

A User Guide for GnuCash

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1 Introduction

1.1 What is GnuCash?

GnuCash is a *free* accounting program for managing personal and small business finances. It runs on computers that use the GNU/Linux operating system.

GnuCash performs a similar job to some popular *non-free* applications that run on versions of the Microsoft Windows operating system: Quicken and Microsoft Money. However, GnuCash has (at least) one major advantage compared to those other products: the source code for GnuCash is freely available. Anyone can extend and improve GnuCash.

1.2 This Document

This document is a *user guide* for GnuCash. It describes many of the features available in GnuCash,¹ hopefully in a way that will help people to get more value from the application.

You can download the latest version of this document from:

<http://www.object-refinery.com/gnucash/index.html>

You are permitted to copy and/or distribute this document free of charge, but you may not modify its content in any way.

1.3 Updates

I plan to continue updating and enhancing this guide, as time permits. If you would like to accelerate this process, please consider sponsoring the development of the guide by “buying” your copy of the guide. The price is US\$24.95, and you can pay by credit card via the Kagi online store:

<http://order.kagi.com/?JBN>

Purchase is appreciated, but not required.

1.4 Important Notice

Before you read any further, you should note the following points:

- this document aims to describe how the GnuCash application works, not how you should arrange your financial affairs. Nothing in this document should be considered as *financial advice*. You should consult a professional financial adviser if you are unsure of the best way to manage your finances.
- I *believe* that the descriptions in this document are accurate—however, I cannot *guarantee* that this is the case. You must use the information in this document *at your own risk, or not use it at all*.
- I am not a GnuCash developer, nor am I directly involved in the GnuCash project. I simply use GnuCash on a regular basis to manage my personal and business finances.

¹At the time of writing, I am using GnuCash version 1.6.2 on SuSE Linux 7.3.

1.5 Feedback

I am happy to receive feedback about this document. Please send e-mail to:

`david.gilbert@object-refinery.com`

2 More About GnuCash

2.1 The Gnome Project

GnuCash is part of the Gnome project, which “has built a complete, free and easy-to-use desktop environment for the user, as well as a powerful application framework for the software developer”.² You can find out more about Gnome at:

<http://www.gnome.org>

In particular, you may be interested to find out more about some of the other free applications that are being developed for Gnome (for example, the Gnumeric spreadsheet).

2.2 GnuCash Development

GnuCash has been under development since 1997, by volunteers from all over the world. There is some information about the history of GnuCash (for those that are interested) in the online documentation that is included with GnuCash.

Other information about the *GnuCash project* can be found at the official GnuCash website (an excellent source of information for both users and developers):

<http://www.gnucash.org>

The latest (stable) version of GnuCash is 1.6.6.

2.3 The GnuCash Licence

GnuCash is licensed under the terms of the *GNU General Public Licence (GPL)*. This means that GnuCash is “free software”, as defined by the Free Software Foundation. There is more information about the GPL and the Free Software Foundation at:

<http://www.fsf.org>

The GPL fits the criteria of the *Open Source Definition*, which means that GnuCash is “open source”. You can find out more about open source software at:

<http://www.opensource.org>

2.4 Versions

As mentioned previously, the latest *stable version* of GnuCash is 1.6.6. New versions are released fairly frequently.

Many people will be using an older version of GnuCash. For example, I am using version 1.6.2 (installed by default with SuSE Linux 7.3). It makes sense to have an up-to-date version of GnuCash, but don't feel that you have to upgrade to the very latest version, unless:

²Quote from the Gnome web site.

- there is a bug in your version of GnuCash that is affecting you directly, and you know that the bug has been fixed in a more recent version of GnuCash.
- there is a new feature in a more recent version of GnuCash that is going to make a big difference to you.

Upgrading GnuCash requires some technical knowledge and will take a reasonable amount of your time. It also entails some risk. Weigh up the costs and benefits before proceeding with an upgrade.

2.5 Getting Support

Support for GnuCash is provided on a voluntary basis via the *GnuCash user mailing list*. There are many subscribers to this list (including many of the GnuCash developers) and it is rare for questions to go unanswered for very long.

Before you can post a question, you need to subscribe to the mailing list (follow the instructions on the GnuCash web site). Once you have subscribed to the list, you will receive all messages that any other subscriber sends to the list. When you send an e-mail to:

`gnucash-user@lists.gnucash.org`

...it will be delivered to all subscribers on the list (hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of people, so think about what you write before you post your message). In particular, before you post a question, be sure to:

- review the GnuCash documentation. It wastes everybody's time if you ask a question about something that is already well documented.
- search through the mailing list archives to see if your question has already been asked before (again, to avoid wasting everybody's time).
- make sure you have gathered together all the information that might be required to answer your question (don't forget to include the version number of GnuCash that you are using).

Some free software projects have a *frequently asked questions* (FAQ) file that contains answers to the most common questions asked by users. As far as I am aware, there is no FAQ for GnuCash.

2.6 Reporting Bugs

If you find a bug in GnuCash, you should report it to the GnuCash developers so that it can be fixed. GnuCash bugs are recorded in the Bugzilla database at:

`http://bugzilla.gnome.org`

When you submit a bug report, you should:

- always include the version number of GnuCash that you are using.

- if you built GnuCash from source, say so, otherwise state the Linux distribution that you use GnuCash on.
- if something doesn't work, state what happened *and what you expected to happen*.
- list the steps to reproduce the problem.
- remember that the developers are volunteers, so be polite.

The GnuCash developers have worked hard (and continue to work hard) to make GnuCash a valuable application for everyone to use. You can repay them (a little) by providing quality bug reports. And quality bug reports take time to prepare.

3 Basic Accounting

3.1 Introduction

In order to get the best out of GnuCash, you need to understand a few basic accounting principles (do not be alarmed though, *you do not need to be an accountant to use GnuCash*). This section contains a brief overview of these accounting principles.

3.2 Accounts and Transactions

3.2.1 Accounts

Accounts are used to record all the financial transactions for a person, a business, a charity, or any other *accounting entity*. There is no limit to the number of accounts that can be used by an accounting entity—new accounts can be created as required.

There are five fundamental account types:

Account Type:	Description:
Asset	Asset accounts represent things that have value to you. Typical assets include cash in the bank, stocks you own, your car, your house, some money you lent to someone.
Liability	A liability account is the opposite of an asset account. Typical liabilities include your mortgage, your credit card accounts, some money you borrowed from someone.
Income	Income accounts are used to record income. Typical examples include your salary, dividends and interest earned on bank deposits.
Expense	Expense accounts are used to record expenses. Typical examples include rent, electricity, food and entertainment.
Equity	Equity accounts represent your net wealth at a point in time (more about this later).

3.2.2 Transactions

A transaction records an exchange of value between two accounting entities. Every transaction has a *value*, expressed as a *monetary amount* and recorded in one account as a *debit entry* and in another account as a *credit entry*. Entering all transactions in *two* accounts, in one as a “debit” and in the other as a “credit”, follows a principle known as *double-entry accounting*.

3.2.3 Account Balances

Every account has an *account balance*, which results from the transactions recorded in that account. The account balance is the difference between the total of all the debit transactions in the account and the total of all the credit transactions in the account.

If the sum of the debit transactions is *greater than the sum of the credit transactions*, then the balance is called a *debit balance*. If the sum of the credit transactions is *greater than the sum of the debit transactions*, the the balance is called a *credit balance*.

3.2.4 Debits and Credits

Why use the terms *debit* and *credit*, when transactions just involve *adding* value to one account and *subtracting* value from another account? Similarly, why say an account has a *debit balance* or a *credit balance*, instead of a *positive balance* or a *negative balance*?

The idea of “adding” and “subtracting” is particularly intuitive when we are talking about a bank account—adding to the balance is good (we have more money), subtracting from the balance is bad (we have less money). This “intuition” makes it tempting to use this convention for all accounts, rather than taking time to learn the meaning of “debit” and “credit”.

But do not be fooled. Adding and subtracting soon become ambiguous when dealing with other account types. For example, what about the balance outstanding on your mortgage (if you have one)? Do you think of this as a negative number or a positive number? The fact is, you can argue the case for either approach.

I tend to think of the balance of *my* mortgage as a positive number, but of course making a mental note that it is money that I *owe* to the bank. So when I pay (add?) money into my mortgage account, it *reduces* (subtracts from?) the balance.

Someone else might consider it more *logical* to consider the balance of *their* mortgage as a negative number. After all, a mortgage is like a large overdraft. When that person pays (adds?) money into their mortgage account, the balance increases (or becomes less negative).

The point is not whether one way or the other is correct, but rather that different people will look at it in different ways. But if you follow the (accounting) convention that **assets** have **debit** balances and **liabilities** have **credit** balances, then the ambiguity is removed.

3.3 The Accounting Equation

The accounting equation specifies a relationship between the totals of the balances in the five account types. The equation states:

$$\text{Assets} - \text{Liabilities} = \text{Equity} + (\text{Income} - \text{Expenses})$$

The left hand side of the equation represents your assets and liabilities. The right hand side of the equation represents your net wealth (*Equity*) at the beginning of the current accounting period, plus any change in net wealth since the beginning of the current accounting period (*Income - Expenses*).

3.4 Double Entry Accounting Examples

If you follow the principle of double entry accounting (matching every debit transaction with a corresponding credit transaction), the accounting equation will always hold true.

Suppose you receive \$100 income. You would record this by recording a debit in your bank account (an asset). At the same time, you would record a credit in your income account. Now the equation looks like this:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Assets} - \text{Liabilities} &= \text{Equity} + (\text{Income} - \text{Expenses}) \\ \$100 - 0 &= 0 + \$100 - 0 \end{aligned}$$

Now suppose you pay \$30 rent. You would record this by putting a credit entry in your bank account (decreasing the value of the asset). At the same time, you should put a debit entry in an expense account. Now the equation looks like this:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Assets} - \text{Liabilities} &= \text{Equity} + (\text{Income} - \text{Expenses}) \\ \$70 - 0 &= 0 + \$100 - \$30 \end{aligned}$$

It still balances! Now suppose you borrow \$50 from your bank. Your bank account balance increases (debit \$50). You should also record a liability to the bank by crediting a liability account with \$50. Now the equation reads:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Assets} - \text{Liabilities} &= \text{Equity} + (\text{Income} - \text{Expenses}) \\ \$120 - \$50 &= 0 + \$100 - \$30 \end{aligned}$$

Notice how this transaction only affected one side of the equation, but it still balances because the assets and liabilities both increased by the same amount.

Double entry accounting keeps your accounts consistent. It is still possible to make mistakes and record a transaction incorrectly, but it is always easier to correct mistakes if you can be sure that the account balances are consistent.

While accountants use the terms *debit* and *credit*, GnuCash does a good job of presenting more intuitive terms (such as *deposit* and *withdrawal* for a bank account), so don't worry if, initially at least, you find the terms debit and credit confusing.

3.5 Equity Accounts

Equity accounts, in the personal accounting context, represent your net wealth at a point in time. If you started your accounting records on the day you were born, you would have zero balances in your equity accounts, since your net wealth on the day you are born is zero (unless you have generous relatives).

On the other hand, if you start your accounting records later in life (very common!) then you already have a net wealth (hopefully positive) which you need to record somewhere. You use equity accounts for this purpose.

As time goes by, you will receive income and incur expenses. Income and expenses change your net wealth and, in a sense, income and expense accounts are a special type of equity account. It is common practice to transfer, at the end of an accounting period (usually one year), all the balances of income and expense accounts to an equity account. This resets the balances of the income and expense account to zero, without losing the net effect on net wealth (since this amount is now reflected in the equity accounts).

3.6 Looking Back

If you take another look at the accounting equation stated previously, you'll start to see that one side of the equation (assets minus liabilities) represents your net wealth. And the other side of the equation (equity plus income minus expenses) also represents your net wealth.

The value of the accounting equation, and double-entry accounting, is not in showing that your net wealth is equal to your net wealth. You already knew

that! But it provides a framework within which you can look at subsets of your transactions and extract valuable information from them.

Your assets have been separated from your liabilities, your income has been separated from your expenses. You can analyse different accounts through different time periods, and at all times you can remain confident that everything consistently ties together to provide an overall picture of your financial position.

4 Accounts in GnuCash

4.1 Account Types

Recall, from the previous section, that all accounts can be classified into five account types: *income*, *expenses*, *assets*, *liabilities* and *equity*. GnuCash actually has eleven account types, because it creates additional asset and liability account types:

Account Type:	GnuCash Account Types:
Income	Income
Expense	Expense
Asset	Asset, Bank, Cash, Share, Unit Trust, Currency
Liability	Liability, Credit Card
Equity	Equity

GnuCash uses these additional asset and liability account types because at certain times it needs to know more specifically what kind of asset or liability it is dealing with. This is particularly true in selecting accounts to be included by default in certain reports.

4.2 The Chart of Accounts

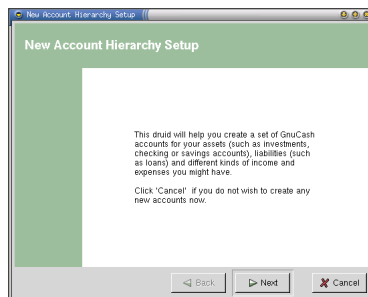
GnuCash, like most accounting systems, organises accounts into a structure called the *chart of accounts*. In GnuCash, the chart of accounts is a hierarchical structure commonly referred to as the *account tree*.

You have a great deal of flexibility in determining the order and grouping of accounts in the GnuCash account tree. The structure you choose, however, will impact the format and layout of the reports that you generate from GnuCash.

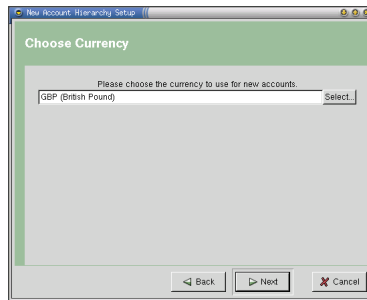
GnuCash can create a default account tree for you, via the *new account hierarchy setup* druid. This is a good starting point, because the accounts it creates are laid out in a logical manner.

