

KDE Instant Messaging

For KDE enthusiasts, Kopete is a general-purpose instant-messenger client compatible with all major services. This article offers a quick introduction to Kopete's flexibility.

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Kopete is the KDE instant-messaging client. It supports a wide range of protocols and ships with a great deal of plugins to extend its functionality. Integration with KDE is one of its strongest points, with support for linking contacts to KAddressBook entries to integrate IM functionality with Kontact. With the coming of KDE 3.5, it even supports Webcams on MSN and Yahoo.

Most aspects of Kopete's appearance and behaviour can be customised. This flexibility can sometimes make Kopete's configuration dialogs seem a little overwhelming. This article takes a look at how to demystify some of Kopete's configuration options as well as how to get set up with some common accounts.

SETTING UP ACCOUNTS

Kopete supports most popular IM protocols, including MSN Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, ICQ, Jabber and AIM. It also has basic support for IRC.

The first time you launch Kopete, it takes you straight to the Select Messaging Service dialog where you can create an account. To reach this dialog again, select Configure... from the Settings menu, and in the dialog that appears, make sure you have Accounts selected in the icon bar to the left. Then click the New... button.

Let's take a look at adding an MSN Messenger and a Jabber account. Setting up the other protocols is a similar process.

MSN MESSENGER

In our on-line worlds, most of us have buddy networks that span the globe and probably include all popular services and operating systems. So it is inevitable that ultimately we will have to communicate with loved ones who



Figure 1. The Add Account Wizard

are using Microsoft Windows. To set up Kopete to connect to the MSN Messenger network, you'll need a Microsoft Passport. If you already have one, skip straight to the next section.

In the Select Messaging Service dialog, highlight MSN Messenger and click Next. If you don't have a Microsoft Passport already, Kopete can help you create one. Click the Register New Account button, and your default browser will launch to take you to the Microsoft Passport page.

You can use any valid e-mail address to sign up for a Microsoft Passport. If you don't already have an e-mail address, you can optionally sign up for a Hotmail account from this page. For this example, I'm going to use my Gmail account.

Click continue on the Microsoft Passport page to start the registration wizard. Fill in all of the details, and click submit. The next step asks you to read and agree to the Passport Network Terms of Service and the Passport Network Privacy Statement.

If you used something other than a Hotmail account to sign up, you'll need to confirm your e-mail address. After completing the sign up process, you should have an e-mail waiting for you in the account you used to sign up with. After following the instructions there, your e-mail address is verified for use as a Microsoft Passport.

SIGNING IN WITH YOUR MICROSOFT PASSPORT

Enter your MSN Passport ID and password into the appropriate forms on the wizard, and click Next. Click Finish on the next screen, and Kopete will connect to the MSN Messenger service.

JABBER

Jabber is an open, secure alternative IM protocol. Jabber works a little differently from MSN or AIM or other proprietary protocols. Most of those services have a single centralised set of servers that you connect to, controlled by the owners of the protocol. There are hundreds of open Jabber servers to choose from, or you could even run your own. People on different servers are able to contact each other.

Creating a Jabber account is usually done within your Jabber client. In the Accounts configuration dialog, select New... and choose Jabber from



Figure 2. Registering a Jabber ID

the list of messaging services. In the Account Information dialog, click Register New Account. In the dialog that appears, you can browse a list of public servers by clicking Choose. I already know a server I'd like to try, kdetalk.net, a KDE Jabber server for users and developers.

Fill in the name of the Jabber server you've selected and the Jabber ID you would like to have as well as a password. Jabber IDs usually take the form of username@server, much like an e-mail address. Here, I'm choosing canllaith@kdetalk.net. If that user name is already taken, the server will prompt me to try another one.

You can optionally turn on Use protocol encryption to encrypt your traffic to the server. Click Register and then Close. Back at the Account Information dialog, optionally tick the box to have Kopete remember your password and click Next. Click Finish, and Kopete connects to the new account.

