

[TeleRead: Bring the E-Books Home](#)

This is a blog post as it existed on Aug. 29, 2007. We'll refine it and eventually replace it with a Wiki. The Web address is <http://www.teleread.org/blog/?p=7029>. Questions? E-mail dr@teleread.org.

[FBReader: Ten easy tips for e-book users who want to switch to a Linux handheld](#)

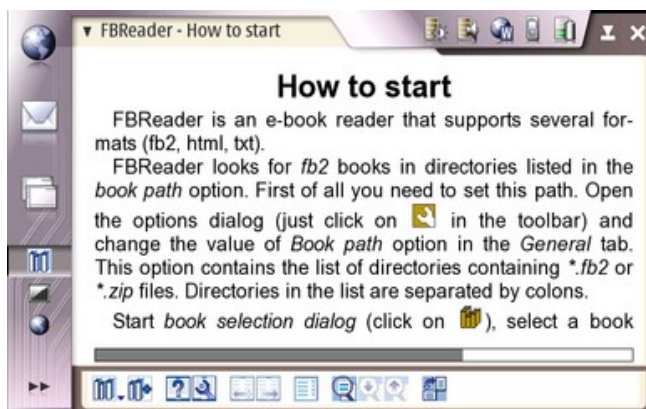
August 29, 2007 at 7:40 am by [David Rothman](#) · Filed under [Nokia 770\(t\)](#) , [e-book ergonomics\(t\)](#) , [e-book\(t\)](#) , [e-books\(t\)](#) , [ebooks\(t\)](#) , [ebook\(t\)](#) , [e-books and other digipubs\(t\)](#) · [Edit](#)

Don't be scared if you're an e-book newcomer and have shied away from a Linux handheld.

The menus on the [affordable Nokia 770s](#) aren't that hard to puzzle out, for example, if you spend a little time at it. And good e-reading software is available, [FBReader](#), which is [open source](#).

Missing until now: Handy customization instructions

The missing ingredient up to now has been a set of handy customization instructions for FBReader newcomers, many of whom might want to modify their respective key layouts to turn Nokias or other devices into *much* better e-reading machines.



Below, I'll share some FBReader basics for the sharp-screened Nokia 770, the newer [Nokia N800](#) and other machines—including Alan Wallcraft's tips on changing the actions tied to various buttons on your handheld. Click [here](#) if you want to go directly to the ten tips and skip the preliminaries.

Nope, this FBReader guide isn't perfect (we'll eventually add screen shots and update the obsolete one above), but a fancier version is on the way with help from Alan, Joseph Gray, Robert Nagle and none other than the gifted developer of the program, Nikolay Pultsin, whose [Google-based e-mail list I'd recommend your joining](#). What's more, our current tips and forthcoming FBReader wiki will help owners of [Pepper Pads](#) and perhaps those of the [E Ink-based iLiad](#), along with [certain other small machines](#).

The benefits of the Nokia-FBReader duo

Once you're all set up, it'll be a snap to use your Nokia or similar machine to download e-books from [Manybooks.net](#), [Project Gutenberg](#) and the [rest](#)—not to mention non-encrypted books from reader-friendly publishers like [Drollerie Press](#) and [Baen](#) and stores such as [Fictionwise](#), which offers thousands of books without DRM.

If you live in the States, you can even use the Nokia/FBReader duo to enjoy free books by [Kurt Vonnegut](#), [William Styron](#) and other authors, via the [ad-supported Wowio service](#), which also offers comics. Just use the free [Mobipocket Desktop](#) to convert Wowio's PDF books to an FBR-readable Mobi format (please note that Desktop is Windows-only).

Meanwhile your new Linux-based gizmo will avoid directly relying on Microsoft, a DRM bastion, whose software has its share of security vulnerabilities. Linux handhelds like the Nokia are safer than, say, the [Windows CE](#) variety. I love my CE-based [DT 375](#), now once again on sale from uBid for \$155,

not bad for a Web tablet with an eight-inch display, far bigger than the Nokia 770's screen of about four inches; but security isn't one of Microsoft's fortes. Besides, in small part for ideological reasons, hackers love to crack machines with Microsoft operating systems.

Caveat

The [White Screen of Death](#) is a risk to 770 buyers, but if WoSD strikes within the first year, then Nokia will [apparently stand behind your machine](#), if you go by the experiences of [Dr. Ellen Hage](#). Thanks for being a brave pioneer, Ellen!

Why the focus on FBReader

Now back to FBReader. It's a [nice way](#) to [read](#) HTML, plain text, nonDRMed Mobipocket, [RTF](#), [FictionBook 2](#), [Plucker](#), [PalmDoc](#), and other formats on linux machines such as the Nokia N770 and the N800, the Pepper Pad and the [iRex iLiad](#) (link goes to [MobileRead](#)'s FBReader download page), as well as on XP machines. I suspect that in the future FBReader will offer good support for the new [IDPF](#) epub format. Meanwhile see [Alan's visual tour of the Pepper Pad version of FBReader](#), as well as [other screenshots](#), including those associated with the image in this post (from a [Nokia-related tour](#)).