4.3 Creating a Set of Accounts

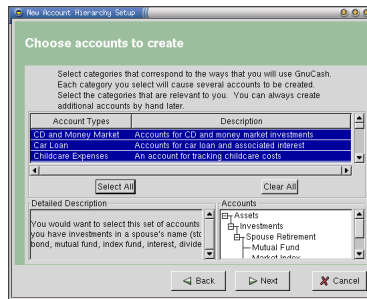
To create a new set of accounts, select the **New File** menu item from the **File** menu in the main GnuCash window. This automatically launches the *new account hierarchy setup druid*:



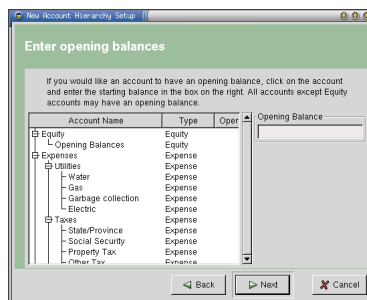
The first window contains information only—read it, then click on the **Next** button. The next window allows you to choose the currency for your set of accounts:



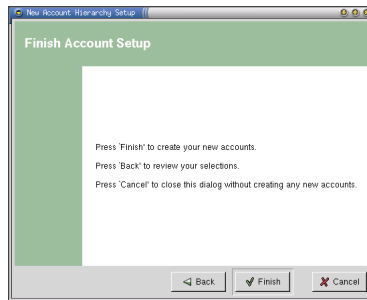
Select the appropriate currency, then click on the **Next** button. The next window contains a list of common account categories:



Select the categories that are appropriate for your finances. As you select each item, a summary is displayed, showing the accounts that will be created. When you are happy with your selections, click on the **Next** button to proceed to the opening balances window:



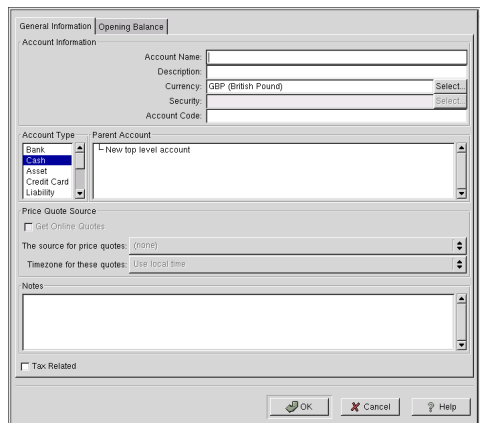
On this window, you can enter opening balances for any accounts that require them (typically your asset and liability accounts). GnuCash will automatically enter transactions in your new set of accounts to create these balances. When you are done entering opening balances, click on the **Next** button to proceed. The final window informs you of your options:



Click the **Finish** button to create the new set of accounts, the **Back** button to review the information you have entered, or the **Cancel** button if you do not want to create any accounts.

4.4 Creating An Account

You can create additional accounts in your account tree at any time. To create a new account, select **New Account...** from the **Account** menu:³



You need to enter an account name and a description. Then you should select an account type, and select the parent account (or **New top level account** if this account should appear at level 1 in the account tree).

You can specify an account code which determines the ordering of the accounts in reports. The account code is typically a number (integer). GnuCash goes one step further and treats the account code as a base-36 number, using the letters A-Z to represent the digits 10 to 35.

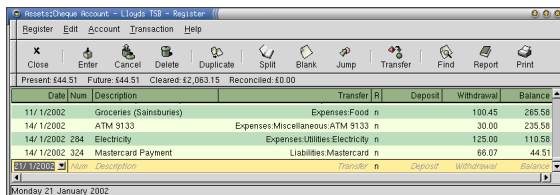
4.5 Entering Transactions

4.5.1 Overview

Once your accounts are defined, entering transactions is relatively straightforward. Although transactions can transfer money between any two accounts in

³The **Account** menu is only available while you are viewing the accounts tree in the main GnuCash window.

your account tree, for most people the bank (cheque or checking) account is the most commonly used account. Most transactions can be entered via the account register window—double click on an account in your account tree to open the account register window:



A blank transaction appears at the bottom of the account register window.

4.5.2 The Date Field

By default, the date field is selected and displays today's date. You can enter dates in several different ways:

- type the date (make sure you use 4 digits for the year).
- use the mouse to select a date from the drop-down calendar.
- use short-cut keys to select a specific date.

The date short-cuts are worth remembering. Try them out now (while you have the date field selected):

Shortcut:	Description:
t	Enters today's date.
-	Subtracts one day from the current date.
=	Adds one day to the current date.
[Subtracts one month from the current date.
]	Adds one month to the current date.
m	The first day of the month currently in the date field.
h	The last day of the month currently entered in the date field.
y	The first day of the year currently in the date field.
r	The last day of the year currently entered in the date field.

The keys for the start of the month and the end of the month have been chosen for easy recall:⁴ *m* is the *first letter* in the word *Month*, and *h* is the *last letter*.

Likewise, the keys for the start of the year and the end of the year have also been chosen for easy recall: *y* is the *first letter* in the word *Year*, and *r* is the *last letter*.

⁴At least for English speakers. I'm not sure how this is handled in the foreign language versions of GnuCash.

4.5.3 The Description Field

Next, you should enter a description for the transaction. This can be any text, and should explain what the transaction is for. You can always update the description later, so don't agonise for too long over it.

GnuCash will use the description you enter to *auto-complete* the remaining fields for the transaction. The details of the last transaction with the same description are copied to the current transaction. This can be a great time saver.

4.5.4 The Transfer Account

A very important choice is the transfer account. In order to follow the *double entry accounting* principle, all transaction items in one account must be offset by another transaction item of an equal and opposite amount in another account. GnuCash makes this easy for you—while you are entering a transaction item in one account, you specify the transfer account and GnuCash automatically updates that other account for you. In the next section, we describe some of the more common transaction types, and how you should enter them in GnuCash.

You can choose the transfer account from a drop-down list. If you have a lot of accounts, this list can be very long, so GnuCash provides some more keyboard shortcuts. As you type the account name, GnuCash will automatically select an account that matches what you have already typed. Try it out...

4.5.5 The Amount Field

The final field you must complete is the amount field. You need to enter the amount in the correct column, according to the type of transaction. Fortunately, GnuCash labels the columns in an intuitive way—if you are using a bank account, for example, the headings *withdrawal* and *deposit* appear as the account headings.

4.6 Common Transaction Types

New users are often unsure how to record certain transaction types. To get you started, a few of the more common transaction types are described here, along with some notes on how to record these in GnuCash.

4.6.1 Income Received

Typical income for a person includes one or more of the following items:

- salary or wages – regular income from your employer.
- interest – income from bank deposits.
- dividends – income from share investments.

All of these income items increase your bank balance, so you need to enter a *debit* transaction item in your bank account. At the same time, you need to record the receipt of income by entering a *credit* transaction item in an income account. You could record all your income in a single income account, but the

financial reports you can generate from GnuCash will be more meaningful if you create a separate income account for each type of income you receive.

Income transactions are automatically shown on the Profit and Loss Report.

4.6.2 Expense Paid

Typical expenses for a person will include some of the following items (as well as others):

- rent – accommodation.
- food – groceries.
- utility bills – gas, electricity, water.
- overdraft interest – a financial expense for borrowing money from the bank.

All of these expense items decrease your bank balance (or increase your credit card liability), so you need to enter a *credit* transaction item in your bank account or credit card account. At the same time, you need to record the expense by entering a *debit* transaction item in an expense account. You could record all your expenses in a single expense account, but the financial reports you can generate from GnuCash will be more meaningful if you create a separate expense account for each type of expense you have.

Expense transactions automatically appear on the Profit and Loss Report.

4.6.3 Withdrawing Cash From Your Bank Account

There are two ways you can account for cash withdrawals from your bank account. The first is to treat the transaction as a miscellaneous expense—this approach is OK if you only withdraw small amounts of cash, and don't really care to account for every last penny (or cent).

The other approach is to maintain a separate cash account, and transfer money from your bank account to the cash account to represent cash withdrawals. Then, you need to record expenses against your cash account. This approach is more accurate, but it requires you to be more conscientious about recording transactions.

4.6.4 Depositing Cash in Your Bank Account

This is the exact reverse of withdrawing cash from your bank account. You need to record the source of cash in an income account.

4.6.5 Transfer Between Bank Accounts

When you transfer money between bank accounts, you need to record the transfer, but not as an expense or income item. Examples include:

- transferring cash from your current account to a savings account.
- paying off the balance on a credit card account.

4.6.6 Loan Repayments

Loan repayments are more involved than they first appear, because they involve two components: a cash transfer (the loan repayment part) and an expense (the interest payment part). To make this more difficult, banks use complex formulae to calculate the interest amount and the repayment amount. Thus, it can be difficult even to find out what the amounts are.

To further complicate matters, many people are used to considering loan payments as a monthly expense when in fact it is only the interest component of each payment that is an expense. It is common for people to focus on cashflows rather than profit and loss.

Once you know the breakdown between the loan repayment and the interest amount, you need to enter one transaction to represent the interest expense, and another transaction to represent the transfer between your bank account and the liability account (that is, the loan repayment). GnuCash will allow you to enter a *split transaction* to handle this repayment in a single transaction. Split transactions will be covered in a future version of this document.

4.7 Account Reconciliation

4.7.1 Background

For certain accounts—most commonly bank accounts and credit accounts—you will receive regular *account statements* from the financial institution that provides the account. It is prudent, of course, to check these statements to ensure that the bank or credit company has not made any errors recording your transactions. At the same time, you can check that you, yourself, have not made any errors recording the transactions in GnuCash.

At first glance, you might think you could just check that the account balance on the statement matches the account balance in GnuCash. Sometimes that will work, but the balances can differ for a variety of reasons:

- you may have written cheques that have not yet been presented to the bank. These transactions will be recorded in GnuCash, but not on your bank statement.
- the bank statement may include transactions that you have not yet recorded in GnuCash. Common examples include bank fees and interest.
- the bank may have made an error recording transactions on their system, or you may have made an error recording your transactions in GnuCash.

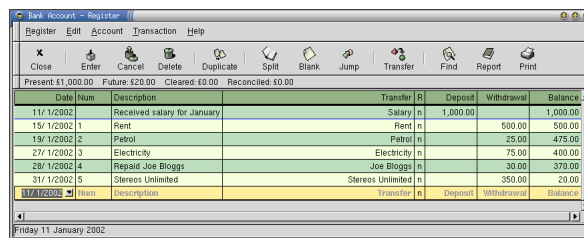
The process of explaining—or *reconciling*—the difference between the two balances is called *account reconciliation*. You can perform an account reconciliation using a pencil and paper, but GnuCash includes a handy feature to make reconciling your accounts relatively painless.

4.7.2 A Worked Example

An example is probably the best way to explain how the account reconciliation procedure works. Suppose that for the month of January 2002, you have recorded the following transactions in your bank account:

Date:	Cheque:	Description:	Amount:
11-Jan-2002	-	Salary for January	1000
15-Jan-2002	1	Rent	-500
19-Jan-2002	2	Petrol	-25
27-Jan-2002	3	Electricity	-75
28-Jan-2002	4	Joe Bloggs	-30
31-Jan-2002	5	Stereos Unlimited	-350
31-Jan-2002		Balance	20

Here's how the account appears in GnuCash:



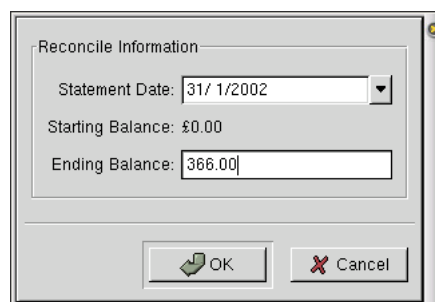
Early in February, you receive the following statement from your bank:

Date:	Cheque:	Description:	Amount:
11-Jan-2002	-	Salary for January	1000
15-Jan-2002	1	Rent	-500
20-Jan-2002	2	Petrol	-25
20-Jan-2002	-	Bank Fees	-5
20-Jan-2002	-	Interest	1
30-Jan-2002	3	Electricity	-75
30-Jan-2002	4	Joe Bloggs	-30
31-Jan-2002		Balance	366

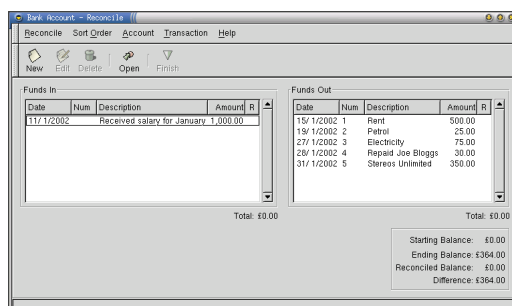
The balance in your accounts (20) does not match the balance on the bank statement (366).

In this example, the reasons for the different balances are fairly obvious: the bank statement includes two transactions (bank fees and interest) that you haven't recorded in GnuCash yet, and GnuCash includes one transaction (cheque 5) which hasn't made it onto the bank statement yet.

To reconcile the account in GnuCash, open the account register window and select **Reconcile...** from the **Account** menu. This presents the *reconciliation information window*:



In this window you should enter the statement date and balance. After you click OK, the *account reconciliation window* is displayed:

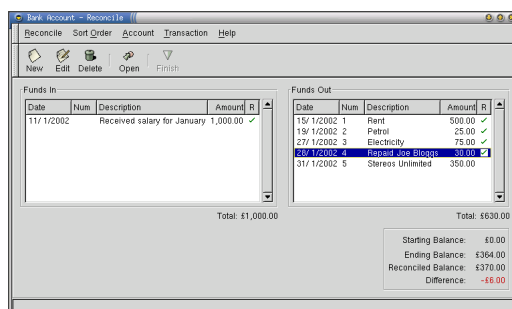


In this window, GnuCash displays all the transactions for the account that have not yet been marked as *reconciled*. Funds flowing into the account are shown on the left, and funds flowing out of the account are shown on the right.