ADDING BUDDIES

To add buddies or contacts, you'll usually need to know their e-mail addresses or user names for the service to which you want to add them. To add a buddy, either click the second button on Kopete's toolbar (usually depicting a star) or select Add Contact from the File menu.

If the person you want to add has an entry in your KDE address book, tick the box Use the KDE address book for this contact to enable linking the address book entry to your Kopete contact. Select the address book entry for this contact (this step is skipped if you leave

the box unticked), and click Next. Enter the name you want your contact to have on your contact list—this can be whatever you like. If you want to create a group in which to put your contact, you can do so here with the Create New Group button.

Click Next, and select the account to which you'd like to add the buddy. Here, I'm adding a Jabber contact. Enter your contact's ID on the next screen and click Next, and then click Finish to see your contact added to your list.

SENDING MESSAGES

To send a message to a contact, simply click on his or her name in your contact list. Kopete obeys the global KDE settings for single- or double-click. By default, messages received show up as a small bubble above the Kopete icon in your system tray. If you prefer behaviour more like Gaim, you can disable the bubble and the message queue in Appearance→Events.

CUSTOMISING THE MESSAGE WINDOW

Most aspects of Kopete's message windows can be customised. The toolbars can be customised or removed, and the formatting of messages can be modified with stylesheets, fonts and different emoticon sets.

Kopete includes several chat window styles, and more can be downloaded from <http://www.kde-look.org>, under the Kopete Styles section. To install a Kopete style you have downloaded to disk, select Configure... from the Settings menu. Select Appearance from the

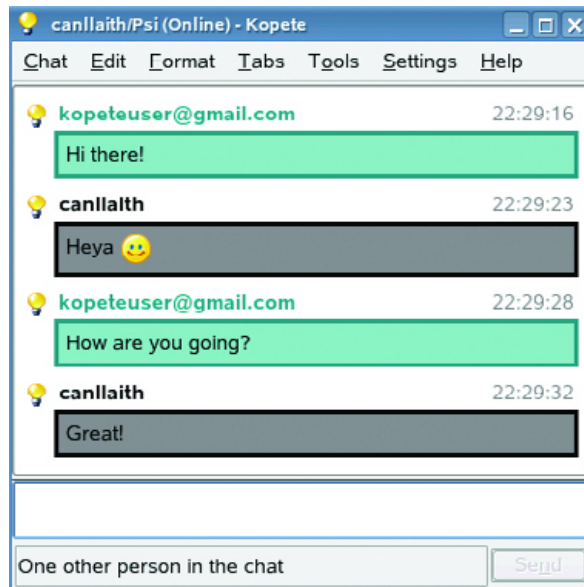


Figure 3. Kopete's Messaging Window

icon bar to the left and then go to the Chat Window tab. This is where you manage your chat window styles.

Click Import underneath the preview window, and then in the dialog that appears, select the XSL file (or the tarball containing it) that you downloaded. If the style is valid, Kopete imports it and then displays the style in the preview window. Click OK to apply the new style.

If Kopete displays an error message, it usually means the style isn't valid. Unfortunately, this happens sometimes with user-contributed styles,

so simply try another one. If you sort the styles by rating on <http://www.kde-look.org>, generally the highest-rated ones are well-formed XSLT.

Emoticon themes also can be downloaded from <http://www.kde-look.org> and installed in much the same way. Once you've downloaded an emoticon theme, you then can install it using the Install theme file... button underneath the emotion preview under Appearance on the Emoticons tab.

"That's all pretty nice", I hear you say. "But Gaim does tabs!"

Kopete also has this functionality, but it's not enabled by default. You can enable them in Behaviour→Chat, by modifying the Chat Window Grouping Policy. It's extremely flexible, allowing you to define whether you want messages from all contacts to open in tabs in the same window, as Gaim does, or whether you want to tab contacts together based on which group they are in or what account they are added to.

Kopete has a wide range of configuration options not covered here. For more information, try the Kopete handbook or talk to the developers on irc.freenode.net in #kopete. ■



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