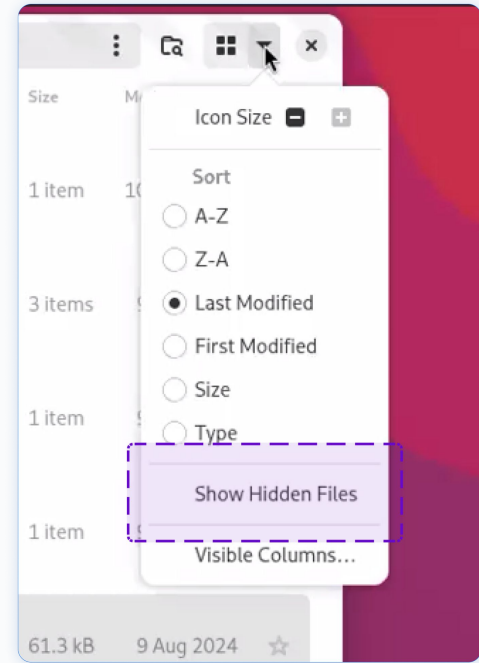
### **This task was very easy for the participants to complete.**

Almost everyone completed this task without any difficulty.

Half of the sample instinctively checked “View Options” for a control on their first attempt, two participants made it to the menu on their second attempt, and one participant made it to “View Options” on their third attempt. Nonetheless, everyone identified and clicked on “Show Hidden Files” on their first visit to the “View Options” menu.

The other menus participants visited across their attempts were: “Main Menu” (two participants) and “Folder Context Menu” (one participant).

Our key findings for the task are as follows:



A screenshot from a testing session showing “Show Hidden Files” as a participants tries to complete the task

## Findings

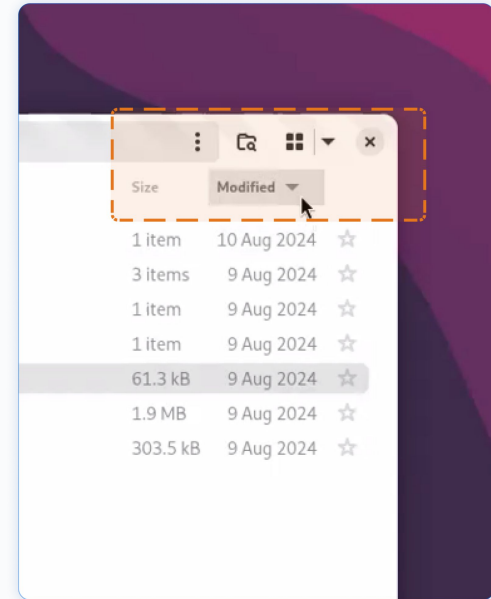
### 1. The label was very intuitive for participants.

The participants who made multiple attempts at this task did not spend a lot of time scanning when they opened the wrong menu. They seemed to be very clear on what they were looking for and moved on almost immediately.

The label also read “Show Hidden Files”, even though clicking on the menu item reveals both hidden files and folders, but this had no observed effect on how the participants interacted.

### 2. Use of the same icon for both “View Options” and “Modified” was misleading for a participant.

One participant clicked on “Modified” when attempting this task with the expectation that it would reveal a menu, just like the “View Options” icon button.



A screenshot from a testing session showing a participant interacting with “Modified” after misinterpreting the attached icon

## Recommendations

Participants generally found it easy to locate the “Show Hidden Files” menu item. But we have a few side recommendations based on our observations for this task. They are:

### **1. Use different icons for unrelated tasks to help users prevent errors.**

Consider changing the icon for “Modified” to keep users from making wrong assumptions about the functionality of the button since the same icon is being used for “View Options” (which reveals a menu when clicked).

### **2. Rename label to improve clarity and promote internal consistency in the Files user experience.**

Consider renaming “Show Hidden Files” to “Show Hidden Items”. Adjusting this naming would communicate the scope of the button with more clarity and improve internal consistency with similarly named features (like “Open Item Location”) in Files.

9.

## Add To Bookmarks

---

We asked participants to add a folder to the sidebar.