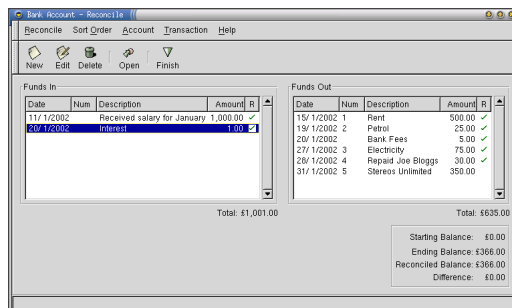
At the bottom of the screen, there is a summary of the reconciliation. The **Opening Balance** shows the previous reconciled balance for this account (if this is the first reconciliation for the account, then the balance will be 0.00). The **Closing Balance** is the statement balance that you entered in the previous window. The **Reconciled Balance** is the balance of all transactions in the GnuCash account that have been marked as *reconciled*.

A transaction in GnuCash can be marked as **reconciled** once it has been checked and agreed against the account statement. The account reconciliation window is the only place that you can mark a transaction as reconciled. To do so, simply click in the **R** column of the **Funds In** or **Funds Out** tables, next to the transaction you wish to mark as reconciled.

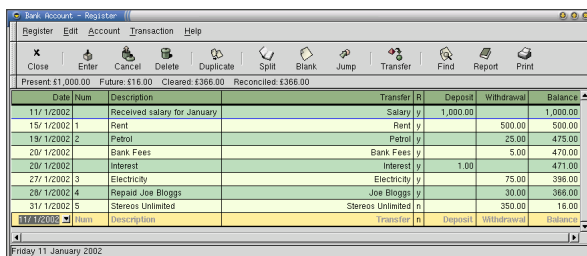
Note that each time you change the status of a transaction, the reconciliation summary at the bottom of the screen is updated:



If you find transactions on the bank statement that do not appear in the account reconciliation window, then you need to add them to the GnuCash account. Click on the **New** icon in the toolbar, and add the transaction in the normal way. Once the reconciled balance matches the statement balance, the **Reconcile** icon in the toolbar is enabled—click this icon to change the status of the transactions that you have indicated are reconciled.



Returning to the account register window, you can now see that most of the transactions are marked as reconciled. One item, however, is not yet marked as reconciled because it has not yet appeared on an account statement (it will appear on next month's statement and can be marked as reconciled then).



Once a transaction has been marked as reconciled, GnuCash will warn you against making any changes to the transaction. In general, if you have checked the transaction and agreed it against your bank statement, there should be no need to change it. If you override GnuCash and change the transaction, then future bank reconciliations may be difficult to complete.

5 Reports

5.1 Introduction

GnuCash is supplied with a range of useful reports. In this section, I describe the five reports that form the core of the GnuCash reporting facilities:

Report:	Description:
Account Register	A listing of the transactions in an account.
Account Summary	A summary of the balances in a selection of accounts.
Transactions	A summary of the transactions in one or more accounts.
Profit and Loss	A summary of income and expenses for a fixed period.
Balance Sheet	A summary of assets and liabilities at a fixed date.

GnuCash has many other reports—these are documented in a later section.

5.2 The Account Register Report

5.2.1 Overview

The *Account Register Report* provides a list of all, or a subset, of the transactions for an account. For example:

Date	Num	Description	Transfer	Expense	Rebate
23/10/2001		Petrol	Assets:Cheque Account - Lloyds TSB	£20.00	
1/11/2001		Petrol	Assets:Cheque Account - Lloyds TSB	£39.39	
27/11/2001		Petrol	Assets:Cheque Account - Lloyds TSB	£35.46	
Total				£94.85	

Highlighted figures on the report are *hyperlinks*—clicking on them takes you to the corresponding transaction in the *account register window*.

5.2.2 Generating the Report

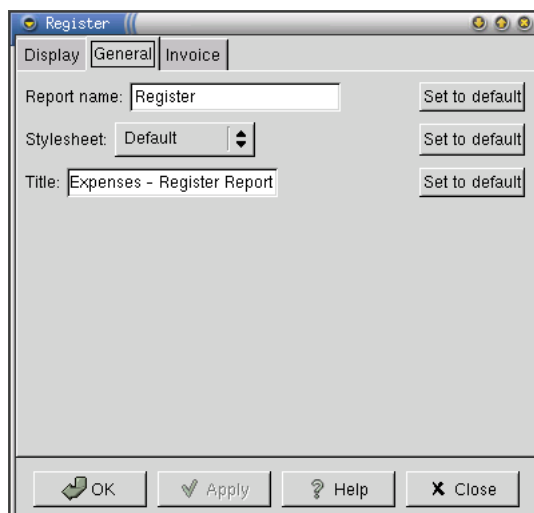
The report can only be created from an account register window. To create a report, select the **Report** menu item from the **Register** menu, or click on the **Report** icon in the toolbar.

The report will include all the transactions that are displayed in the account register—in other words, it takes the same date range as the account register window is currently displaying.

The report will appear in the main GnuCash window.

5.2.3 Report Options

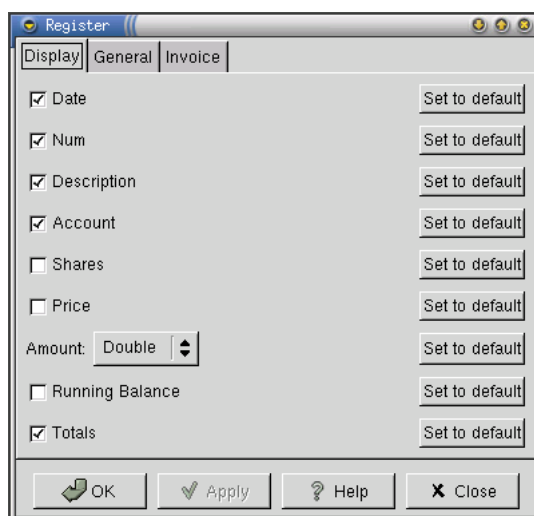
You can modify the report by clicking on the **Options** icon in the toolbar.⁵ The *report options window* appears, with the *General* tab displayed:



The options on this tab are described here:

Option:	Description:
Report Name	The name used to identify the report in the main GnuCash window (on the notebook tabs and in the Window menu).
Stylesheet	The stylesheet used to format the report (HTML is used for the reports).
Title	The report title—appears within the report.

The *Display* tab contains options for which transaction items to display in the report:

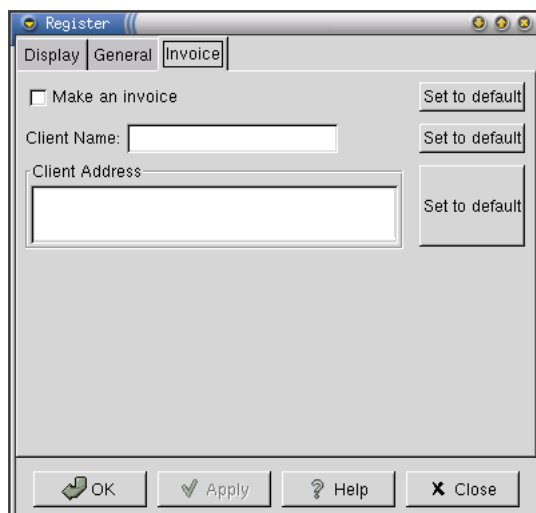


⁵There does not appear to be a corresponding menu item.

The options on this tab are described here:

Option:	Description:
Date	Include the Date field.
Num	Include the Num field.
Description	Include the Description field.
Account	Include the Account field.
Shares	Include the Shares field.
Price	Include the Price field.
Amount	Controls whether there is one (Single) or two (Double) columns for the transaction amounts. In the latter format, debits are shown in the first column, and credits in the second column.
Running Balance	Include a running balance for the account.
Totals	Include totals on the report.

You can format the *Account Register Report* as an invoice by selecting the invoice option:

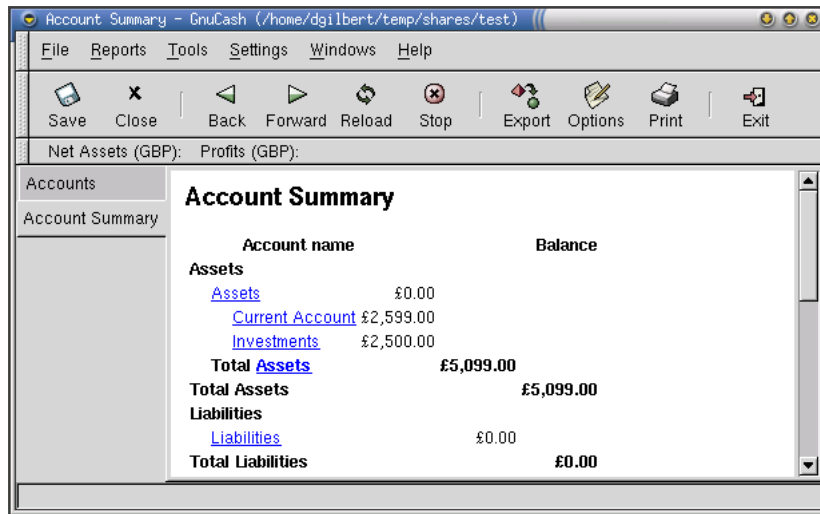


The invoice will have your name and address at the top (taken from the GnuCash Preference settings), and the name and address of the client (taken from the above options).

5.3 Account Summary Report

5.3.1 Overview

The *Account Summary Report* provides a listing of accounts (and balances) as at a particular date. For example:



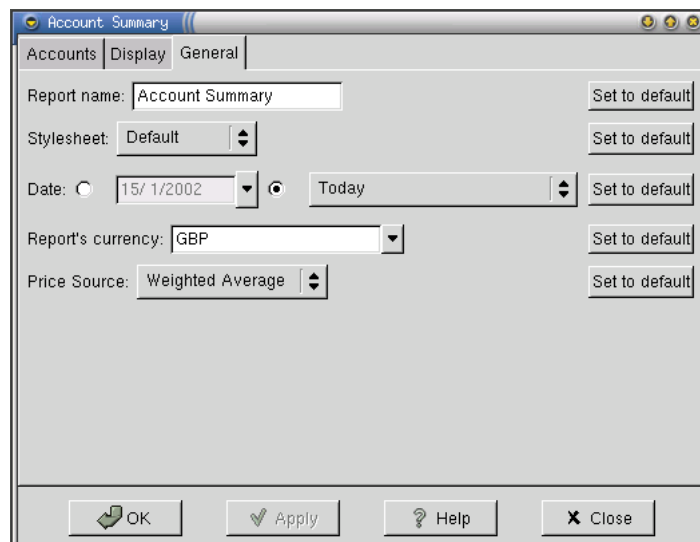
By default, the report will include all accounts, but you have the option to select a subset of accounts.

5.3.2 Generating the Report

You can generate the report from the main GnuCash window. Open the [Reports](#) menu and select the [Account Summary](#) menu item. GnuCash will create a report using default options—you can modify these after the report is created.

5.3.3 Report Options

To change the report options, click on the [Options](#) icon in the toolbar.⁶ The *report options window* appears, with the *General* tab displayed:

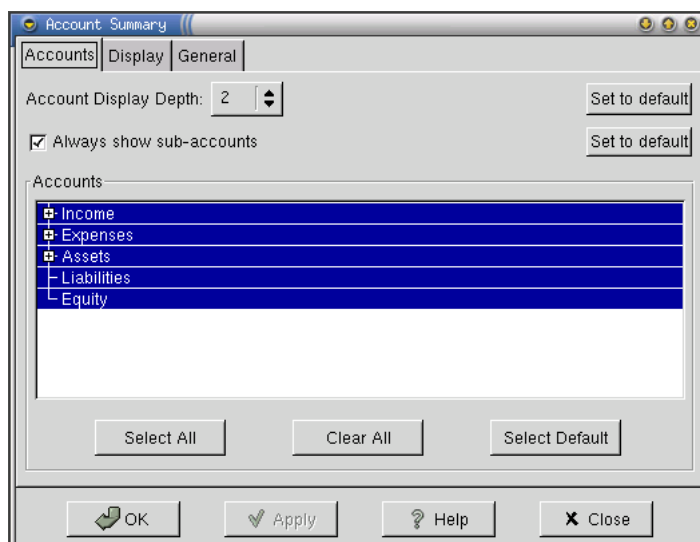


⁶There does not appear to be a corresponding menu item.

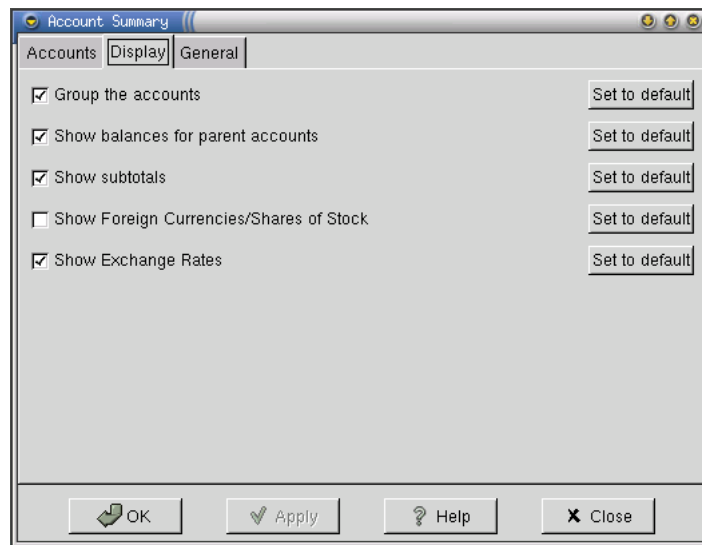
The options on this tab are described here:

Option:	Description:
Report Name	The name used to identify the report in the main GnuCash window (on the notebook tabs and in the Window menu).
Stylesheet	The stylesheet used to format the report (HTML is used for the reports).
Date	The balance date for the report. The account balances on the report include transactions <i>up to and including</i> the balance date. For convenience, a drop down list is provided containing common date selections.
Report's Currency	The currency for the report. You need to have exchange rates available in GnuCash before you change the default currency.
Price Source	Controls the way that GnuCash looks up exchange rates.

The *Accounts* tab allows you to select which accounts should appear on the report—all accounts are selected by default:



The *Display* tab controls some of the items that are displayed on the report:



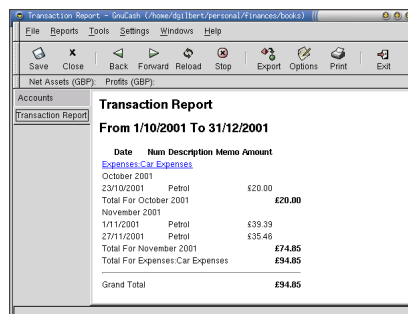
The options on this tab are described here:

Option:	Description:
Group the accounts	Group the accounts into categories: assets, liabilities, equity, income and expenses.
Show balances for parent accounts	Show balances for the parent accounts.
Show subtotals	Show subtotals on the report for each level in the account tree.
Show foreign currencies/shares of stock	Show currencies and number of shares in an additional column on the report.
Show exchange rates	Includes a table of exchange rates at the bottom of the report.

5.4 The Transaction Report

5.4.1 Overview

The *Transaction Report* lists transactions from one or more accounts that occur within a date range. For example:



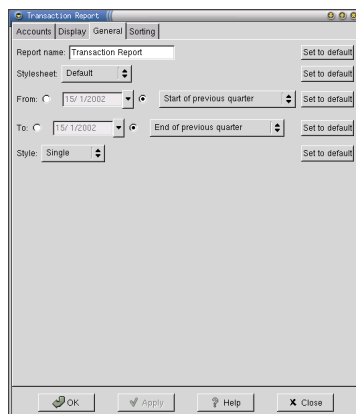
The highlighted account names are *hyperlinks*—if you click on one of these, GnuCash will open the account register window for the account.

5.4.2 Generating the Report

To generate the report, go to the **Reports** menu and select the **Transaction Report** menu item. GnuCash will create a report using default options (a list of transactions in *income* accounts between the beginning of the current year and today). You can modify these options after the report is created.

5.4.3 Report Options

To change the report options, click on the **Options** icon in the toolbar.⁷ The *report options window* appears, with the *General* tab displayed:

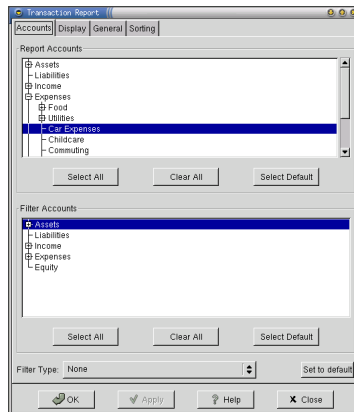


The options on this tab are described here:

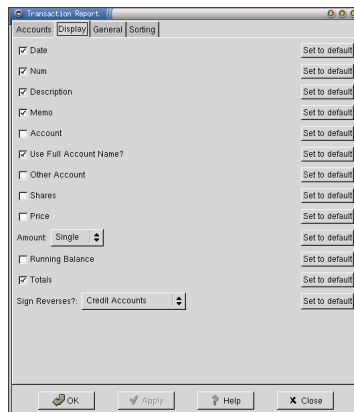
Option:	Description:
Report Name	The name used to identify the report in the main GnuCash window (on the notebook tabs and in the Window menu).
Stylesheet	The stylesheet used to format the report (HTML is used for the reports).
From	The start date for transactions included in the report. For convenience, a drop down list is provided containing common date selections.
To	The end date for transactions included in the report. For convenience, a drop down list is provided containing common date selections.
Style	Controls whether one (Single) or two (Columns) are used to display the transaction amounts.

The *Accounts* tab allows you to control from which accounts the transactions in the report are obtained:

⁷There does not appear to be a corresponding menu item.



The *Display* tab controls which transaction items are displayed on the report:



The items on this tab are:

Option:	Description:
Date	Include the Date field.
Num	Include the Num field.
Description	Include the Description field.
Memo	Include the Memo field.
Account	Include the Account field.
Use Full Account Name?	Use the full account name.
Other Account	Include the transfer account.
Shares	Include the Shares field.
Price	Include the Price field.
Amount	Include the Amount field.
Running Balance	Include a running balance on the report.
Totals	Include totals on the report.
Sign Reverses?	Reverse the signs for transaction amounts in certain account types. This makes the numbers more intuitive to look at.

The *Sorting* tab controls the order in which the transactions appear on the report:



The items on this tab control the sorting and totalling for the report.

5.5 The Profit and Loss Report

5.5.1 Overview

The *Profit and Loss Report* summarises your income and expenses during a specific period of time. For example:

Profit and Loss - 1/ 1/2002 to 15/ 1/2002	
Income	
Income	
Dividends - Simba Management Limited	\$0.00
Interest	\$0.00
Salary - MJB	\$0.00
Total Income	\$0.00
Total Income	\$0.00
Expenses	
Expenses	
Food	\$0.00
Utilities	\$0.00
Car Expenses	\$0.00
Childcare	\$0.00
Commuting	\$0.00
Insurance	\$0.00
Entertainment	\$0.00
House Maintenance	\$0.00
Miscellaneous	\$0.00
Total Expenses	\$0.00
Total Expenses	\$0.00
Profit	\$0.00

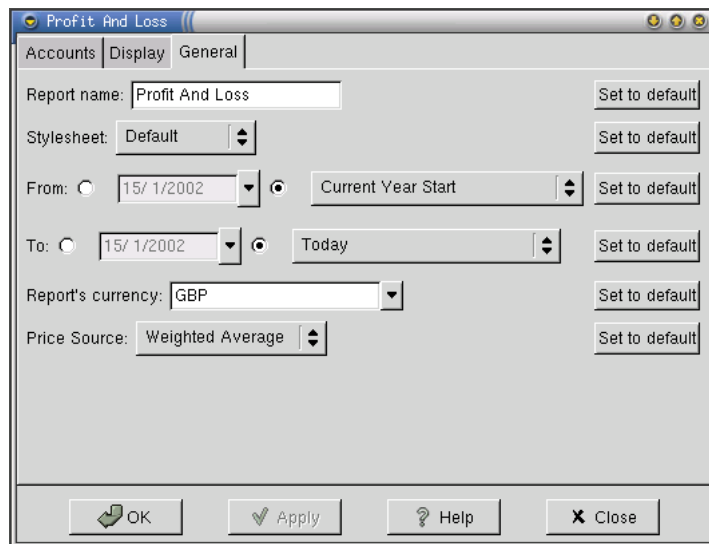
The difference between income and expenses for a period is your profit or loss, which directly translates into a change in your net wealth.

5.5.2 Generating the Report

To generate the report, go to the [Reports](#) menu and select the [Profit and Loss](#) menu item from the [Income and Expense](#) submenu. GnuCash will create a report using default options—you can modify these options after the report is created.

5.5.3 Report Options

To change the report options, click on the Options icon in the toolbar.⁸ The *report options window* appears, with the *General* tab displayed:

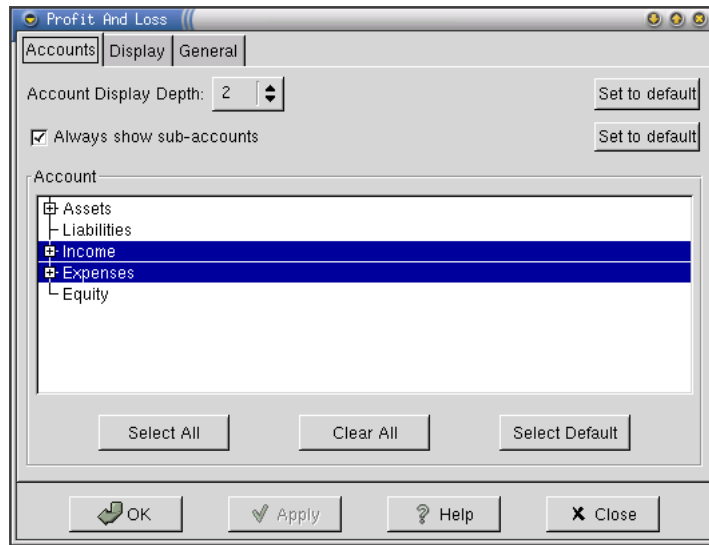


The options on this tab are described here:

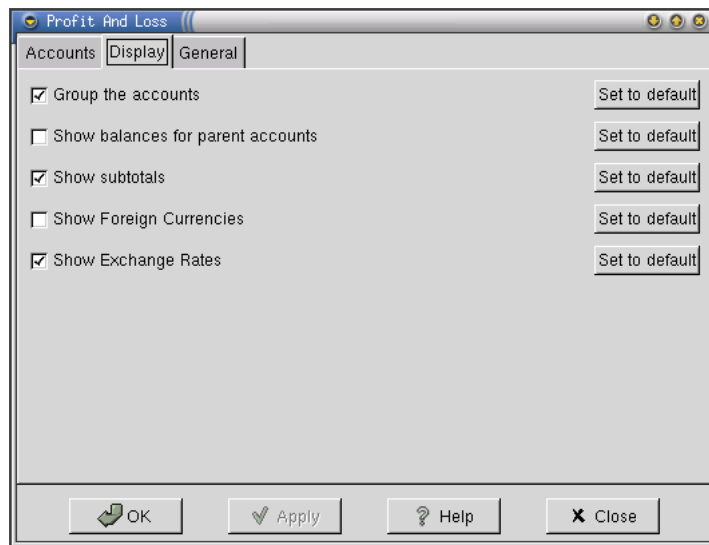
Option:	Description:
Report Name	The name used to identify the report in the main GnuCash window (on the notebook tabs and in the Window menu).
Stylesheet	The stylesheet used to format the report (HTML is used for the reports).
Date	The balance date for the report. The account balances on the report include transactions <i>up to and including</i> the balance date. For convenience, a drop down list is provided containing common date selections.
Report's Currency	The currency for the report. You need to have exchange rates available in GnuCash before you change the default currency.
Price Source	Controls the way that GnuCash looks up exchange rates.

The *Accounts* tab allows you to select the accounts to be included in the report. By default, all income and expense accounts are included:

⁸There does not appear to be a corresponding menu item.



The *Display* tab contains options to control how the report is displayed:



5.6 The Balance Sheet Report

5.6.1 Overview

The *Balance Sheet Report* summarises your assets, liabilities and net worth as at a point in time. For example:

Balance sheet at 15/ 1/2002	
Assets	
Assets	£0.00
Current Account	£2,598.00
Investments	£2,500.00
Assets	£5,098.00
Liabilities	
Liabilities	£0.00
Liabilities	£0.00
Unrealized Gains(Losses)	£0.00
Equity	
Equity	£5,000.00
Net Profit	£98.00
Total Equity	£5,098.00
Liabilities & Equity	£5,098.00

The date used for the account balances in the Balance Sheet Report is called the *balance date*.

5.6.2 Generating the Report

To generate a *Balance Sheet Report*, select the **Balance Sheet** item from the **Assets & Liabilities** submenu in the **Reports** menu on the main GnuCash screen. By default, the balance date for the report is today.

5.6.3 Report Options

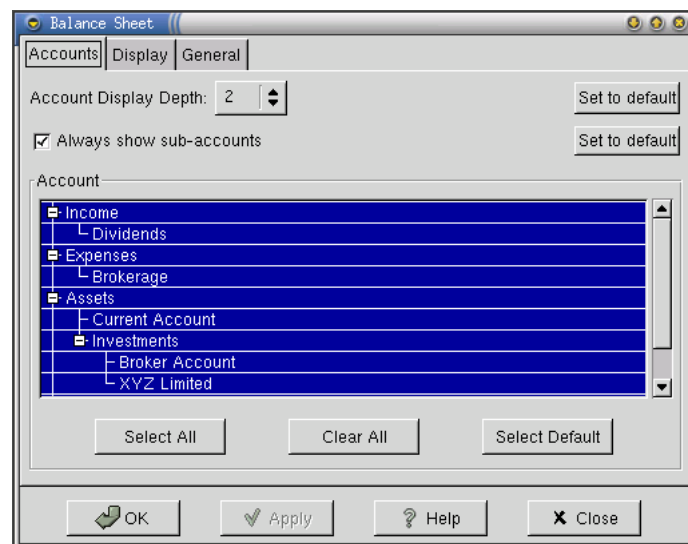
You can tailor the report to suit your requirements by clicking on the **Options** icon in the toolbar.⁹ This opens the *report options window*, with the *General* tab displayed:

The options on this tab are described here:

⁹There does not appear to be a corresponding menu item.

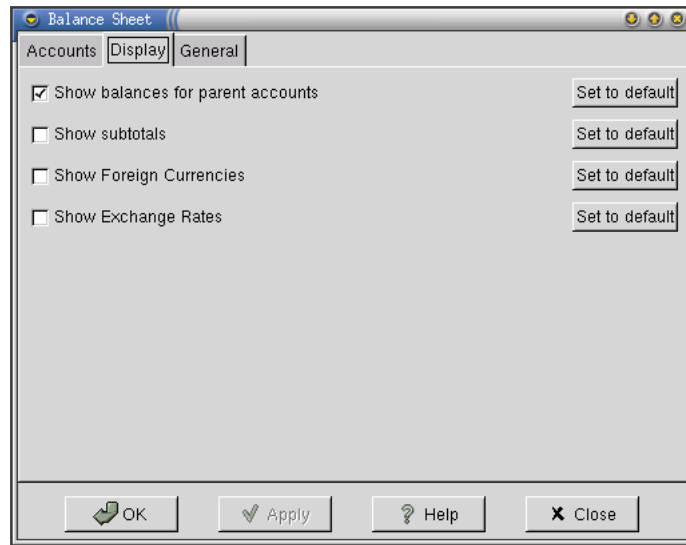
Option:	Description:
Report Name	The name used to identify the report in the main GnuCash window (on the notebook tabs and in the Window menu).
Stylesheet	The stylesheet used to format the report (HTML is used for the reports).
Date	The balance date for the report. The account balances on the report include transactions <i>up to and including</i> the balance date. For convenience, a drop down list is provided containing common date selections.
Report's Currency	The currency for the report. You need to have exchange rates available in GnuCash before you change the default currency.
Price Source	Controls the way that GnuCash looks up exchange rates.

The *Accounts* tab allows you to select the accounts to include on the report:



The *Account Display Depth* field controls which accounts are displayed in the report, according to their depth in the account tree. Top level accounts are at level 1, accounts directly below the top level accounts are at level 2, and so on.

Finally, you can control some of the display options:



There are four checkboxes on this tab:

Option:	Description:
Show balances for parent accounts	If selected, balances are displayed for parent accounts.
Show subtotals	Show subtotals. We could do with an explanation here describing what gets subtotalled.
Show Foreign Currencies	-
Show Exchange Rates	-

6 Shares and Unit Trusts

6.1 Introduction

GnuCash includes a simple, but effective, facility for recording your investments in shares, mutual funds and unit trusts. This facility is described in this section.