The goal of the task was to assess the findability of “Add To Bookmarks” in the menu structure.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Add a folder to bookmarks with “Add To Bookmarks”						



## Task Performance

### **Generally, the participants struggled with this task.**

Only one participant was able to find the button without any difficulty. With over half of the sample making between six to nine attempts before completing or giving up on the task, some of the participants who found “Add To Bookmarks” struggled as much as the participant who gave up on the task.

Participants also approached this task in distinct ways. Two began their attempts by checking "Current Folder Menu" while the others started with: checking the folder context menu; checking “Main Menu”; checking “View Options”; starring the folder with the expectation that it will appear in the sidebar below “Starred”.

Overall, we discovered that an overlap of how “Bookmark”, “Starred”, and “Favourites” are implemented in other software influenced how some participants interacted during this task. We saw these influences in how they expected to be able to perform the task.

Our key findings for this task are as follows:

*“ This “Add To Bookmarks” and “Star”, it’s quite confusing for me, but it might be different for other users. ”*

- P1

## Finding #1

### **Participants expected to find “Add To Bookmarks” in the folder context menu.**

Majority of the participants mostly turned to the folder context menu in their subsequent attempts, revisiting it severally, until they either gave up or completed the task. Participants accessed the menu both from within the folder and outside it (from the parent folder). They generally reported not checking “Current Folder Menu” or considering it earlier because they assumed it would contain the same menu items as the folder context menu.

Generally, participants also checked the “Main Menu” and “View Options” menus in their attempts, but these menus received minimal engagement compared to the folder context menu which got 83% more clicks than “Main Menu” and “View Options” individually, and 67% more clicks than both menus combined.

*“ I wouldn’t have expected the button to be here. I’d expect some of this as well to be on the right-click menu [Folder context menu]. ”*

- P1

## Finding #2

### **The label (Add To Bookmarks) was confusing for most of the participants.**

For almost everyone, clicking the "Add To Bookmarks" menu item was an explorative choice as they hesitated and expressed uncertainty before deciding to click the button.

Some participants stated that their hesitation stemmed from the term “Bookmarks” in the label, because their understanding of the term and its function in other software (especially web browsers) seemed very different from what they were trying to do with this button in Files.

Nonetheless, while the participants struggled to find the menu item, everyone who found it decided to click on it despite their initial hesitation.

*“ I’m thinking of selecting ‘Add To Bookmarks’ but I don’t know where the Bookmark will take me to. Let’s see... ”*

- P5

*“ We have ‘Add To Bookmarks’. No. I’m not bookmarking. ”*

- P2

## Recommendations

Based on our observations for this task, our recommendations are:

### **1. Add “Add To Bookmarks” to the menu items available in the folder context menu.**

We recommend considering including “Add To Bookmarks” to the menu items in the folder context menu to aid discovery of the feature for new users as this is where the participants mostly expected to find a feature like this.

### **2. Revise the label for this menu item to improve its clarity and eliminate cognitive friction from the interaction.**

We recommend revising the label for this feature (especially use of the term “Bookmarks”) to an intuitive alternative that would be a lot easier for new users to accurately interpret when they attempt this task on their own.

An alternative could also be to consider providing a hint or reference in the sidebar that helps users connect the dots on how the term “Bookmarks” applies in the Files user experience.

10.

## Search

---

We asked participants to find a specific file using the limited information we provided about the file.

The goal of the task was to assess usability of the Search feature and Search Filters, as well as the intuitiveness of the interaction when performing a search task in Files.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Find a file using the search feature, with filters						