6.2 Broker Accounts

Before you begin trading shares, you will usually open an account with a broker—the *broker account*—and deposit cash in the that account to pay for your share purchases and any associated brokerage costs. This account will record all the cash transactions between you and your broker. When you sell shares, the proceeds of the sale will be transferred to your account.

Most brokers require you to maintain a positive cash balance in your account, and will usually pay interest periodically.

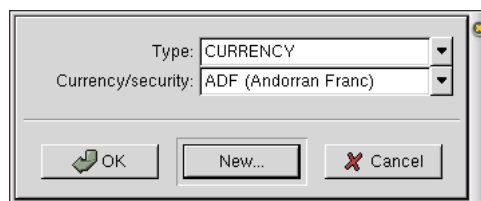
There is no special account type in GnuCash for broker accounts—you should set up this account in GnuCash as a regular *asset account*.

If you use the services of more than one broker, set up additional accounts for each broker.

6.3 Share Accounts

A *share account* is a special type of *asset account* that you use to track your holdings when you buy and sell shares in a company. You can add as many share accounts to your account tree as you require to track all of your share investments.

When you are setting up a share account, you must fill in the **Security** field.¹⁰ If you click on the **Select...** button at the right of the security field, you will be presented with a small window from which you can select an existing security or define a new one. Don't be put off by the fact that GnuCash initially displays an entry for a currency—the same window is used for selecting currencies and shares/unit trusts:



Click on the **New...** button to create a new security:

¹⁰GnuCash uses the term security to refer to shares, unit trusts and currencies.

The fields on the *security definition window* are as follows:

Field:	Description:
Full name	The name of the company or fund.
Symbol/abbreviation	The symbol for the company or fund. This is important if you are using the GnuCash facility for downloading automatic price updates. If you are manually updating prices, this field is less important.
Type	The type of security. Select an entry from the list, or type a new one.
CUSIP or other code	The CUSIP code for the security.
Fraction traded	Usually 1/1 for shares, but unit trusts will often trade in fractional units.

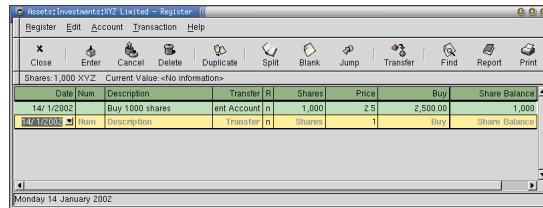
After you click the OK button, the previous *security selection window* returns, this time displaying the new security you have defined—click OK to select it:

The completed account definition now looks like this:

You can edit the account details and the security definition at any time, if you have made a mistake.

6.4 Buying and Selling Shares

To record a share purchase, open the share account and enter the details in the account register window. You will notice that some of the column headings in the account register window are different for share accounts as compared to regular accounts:



You need to fill in the following fields:

Field:	Description:
Date	The date of the transaction.
Description	A short description of the field.
Transfer	The broker account (if you have set one up), or your current account if you are paying cash for the shares.
Shares	The number of shares.
Price	The price per share.

GnuCash will calculate the total purchase cost by multiplying the number of shares by the price paid.

To record the transaction costs associated with this deal, you have two options:

- enter a transaction split, to include the broker fees directly with the share transaction.
- record the broker fees as an expense separately via the broker account.

6.5 Dividends

When you hold shares in a company, you will usually receive a regular dividend payment. To record these, you need to set up an income account for dividends.

Debit your bank account and credit your dividend income account. Note that no entry is required in the share account.

6.6 Updating Share Prices

Over time, share prices will rise and fall according to expectations about the future earning power of the company. To get an accurate picture of your financial position, you need to revalue your investments at current market prices.

GnuCash has a simple facility for recording share prices through time. Refer to the *Tools* section (8) for details.

6.7 Reporting

GnuCash includes your investments on the *Balance Sheet Report*, at cost or using current market valuations (if you have the prices available).

The *Investment Portfolio Report* also provides information about your shares and mutual fund investments.

6.8 Stock Splits

6.8.1 Overview

A *stock split* is where a company issues new shares—at no cost—to existing shareholders on a pro-rata basis. For example, in a *1-for-10 stock split*, a company gives every shareholder one new share for every ten they already hold.

To record a stock split, you need to enter a transaction in your stock account that shows that you have acquired shares at no cost. The value of this transaction is zero (and so GnuCash doesn't insist on a transfer account), but it enables GnuCash to keep track of exactly how many shares you own, and what is the *total cost* of those shares.

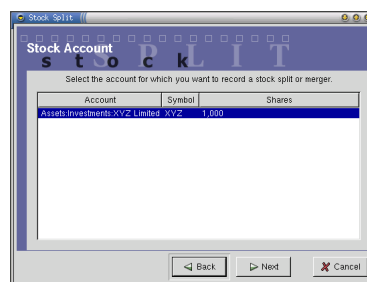
You can enter this transaction manually, or you can use the *stock split druid*.

6.8.2 The Stock Split Druid

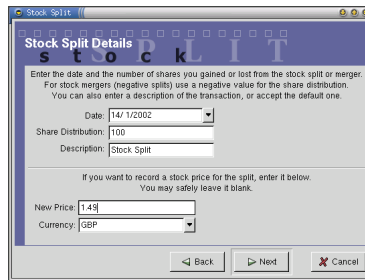
The stock split druid leads you through a sequence of steps to easily create a stock split transaction. The transaction is generated automatically, on the basis of some details that you are prompted to enter. This is the easiest way to handle a stock split, but you should always check the transactions that the druid creates, just to be sure it has done the right thing.

You can launch the druid by selecting **Stock Split...** from the **Account** menu, either in the main GnuCash window or in the stock account register window.

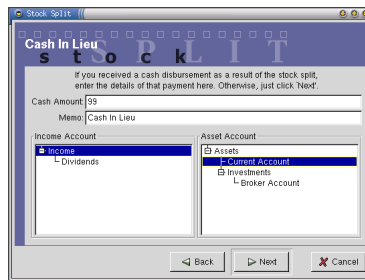
On the first screen, you will see a list of stock accounts from your account tree:



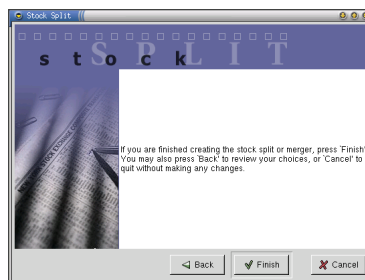
Select the account for the stock that is being split, then click the **Next** button. In the next screen, you need to enter the split date and the number of shares you will receive as a result of the split:



You are also given the opportunity to enter a new stock price—in a stock split, the share price adjusts downwards to reflect the increased number of shares on issue. This is optional, you can leave this blank if you want to. Click the **Next** button to proceed. On the next screen, you can enter a cash amount (if any) that you are receiving in connection with the stock split:



The final screen informs you of your options to review the details you have entered, to cancel the druid (no changes are made to your accounts in this case), or to create the transaction:



If you proceeded to create the transaction, be sure to review what the druid has done for you.

7 Other Reports

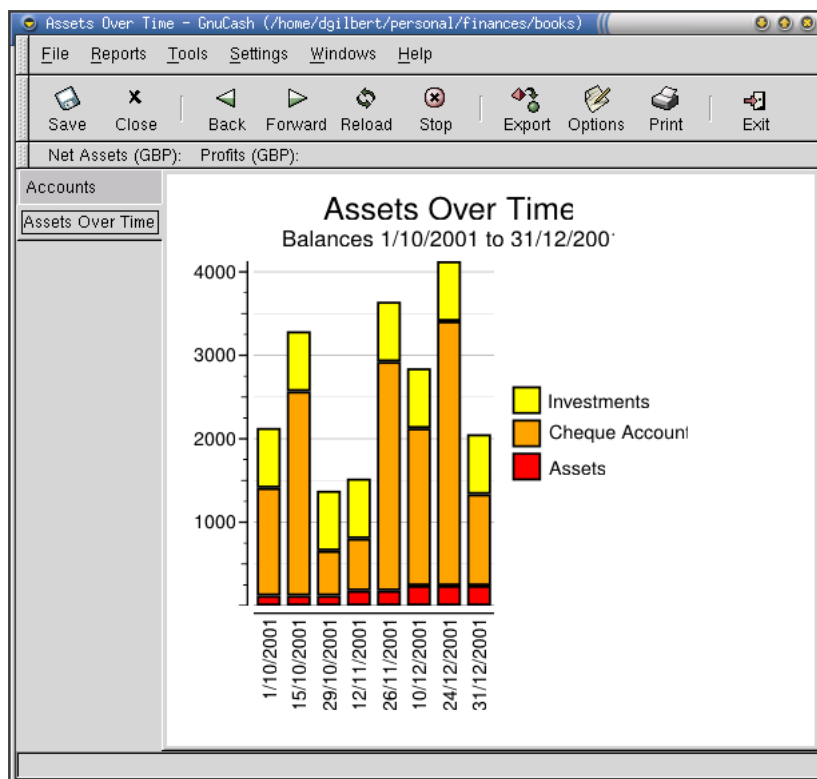
7.1 Introduction

In this section, I describe some of the other reports—many of them graphical—not covered in the earlier reporting section.

7.2 The Asset Barchart Report

7.2.1 Overview

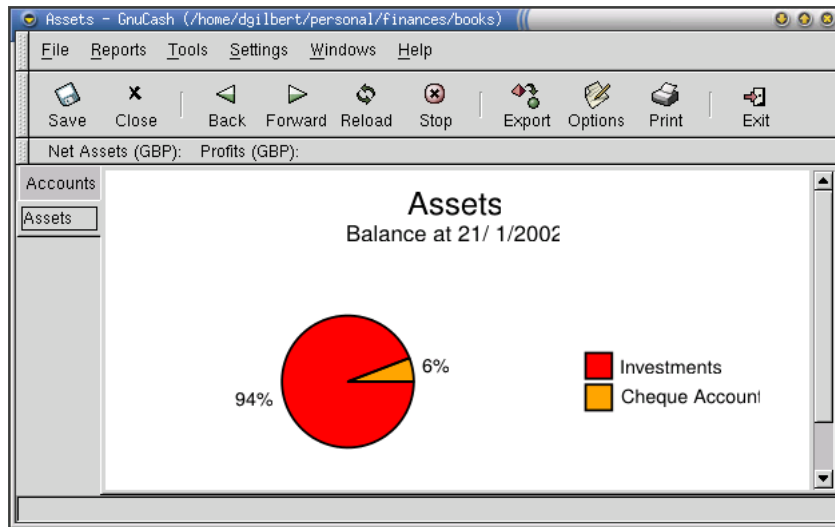
This report shows a *stacked bar chart* summarising the value of your assets at certain points in time.



7.3 The Asset Piechart Report

7.3.1 Overview

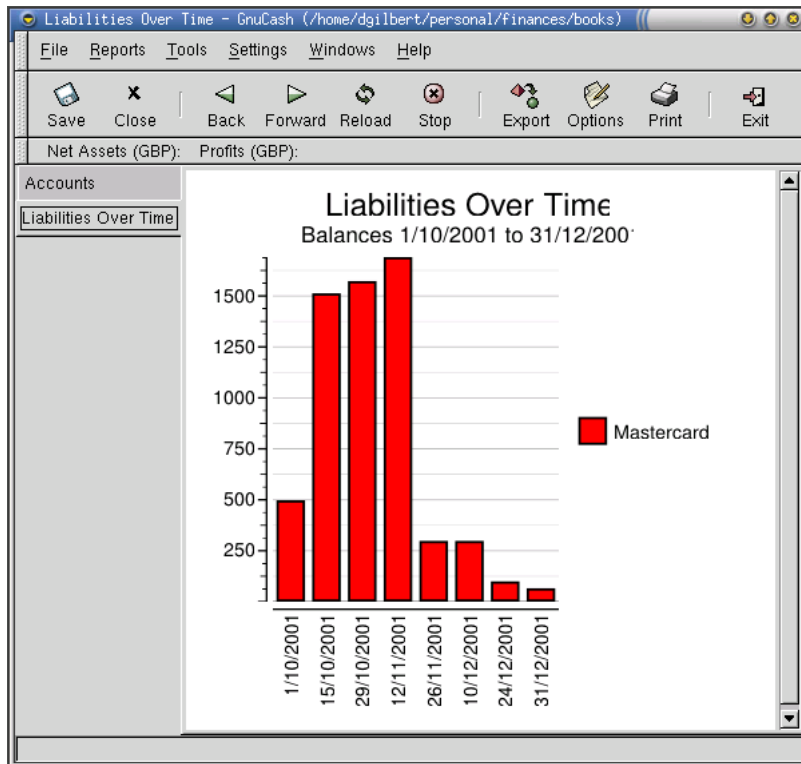
This report shows a *pie chart* summarising the value and allocation of your assets at a certain point in time.



7.4 The Liability Barchart Report

7.4.1 Overview

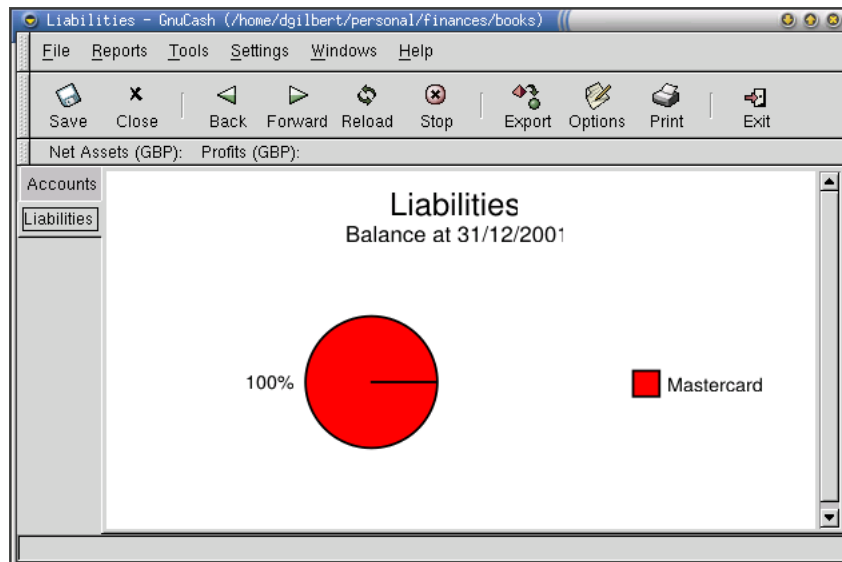
This report shows a *stacked bar chart* summarising the value of your liabilities at certain points in time.