## Task Performance

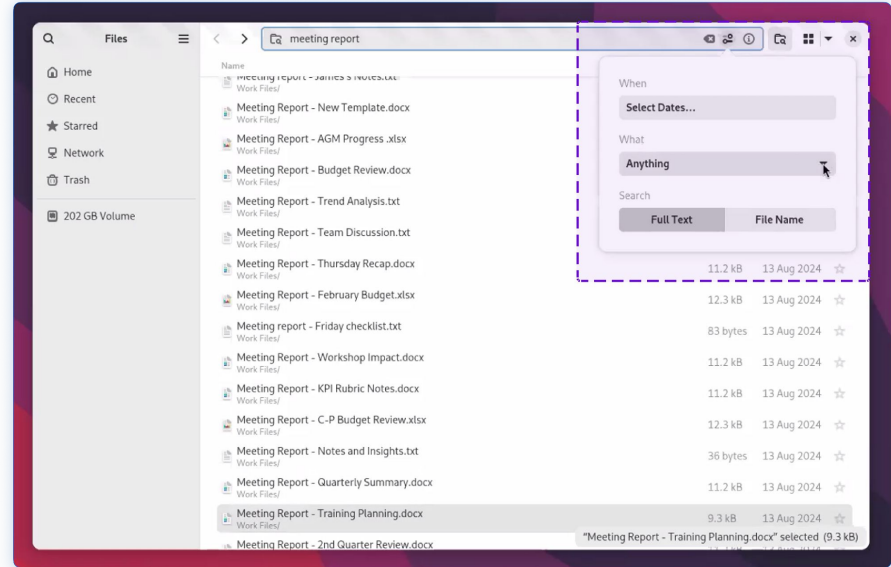
**This task was mostly easy for the participants to complete.**

Two out of the six participants completed this task with moderate difficulty, but half of the sample completed it without any difficulty.

Our findings for this task are:

- 1. The search task flow was very intuitive for all participants when using “Search Current Folder”.**

Everyone knew to navigate to “Home” and initiate their search from there if they wanted to find a file that may be located outside the current folder.



A Screenshot of Files from a testing session showing the search filters and the “Search Current Folder” button

## Finding #2

**The search filters were generally easy for people to use and proved effective for their context of use. But, some filter labels were confusing for the participants.**

All participants were able to find the file using the search filters and almost everyone had an intuitive interaction with them.

Different participants praised being able to filter by type, and the use of period estimates for “Select Dates” input, because it was more accommodating of their needs. Meanwhile another participant suggested renaming some filter labels like “Anything” to “File Type” because they were initially confused about what it was referring to and what “Anything” could be.

*“ I liked that you could filter by type, like select any file type you’re looking for. ”*

– P4

*“ The Select Dates helped because you really can’t have an exact date for when it was done [referring to when a file or folder was created]. ”*

– P1

### Finding #3

## The icon buttons needed to complete this task were confusing for some of the participants.

The “Search Current Folder” icon wasn’t intuitive for some participants because they were looking for a magnifying glass, which, in the current icon, is a relatively smaller element. This caused some participants to struggle initially as they tried to find a way to initiate a search.

The tooltip eventually resolved any doubts the participants had once they hovered on the icon, but the participants who struggled to identify the icon made up to three attempts with different UI components (all located in the header bar), before hovering on the “Search Current Folder” button.

For the “Filter Search results” icon, most of the participants easily identified the icon and continued with the task, but one participant struggled to identify the icon and was unable to proceed without help.

*“ The problem is the search icons here, it's quite small. It should be a bit bigger than that because you have to look really well before you find it. ”*

– P1

*“ I think that should be this one [referring to the ‘Search Current Folder’ button]. I hope it opens up something that allows me to search. ”*

– P5



## Recommendations

### **1. Review design of the “Search Current Folder” icon to enhance its intuitiveness.**

We observed that when participants performed familiar tasks, they scanned the UI for familiar cues, in this case they scanned the header bar for a magnifying glass and had some trouble finding it. Our recommendation would to consider making the magnifying glass in the icon more prominent to make it easier for users to notice it when scanning the header bar for a search button.

### **2. Review filter labels towards optimizing them for clarity.**

Our recommendation here is to consider revisiting the filter labels to see if any of them, in addition to “Anything” can be further optimized for clarity, or be more tailored to the context of a search activity, as this would make them more intuitive for users when performing search actions in Files.

11.

## List View Layout

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With Files in List View, we asked participants to create a new folder in a folder containing over 200 files.