7.5 The Liability Piechart Report

7.5.1 Overview

This report shows a *pie chart* summarising the value of your liabilities at a certain point in time.



7.6 The Average Balance Report

7.6.1 Overview

Not yet documented.

7.7 The Net Worth Barchart Report

7.7.1 Overview

This report shows a *bar chart* summarising your net worth at certain points in time.

7.8 The Investment Portfolio Report

7.8.1 Overview

A summary of your investments in shares and mutual funds.

7.9 The Price Scatterplot Report

7.9.1 Overview

A plot of share prices through time.

7.10 The Tax Report

7.10.1 Overview

Not yet documented.

7.11 The Expense Barchart Report

7.11.1 Overview

A stacked bar chart of your expenses through time.

7.12 The Expense Piechart Report

7.12.1 Overview

A pie chart showing a break down of your expenses over a period of time.

7.13 The Income Barchart Report

7.13.1 Overview

A stacked bar chart showing your income at various points in time.

7.14 The Income Piechart Report

7.14.1 Overview

A pie chart showing a breakdown of your income for a specified period of time.

7.15 The Income/Expense Chart Report

7.15.1 Overview

A bar chart showing income and expenses for a specific period of time.

8 Tools

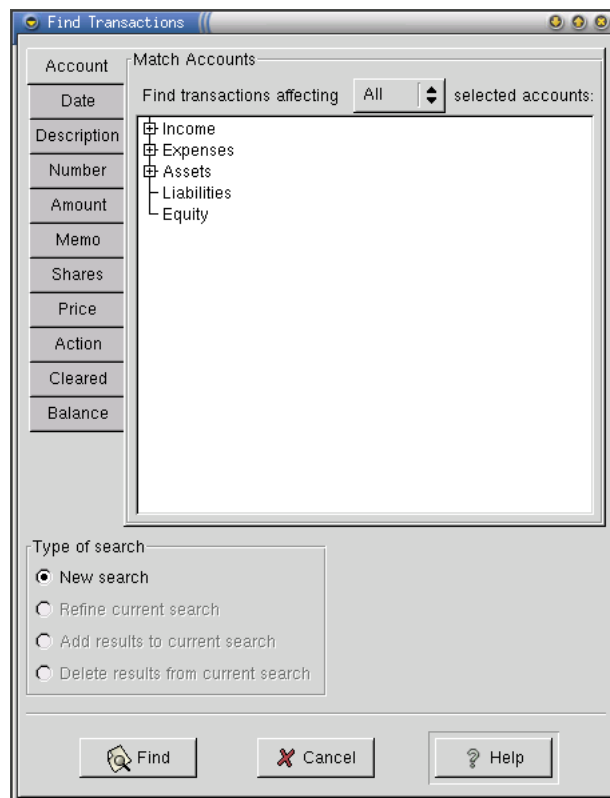
8.1 Overview

GnuCash includes some tools that can be accessed from the **Tools** menu in the main GnuCash window.

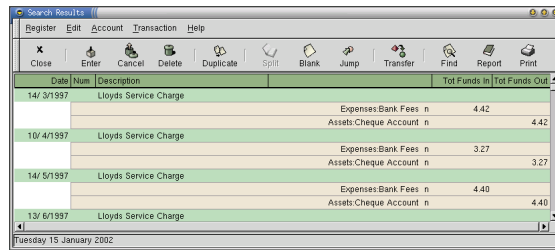
8.2 Find Transactions

After you have been using GnuCash for a while, you will find that you have defined dozens of accounts and that you have entered hundreds—or perhaps even thousands—of transactions. This can make it difficult to locate a particular transaction, especially if you don't recall the transaction date. The *Find Transactions Tool* is designed to help in this situation.

You can open the *Find Transactions Tool* by selecting **Find Transactions** from the **Tools** menu:



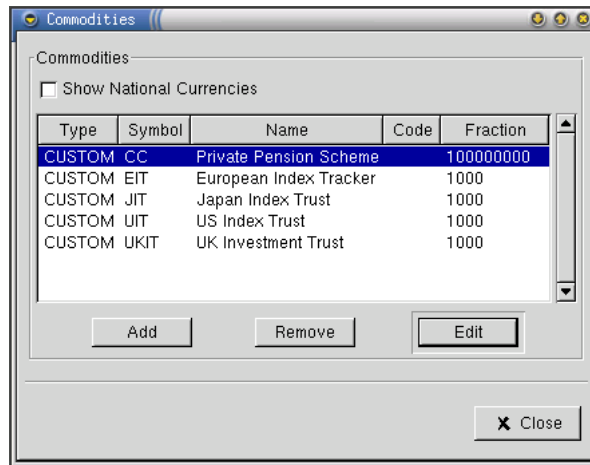
After specifying your selection criteria, click the **Find** button to search for matching transactions. After a short delay, the *search results window* is displayed. This is just like the *account register window*, except that it includes all transactions that match the search parameters (not just the transactions from a single account):



You can generate and print a report for the transactions in the search window.

8.3 The Commodity Editor

You can use the *Commodity Editor* to define new commodities or edit existing commodities in GnuCash:



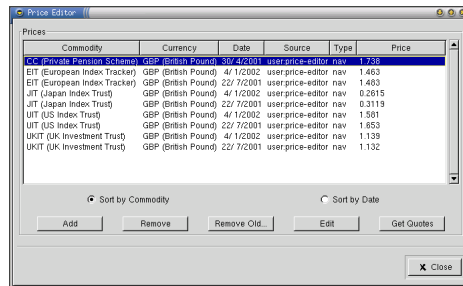
A *commodity* (in GnuCash) is a stock, mutual fund, unit trust, currency, or other tradeable instrument. You need to define commodities so that GnuCash can obtain *prices* or *rates* for those commodities. When you create or edit a commodity, you need to fill in the fields of the *New Currency/Security* window:



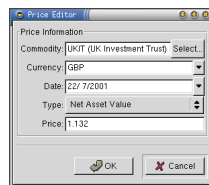
This is described more fully in section 6.3.

8.4 The Price Editor

This tool is used to manually edit prices for shares and unit trusts, and also to update exchange rates for currency accounts. You cannot enter a share price or exchange rate until you have entered a commodity definition to represent the underlying item being traded.



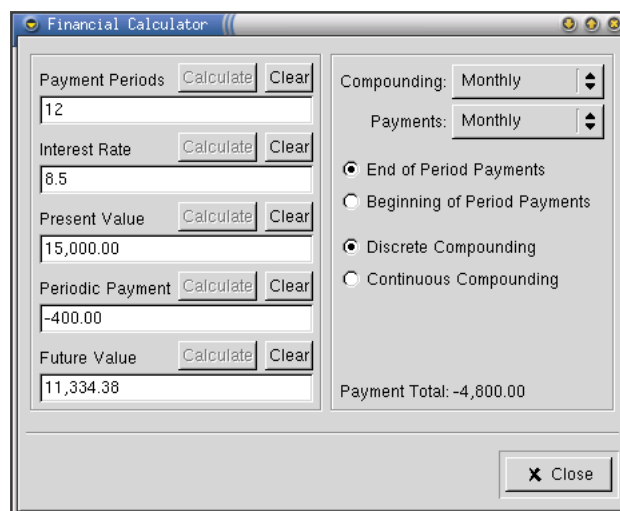
If you add a new price, or edit an existing price, you need to fill out the fields on the price editor window:



You can update prices manually or automatically (if automatic rate collection is configured for your copy of GnuCash).

8.5 Financial Calculator

GnuCash includes a handy financial calculator for calculating loan repayments:



This will be documented in detail in a later version of this document.

A GnuCash Menus

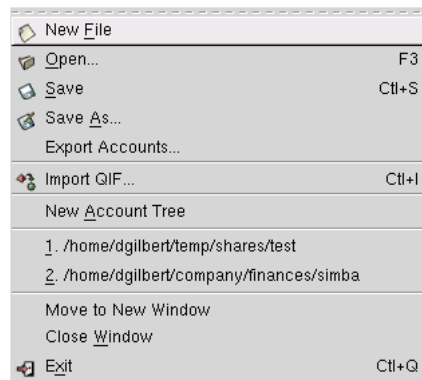
A.1 Introduction

This section describes all the menus on the main GnuCash window, and provides cross-references to other sections of the guide.

A.2 The File Menu

A.2.1 Overview

It has become standard for GUI applications to have a **File** menu as the first item on the menubar. Some of the menu items relate to files, but not all of them! The menu appears as follows:



Refer to the following subsections for details.

A.2.2 New File

Creates a new set of accounts (see section 4.3 for details). GnuCash only allows you to have one set of accounts open at a time. If you are already working on another set of accounts, and you have unsaved changes, GnuCash will prompt you to save your changes before closing the accounts and creating a new set.

A.2.3 Open...

Presents a *file open* dialog, allowing you to choose a set of accounts to open. GnuCash only allows you to have one set of accounts open at a time. If you are already working on another set of accounts, and you have unsaved changes, GnuCash will prompt you to save your changes before closing the accounts and creating a new set.

As a convenience, GnuCash displays a list of recently opened files towards the bottom of the **File** menu. It is often faster to select a file from there.

A.2.4 Save

Saves any and all changes to the current set of accounts. If you are entering many transactions in one session, it is a good idea to save your work at regular intervals.

A.2.5 Save As...

Saves the current set of accounts under a new name.

You can use any valid file name to save your accounts and transactions. It is common to use the suffix `.xac`, but this is not required.

A.2.6 Export Accounts...

Exports your account tree structure to an XML file. Useful if you want to start a new set of accounts using the same account structure as an existing set of accounts.

Note that only the account structure is exported, not the transactions.

A.2.7 Import QIF...

Imports data from a QIF-format file. QIF is the *Quicken Interchange Format*, a file format used by Quicken (a personal finance manager application that runs on Microsoft Windows).

Many applications, besides Quicken, can generate files in QIF format, so it is a useful format to be able to import.

The import process is quite involved, and is not documented here (yet). Refer to the online documentation for details.

A.2.8 New Account Tree

Opens a new account tree tab or window for the current set of accounts. This does not create or open a new set of accounts, it just creates another *view* on the current set of accounts.

A.2.9 Move To New Window

Opens a new top-level window displaying the current set of accounts.

A.2.10 Close Window

Closes the current tab or window.

It is possible to close all the tabs, including the account tree, so that it looks like you no longer have a set of accounts open at all. In fact, the accounts are still open—select the *New Account Tree* menu item to see that this is the case.

A.2.11 Exit

Exit GnuCash. If you have unsaved changes, GnuCash will prompt you to save your work before closing.

A.3 The Reports Menu

A.3.1 Overview

This menu contains items for generating (most of) the reports that GnuCash can generate. The menu appears as follows:



Refer to the following subsections for details.

A.3.2 Tax Report/TXF Export

Creates a *Tax Report*. Refer to section [7.10](#) for details.

A.3.3 Account Summary

Creates an *Account Summary Report*. Refer to section [5.3](#) for details.

A.3.4 Transaction Report

Creates a *Transaction Report*. Refer to section [5.4](#) for details.

A.3.5 Welcome Extravaganza

The **Welcome Extravaganza** menu item is found under the **Utility** submenu. Selecting this menu item creates a composite report that is not covered in this document.

A.3.6 Multicolumn View

The **Multicolumn View** menu item is found under the **Utility** submenu. Selecting this menu item creates a composite report that is not covered in this document.

A.3.7 Frame URL

The **Frame URL** menu item is found under the **Utility** submenu. Selecting this menu item creates a report that displays the content from a URL. I'm not sure what the intent of this report is.

A.3.8 Hello, World

The **Hello, World** menu item is found under the **Utility** submenu. Selecting this menu item creates a report that is intended as a demonstration for GnuCash Developers.

A.3.9 Balance Sheet

Creates a *Balance Sheet Report*. Refer to section [5.6](#) for details.

A.3.10 Asset Barchart

Creates an *Asset Barchart Report*. Refer to section [7.2](#) for details.

A.3.11 Average Balance

Creates an *Average Balance Report*. Refer to section [7.6](#) for details.

A.3.12 Liability Barchart

Creates a *Liability Barchart Report*. Refer to section [7.4](#) for details.

A.3.13 Investment Portfolio

Creates an *Investment Portfolio Report*. Refer to section [7.8](#) for details.

A.3.14 Net Worth Barchart

Creates a *Net Worth Barchart Report*. Refer to section [7.7](#) for details.

A.3.15 Liability Piechart

Creates a *Liability Piechart Report*. Refer to section [7.5](#) for details.

A.3.16 Price Scatterplot

Creates a *Price Scatterplot Report*. Refer to section [7.9](#) for details.

A.3.17 Asset Piechart

Creates an *Asset Piechart Report*. Refer to section [7.3](#) for details.

A.3.18 Profit and Loss

Creates a *Profit and Loss Report*. Refer to section [5.5](#) for details.

A.3.19 Expense Piechart

Creates an *Expense Piechart Report*. Refer to section [7.12](#) for details.

A.3.20 Expense Barchart

Creates an *Expense Barchart Report*. Refer to section [7.11](#) for details.

A.3.21 Income Piechart

Creates an *Income Piechart Report*. Refer to section [7.14](#) for details.

A.3.22 Income Barchart

Creates an *Income Barchart Report*. Refer to section [7.13](#) for details.

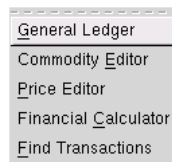
A.3.23 Income/Expense Chart

Creates an *Income/Expense Chart Report*. Refer to section [7.15](#) for details.

A.4 The Tools Menu

A.4.1 Overview

This menu provides access to some of the tools that have been implemented in GnuCash. The menu appears as follows:



Refer to the following subsections for details.