The goal of the task was to assess findability of the “New Folder” menu item and to investigate the user experience when opening a folder context menu in list view

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Create a new folder while in List View						

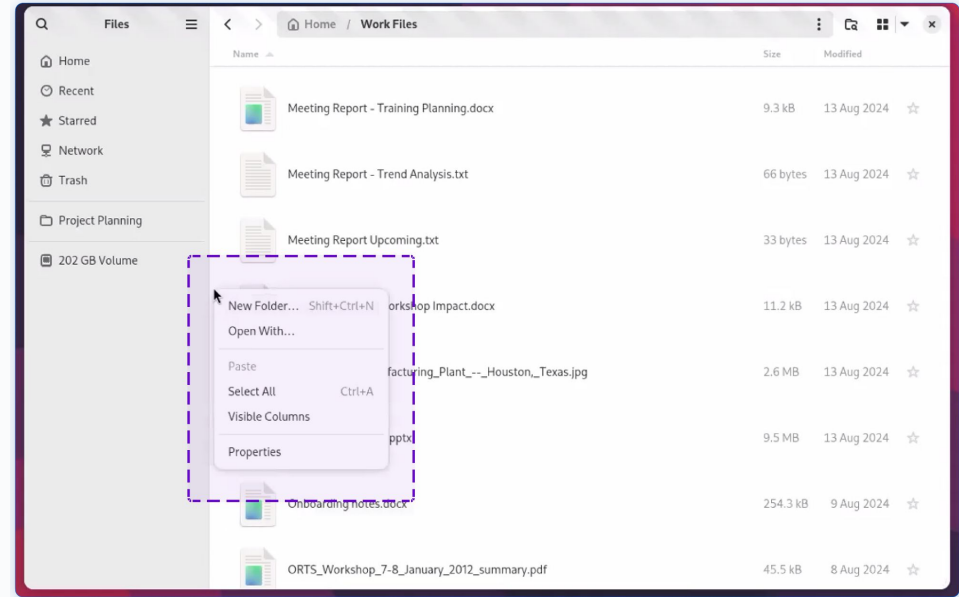
## Task Performance

**This task was generally challenging for the participants.**

Visiting the folder context-menu was the most prevalent and intuitive approach observed among the participants when they attempted this task.

However, while the “New Folder” button was present in the menu that everyone expected it to be in, the list view layout did not effectively support their behaviours when accessing the folder context menu.

Our key findings for this task are:



A screenshot of Files from a testing session, showing a participant's right-click action on the margin

## Finding #1

### **The absence of sufficient space between the files was a major source of frustration for the participants when performing this task.**

Participants expected to be able to find and click on empty space between the files to access the folder context menu. But although almost everyone instinctively began the task by hovering between files in search of clickable space, only two out of the six were eventually able to open the folder context menu in this way. The other four arrived at the conclusion that they weren't going to be able to, and went over to right-click along margins of the layout to open the context menu.

While some participants came to this conclusion a lot sooner without any clicks, a few others made as many as seven attempts (with lots of scrolls and hovering in-between) before choosing to try along the margins. Feelings of frustrations were observed and participants verbally expressed their frustration as they navigated this challenge.

*“ You can just right click and create a new folder but I wasn't clicking on an empty space. ”*

- P1

*“ I'm trying to right click on an empty space not a particular item, but it seems to be clicking on the items instead. ”*

- P4

*“ I went to the margins because there's a tendency that when you click on this area here, you're going to click on an already existing file above or below, so you have to come to the edge. ”*

- P3

## Recommendation

### **Provide sufficient spacing between the contents of a folder in list view layout.**

In line with our findings for this task, we recommend reviewing the list view layout for opportunities to better meet user expectations and support the participants' behaviour observed in this task, to significantly improve the user experience when creating a new folder or accessing the folder context menu in list view.

# Discussion

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## Discussion

Overall, the usability test effectively supported our research goals and provided qualitative insights that directly addressed our research questions.

Reflecting on the study's limitations, a key aspect that may have influenced our result was the participant sample. We tested with a sample that was predominantly composed of Windows 11 users, although unintended. Ideally, a more diverse group that included current users of different operating systems could have further enriched our findings by providing a broader range of experiences to consider. However, we mitigated this limitation by recognizing that the participants who had previous experience with more operating systems brought their knowledge from those interactions into their use of Files, which likely influenced their behaviours and expectations during the usability test.

# Next Steps

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## Next Steps

We learned in this study that users have preferences for performing certain tasks.

Future research efforts can build on this finding by exploring the usage patterns of Files users to inform decisions around the most effective ways to support them.

**Thank You!**