A.4.2 General Ledger

Opens the *general ledger window*. Not yet documented.

A.4.3 Commodity Editor

Opens the *commodity editor window*. Refer to section 8.3 for details.

A.4.4 Price Editor

Opens the *price editor window*. Refer to section 8.4 for details.

A.4.5 Financial Calculator

Opens the *financial calculator window*. Refer to section 8.5 for details.

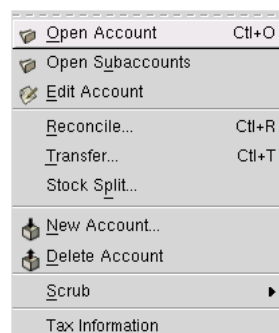
A.4.6 Find Transactions

Opens the *find transactions window*. Refer to section 8.2 for details.

A.5 The Account Menu

A.5.1 Overview

Contains menu items that relate to accounts. This menu is only available when you are viewing the *account tree* in the main GnuCash window. The menu appears as follows:



Refer to the following subsections for details.

A.5.2 Open Account

Opens an *account register window* for the account that is selected in the account tree.

A.5.3 Open Subaccounts

Opens a *General Ledger window* for all the subaccounts under the account selected in the account tree.

A.5.4 Edit Account

Opens a window that allows you to change the properties of an account.

A.5.5 Reconcile...

Opens the *account reconciliation window* for the account selected in the account tree. Refer to section [4.7.2](#) for details.

A.5.6 Transfer...

Opens a window for transferring an amount from one account to another.

A.5.7 Stock Split...

Opens the *Stock Split* druid. Refer to section [6.8](#) for details.

A.5.8 New Account...

Creates a new account. Refer to section [4.4](#) for details.

A.5.9 Delete Account

Deletes the account selected in the account tree.

A.5.10 Scrub Account

Checks the selected account for unbalanced transactions, and adds balancing items where necessary.

A.5.11 Scrub Subaccounts

Checks the selected account (and sub accounts) for unbalanced transactions, and adds balancing items where necessary.

A.5.12 Scrub All

Checks all accounts for unbalanced transactions, and adds balancing items where necessary.

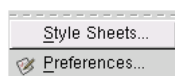
A.5.13 Tax Information

Opens a window for editing the tax information for accounts. Not documented here yet.

A.6 Settings

A.6.1 Overview

This menu contains items for changing global GnuCash settings. The menu appears as follows:



Refer to the following subsections for details.

A.6.2 StyleSheets...

Allows you to change the properties of the two style sheets that are provided with GnuCash version 1.6.2.

A.6.3 Preferences...

Allows you to set your own preferences for the way GnuCash works. The preference settings are documented in [Appendix C](#).

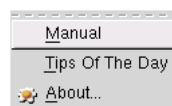
A.7 Windows

In this menu there will be one item for each account register, report or account tree that you have opened. Selecting one of these switches the display to show the selected item.

A.8 Help

A.8.1 Overview

This menu contains items for obtaining information about GnuCash. The menu appears as follows:



Refer to the following subsections for details.

A.8.2 Manual

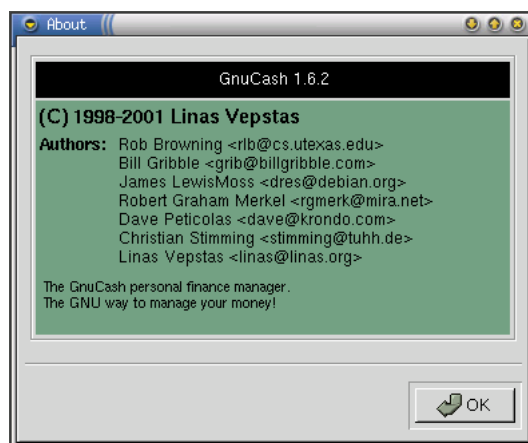
Displays the online user guide.

A.8.3 Tips of the Day

Displays the *tip of the day* window. You should review these tips, as they contain useful information about using GnuCash. In version 1.6.2 of GnuCash, there are about 20 tips in total.

A.8.4 About...

Displays information about GnuCash, including the version number. Here is the *about window* from the version of GnuCash that I am using:



B Account Register Menus

B.1 Introduction

This section describes all the menus on the account register window, and provides cross-references to other sections of the guide.

B.2 The Register Menu

B.2.1 Overview

This menu contains items for controlling the appearance and behaviour of the account register window, and also some report items. The menu appears as follows:



Refer to the following subsections for details.

B.2.2 Style

Sets the register style to one of the following options:

Style:	Description:
Basic Ledger	The default.
Auto-Split Ledger	Same as Basic Ledger except that new transactions always show the <i>split details</i> .
Transaction Journal	Shows each transaction on multiple lines including all memo fields, and includes a running balance for the account.

In addition to selecting the style, you can also select the **Double Line** item to show each transaction item on two lines instead of one (the additional line shows the **Action** and **Notes** fields for the transaction item).

B.2.3 Sort Order

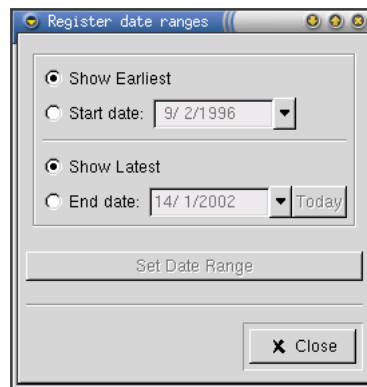
Selects the *sort order* for viewing the transactions in the account:

Order:	Description:
Standard order	The default.
Sort by Date	Ascending date order.
Sort by date of entry	Date entry order (note that the transaction's date of entry is not shown anywhere).
Sort by statement date	Statement date.
Sort by Num	Ascending order according to the entry in the Num field for the transaction.
Sort by Amount	Ascending order according to the transaction amount.
Sort by Memo	Ascending order according to the memo entry.
Sort by Description	Alphabetical order on the Description field.

The sort order affects only your view of the transactions, not the way they are recorded.

B.2.4 Date Range

Sets the date range for transactions to display in the account register window. To select a subset of the transactions, fill in the fields on the date range selection window:



By default, all transactions are displayed.

B.2.5 Report

Creates a *Register Report*. This displays all the transactions in the account register window. See section 5.2 for details.

B.2.6 Invoice

Creates an *Invoice Report* from the transactions in the account register window.

B.2.7 Print

Prints the transactions in the account register window.

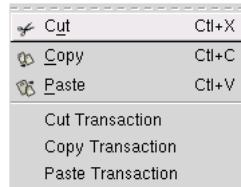
B.2.8 Close

Closes the account register window.

B.3 The Edit Menu

B.3.1 Overview

The menu appears as follows:



Refer to the following subsections for details.

B.3.2 Cut

Cuts the selected text, storing it on the clipboard.

B.3.3 Copy

Copies the selected text, storing it on the clipboard.

B.3.4 Paste

Pastes the contents of the clipboard to the current field.

B.3.5 Cut Transaction

Cuts the selected transaction to the *transaction clipboard*.

B.3.6 Copy Transaction

Copies the selected transaction to the *transaction clipboard*.

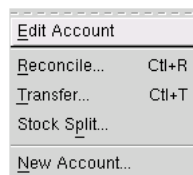
B.3.7 Paste Transaction

Pastes a transaction from the *transaction clipboard* to the current account.

B.4 The Account Menu

B.4.1 Overview

Contains menu items that relate to the account. The menu appears as follows:



Refer to section [A.5](#) for details.

B.5 The Transaction Menu

B.5.1 Overview

The menu appears as follows:



Refer to the following subsections for details.

B.5.2 Enter

Records the current transaction.

B.5.3 Cancel

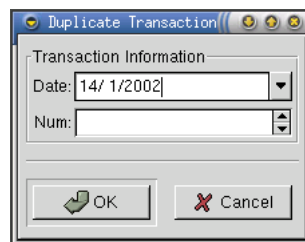
Cancels the current transaction by clearing all the input fields.

B.5.4 Delete

Deletes the current transaction.

B.5.5 Duplicate

Duplicates the current transaction. You will be given the opportunity to edit the transaction **Date** and **Num** fields:



Click **OK** to duplicate the transaction, but with the new **Date** and **Num** items.

B.5.6 Split

Displays the list of *splits* for the current transaction.

B.5.7 Blank

Moves the cursor to the *blank transaction* at the bottom of the account register window.

B.5.8 Jump

Jumps to the corresponding entry in the other account for this transaction.

B.5.9 Scrub All

Identifies and fixes problems for all transactions displayed in the account register window.

B.5.10 Scrub Current

Identifies and fixes problems for the current transaction.

B.5.11 Invoice

Generates an invoice based on the selected transaction.

B.5.12 Print Check

Prints a cheque for the selected transaction.

B.6 Help

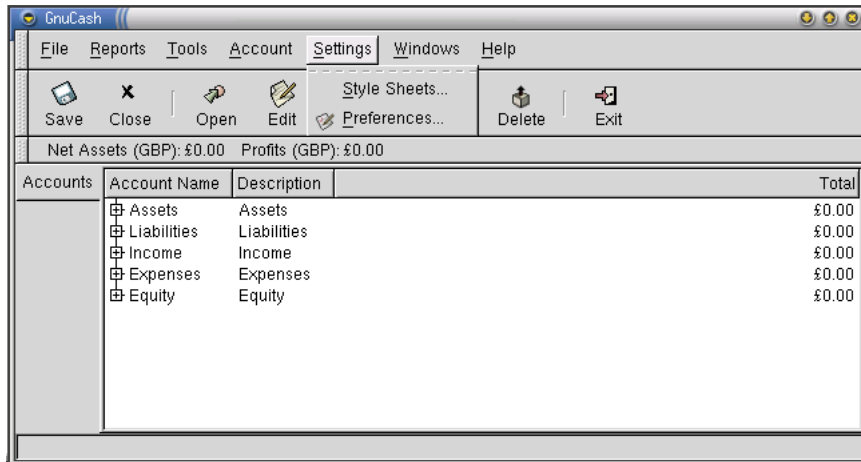
B.6.1 Help

Displays the online user guide.

C GnuCash User Preferences

C.1 Overview

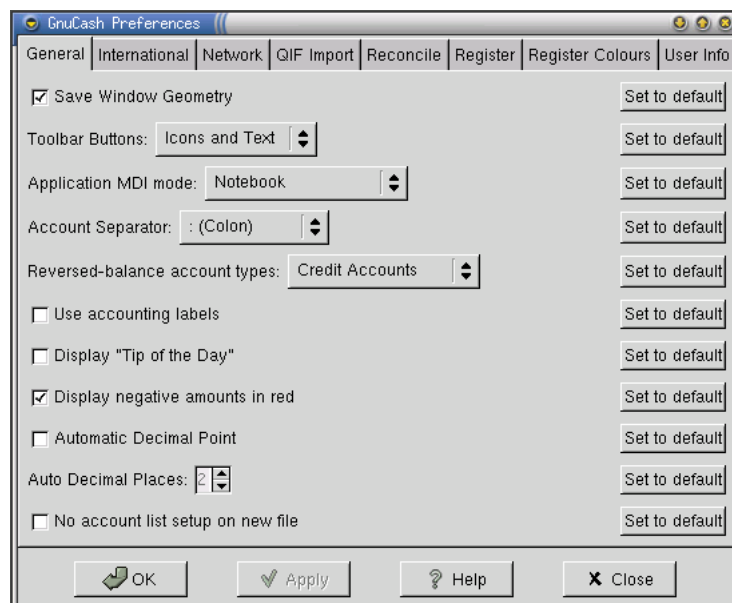
You can configure GnuCash to work in a way that suits you by changing the *user preferences*. Select the **Preferences...** menu item from the **Settings** menu:



This will display the *Preferences Window*, with the *General* tab selected. Each tab on this window is described in the following subsections.

C.2 General Settings

The **General** tab contains a miscellaneous collection of settings for controlling the GnuCash environment:



Each item on this tab is described in the following subsections.

C.2.1 Save Window Geometry

When the `Save Window Geometry` checkbox is selected, GnuCash records the size of each type of window. The next time GnuCash opens a window of that type, it uses the recorded size rather than the default size.

C.2.2 Toolbar Buttons

The `Toolbar Buttons` combobox controls the appearance of the buttons on the toolbar. There are three options:

Option:	Description:
Icons and Text	Toolbar items shown as icons with text labels (the default).
Icons only	Toolbar items shown as icons only (no text).
Text only	Toolbar items shown as text only (no icons).

The default value is `Icons and Text`.

C.2.3 Application MDI Mode

The `Application MDI Mode` combobox controls the way that GnuCash presents multiple windows (MDI stands for *multi-document interface*). The available options are:

Option:	Description:
Notebook	GnuCash opens a new tab on the main window, whenever necessary.
Top-level	GnuCash opens a new top level window, whenever necessary.
Single Window	GnuCash displays just one window at a time. You can select which window is displayed from the <code>Window</code> menu.
Use GNOME Default	Behaviour is controlled by the GNOME default.

The default selection is `Notebook`.

C.2.4 Account Separator

The symbol used to separate account names in the account hierarchy. Options include:

Option:	Description:
: Colon	Separate account names with a <i>colon</i> .
/ Slash	Separate account names with a <i>slash</i> .
\ Backslash	Separate account names with a <i>back-slash</i> .
- Dash	Separate account names with a <i>dash</i> .
. Period	Separate account names with a <i>period</i> .

The default is a colon (:).

C.2.5 Reversed Balance Account Types

The **Reversed Balance Account Types** combobox determines which accounts have the sign of their account balances reversed for display purposes.

In general, GnuCash displays *debit* balances as positive numbers and *credit* balances as negative numbers. This makes the system more intuitive. However, sometimes this convention results in numbers that are the reverse of what we are used to seeing. So with this option, you can control the type of accounts that have their signs reversed when account balances are shown:

Option:	Description:
Income & Expense	Income and expense accounts.
Credit Accounts	Credit card accounts.
None	No accounts.

The default value is **Credit Accounts**.

C.2.6 Use Accounting Labels

Select this option and GnuCash will use the terms *debit* and *credit*. Leave this option unselected (the default) and GnuCash will use more intuitive terms—for example, *deposit* and *withdrawal* for a bank account.

C.2.7 Display Tip Of The Day

A “tip of the day” is displayed every time you start up GnuCash (by default). If you don’t want this, uncheck this option.

C.2.8 Display Negative Amounts In Red

Negative values are displayed in red, by default. If you don’t want this, uncheck this option.

C.2.9 Automatic Decimal Point

Select this option if you would like GnuCash to automatically insert a decimal point when you enter a number without a decimal point. Some people find this convenient because they can enter numerical data more quickly (I’m not one of them!).

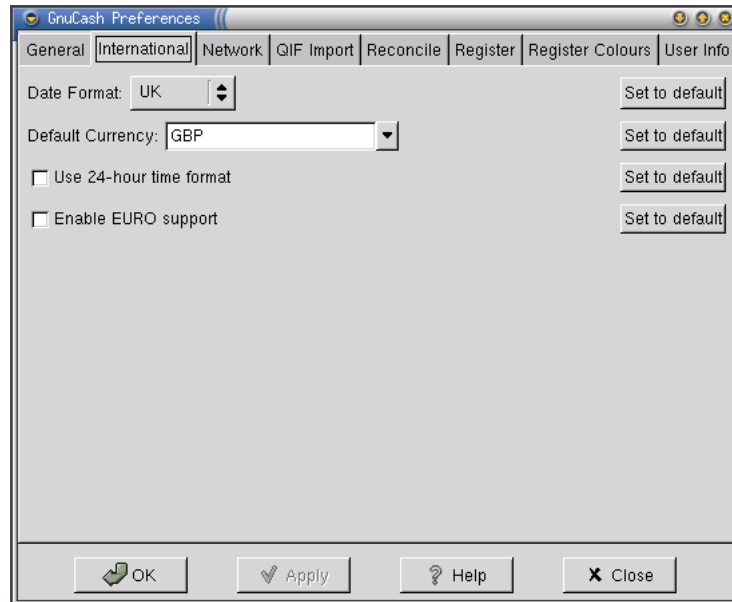
If you select this option, you also need to specify the number of decimal places (the default is 2).

C.2.10 No Account List Setup On New File

When you create a new accounts file, GnuCash displays the *New Account Hierarchy Setup* druid. You can just click on the cancel button if you don’t want to use the druid, but if you would rather that it didn’t appear at all, then select this option.

C.3 International Settings

GnuCash is used in many countries throughout the world. These settings allow you to customise GnuCash to suit you, wherever you happen to live:



The items on this tab are described in the following subsections.

C.3.1 Date Format

You can set the date format to any of the following:

Option:	Description:
US	The date format commonly used in the United States of America (mm/dd/yyyy).
UK	The date format commonly used in the United Kingdom (dd/mm/yyyy).
Europe	The date format commonly used in many European countries (dd.mm.yyyy).
ISO	The date format specified by the International Standards Organisation (yyyy-mm-dd).
Locale	The date format specified by the locale setting on your machine.

C.3.2 Default Currency

Sets the default currency for transactions in GnuCash.

C.3.3 Use 24 Hour Time Format

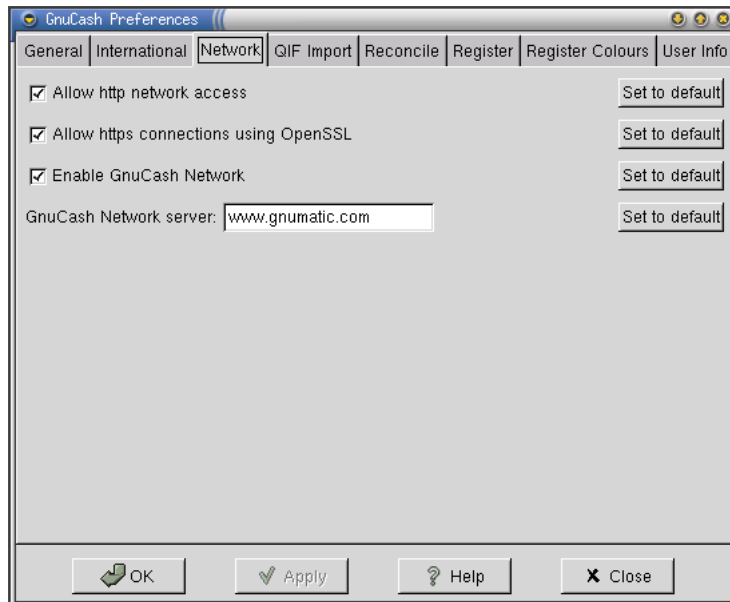
Uses 24 hour time format—not sure where though!

C.3.4 Enable EURO Support

Enables support for the EURO—this will be documented in a later version of this guide.

C.4 Network Settings

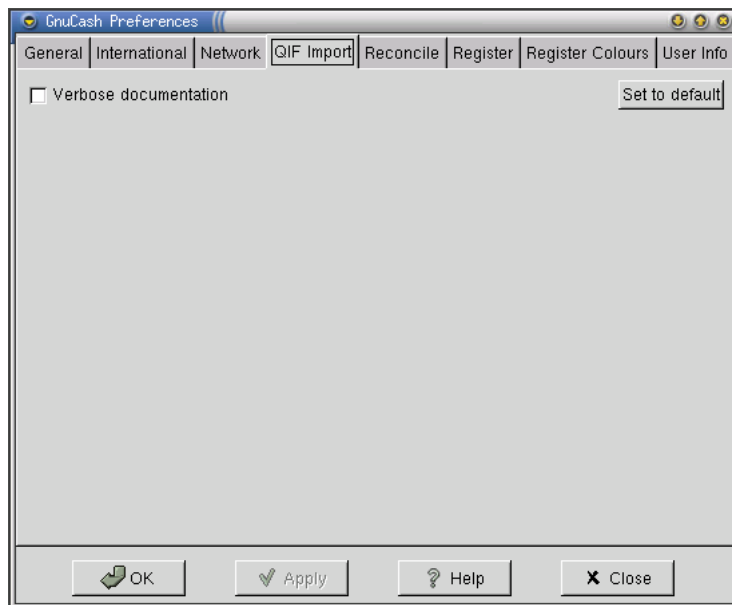
The **Network Settings** tab contains preferences for the use of network services:



These network services were never fully implemented, so these settings are redundant.

C.5 QIF Import Settings

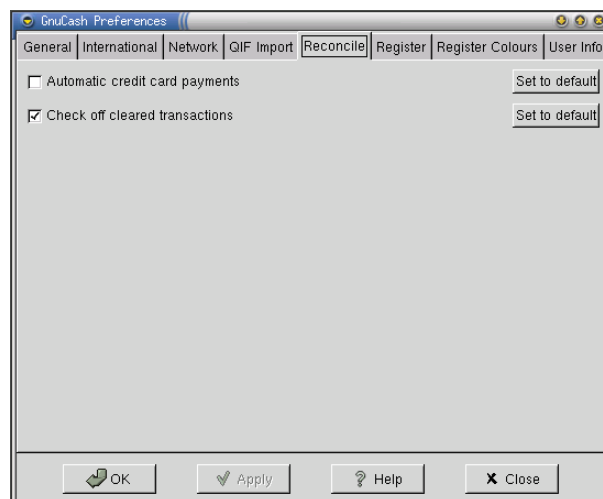
Settings for importing QIF files. QIF is the “Quicken Interchange Format”, a file format used by Quicken (a personal finance application for Microsoft Windows). Many other applications can also generate QIF-format files.



By default, the QIF Import druid will provide lengthy explanations of the import process. You can switch this behaviour off here.

C.6 Reconciliation Settings

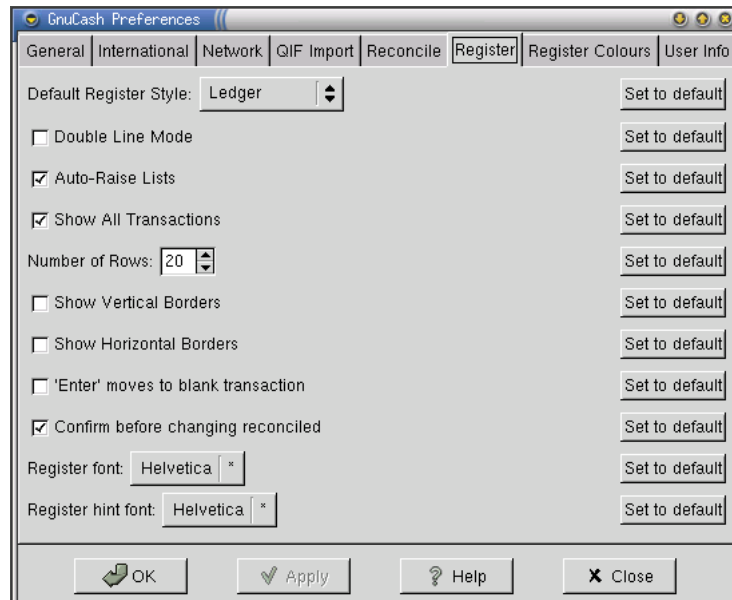
Settings that affect the *account reconciliation* process:



Option:	Description:
Automatic credit card payments	Automatically generate a payment on completion of an account reconciliation if the account type is Credit Card . Selected by default.
Check off cleared transactions	Cleared transactions are automatically checked off in the reconciliation window.

C.7 Register Settings

Settings that control the appearance and behaviour of the *account register window*:



Each item on this tab is documented in one of the following subsections.

C.7.1 Default Register Style

Controls the default style for the account register window:

Option:	Description:
Ledger	Ledger style.
Auto-Ledger	Auto-ledger style.
Journal	Journal style.

C.7.2 Double Line Mode

In *double line mode*, each transaction in an account is presented on two lines. The second line contains the **Action** and **Notes** fields for the transaction. The default is *single line mode*.

C.7.3 Auto-Raise Lists

As you type the name of an account in the account register window, the list of all accounts is automatically displayed. This setting turns off this default behaviour.

C.7.4 Show All Transactions

When you open an account register, by default GnuCash shows all transactions. If you deselect this option, GnuCash will choose a default date range.

You can override this setting in the *Account Register* window via the **Date Range** submenu in the **Register** menu.

C.7.5 Show Vertical Borders

Draws vertical lines between the fields of each transaction in the *Account Register* window. By default, GnuCash does not draw any lines.

C.7.6 Show Horizontal Borders

Draws horizontal lines between the fields of each transaction in the *Account Register* window. By default, GnuCash does not draw any lines.

C.7.7 Enter Moves to Blank Transaction

Controls the behaviour of the RETURN or ENTER key. By default, pressing ENTER will move to the next transaction. If this option is selected, pressing the ENTER key will move to the blank transaction at the bottom of the *Account Register*.

C.7.8 Confirm Before Changing Reconciled

GnuCash will confirm any changes to reconciled transactions. If you don't want this, deselect this option (be careful!).

C.7.9 Register Font

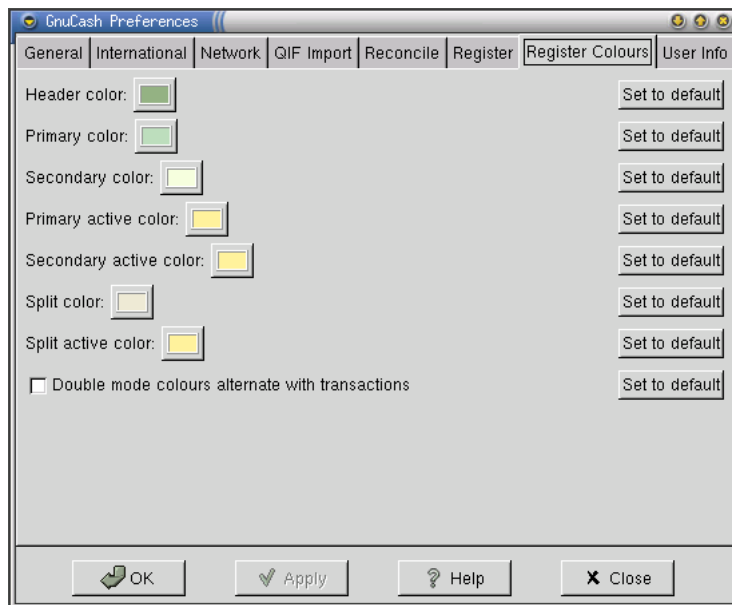
The font used to display transactions in the *Account Register*. The available options will depend on the fonts that are installed on your system.

C.7.10 Register Hint Font

The font used to display transaction hints in the *Account Register*. Transaction hints are small text items that are displayed in empty text fields to guide the user—they give hints on the type of data that should be entered in a particular field.

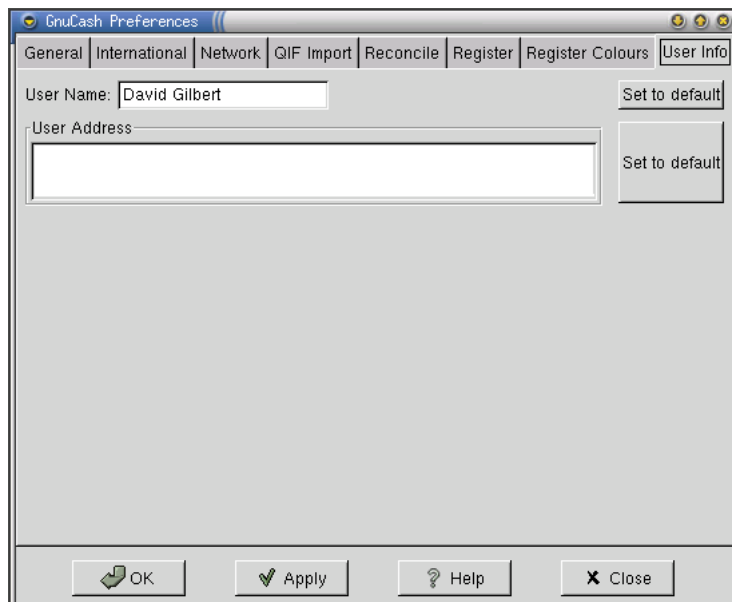
C.8 Register Color Settings

This tab allows you to change the colors used in the *account register window*:



C.9 User Information

You can enter your name and address on the *User Info* tab:



GnuCash uses your name and address at the top of invoice reports, if you generate them. I am not aware of the information being used anywhere else.