Read on for tips on (1) getting FBReader on your machine, (2) some basic commands, (3) using the customization menu, (4) changing scrolling characteristics if need be so you can move ahead a page rather than by the line, (5) line spacing and justification settings and others, (6) size and style of the type, aka font in this case, (7) an easy way to switch between the usual sideways position and up and down, (8) how to change the buttons for Page Ahead and Page Back and the rest, (9) Alan Wallcraft's key assignments and (10) mine.

Later today or tomorrow, I'll add to the bottom of this post another item, a list of topics envisioned for TeleRead's planned Wiki on FBReader.

Encouraged: Questions and corrections

Free free to post or e-mail your questions or corrections—this is just a preview of the FBReader Wiki. I'm hardly the ultimate FBReader expert and will count on others to provide definitive answers.

Other volunteers for the Wiki will be [very welcome](#), along with suggestions for additional topics, which ideally you can write up yourself! Meanwhile don't blame others for any glitches I've made in the very preliminary and very abbreviated draft below.

Tip #1: Getting FBReader on your machine

1. Go [here](#) for a download after consulting your machine's manual for program installation instructions. On Nokias handhelds—within the Web browser—you can just tap the specified link to start the download. Use the Open rather than Save option when your browser prompts you,
2. After you finished downloading to the your Nokia handheld, a prompt will ask you if you want to go into an install menu, if the software hasn't already transported you to an installation screen automatically. Then you can take it from there, and, lickety-split, FBReader will be on your machine.
3. On the 770, anyway, you can reach your new FBReader software by tapping the overlapping rectangles at the left of the main screen, then tapping Extras followed by the FBReader icon, the blue one with the books.

Yes. in the Wiki, we hope to offer machine-specific installation instructions for devices besides the 770. What's more, just about all 770 tips should also work for the N800.

Tip #2: Some basic commands, such as opening a book or adding new ones

First off, be sure you not in full screen mode when you open up FBReader. You want to be able to see

the commands, not just e-book text. In fact, that capability should exist when you first try FBReader. If not, press the left button at the top of the screen when you're holding it in the usual sideways position.

For brevity's sake, I won't explain all the basic commands of FBReader. But at least on my Nokia 770, the "Open sesame" is really the arrow in the upper left of the screen.

Tap Library and you'll see options for adding a book or opening an existing book.

Adding a book to FBRead on a Nokia 770: Use your Nokia's file manager to create an /ebooks subdirectory on your memory card. The path will then be /media/mmc1/ebooks.

Yes, you can execute basic commands from icons at the bottom of your screen. Please note that the icons shown at the bottom will change depending where you are in the menus. I'm focusing here on the starter icons, left to right:

Open a book, via a list of authors: Tapping a book image at the very left bottom will show you a list of authors, the names of whom you can tap to see the books available by them.

Open a book via a simple list of titles: The book icon with the downward arrow.

Add a book: The book icon with the + sign.

Go to start of book: Icon with vertical line and left-pointing arrow.

Return to earlier menu, in some cases, or go back a page: Left arrow.

Move ahead in some cases: Right arrow.

Word search: Book with magnifying glass. A submenu will let you search backwards, among other options. When you tap on form for entering search words, a keyboard will pop up in the Nokia, just as it does in rectangles on your Web browser.

Information on book: The book with the lightbulb shows you information on the book, such as the name of the author if available through the file or your manual entry.

Customization menu as noted: Wrench and screwdriver.

Changing from horizontal (landscape) to vertical (up and down) view: Book shown in different directions. With the N770s default set of keys, you can also change orientations via the raised button in middle of the scroll keys.

Since some icons are not in use, they're grayed out. Let's not worry about them now.

Tip #3: Using the customization menu

But how to do customization—including changes in scrolling characteristics and key assignments?

1. Tap on Options, shown near the bottom right, via the icon with a wrench and screwdriver. You'll see a tabbed menu come up. *Careful! You won't necessarily see all options unless you use the left and right arrows.*
2. Hit the small left arrow at the upper left to move farther to the left if need be, and the right arrow at the top to move right.

Tip #4: Changing the scrolling characteristics if need be, so you can move by whole pages, not just line by line

Unless you're a programmer type, you'll most likely want to be able to scroll ahead a full page, not just a line or few lines. Here's the trick, *in case your FBReader won't already let you to do this by mapping*

the key assignments to Large Scroll:

1. To the right of General, the very leftmost tab, you'll find Scrolling. Go there.
2. Pick the suboption of Small Scrollings.
3. Within Scrolling Mode, specify Scrolling Percentage.
4. Choose 100 as the percentage to move ahead or back a full page, not just by the line. At least that's what I've done in the past. Hopefully the full pages will be the default in the future if they're not already.
5. Go with No Overlapping of pages, unless you want to see the bottoms of pages you've just read.

Tip #5: Changing the line spacing or switching justification on or off

Want more or less space between lines? You'll find it within the Format menu. Same for the ability to switch justification on and off.

Tip #6: The size and style of the type—including whether you want bold or italics

Within the upper tabs, choose Styles. You can easily make the type larger or tired eyes, or reduce it when you're reading long paragraphs.

Tip #7: Rotation change, so it's easier to go back and forth between the sideways landscape orientation and the up-and-down portrait

Look for the Rotation tap and click on 90 Degrees Clockwise.

Tip #8: Changing the buttons—for Page Ahead or Page Back and the rest

You may find that your machine's buttons aren't in the proper locations for *your* most comfortable use.

For example, on the N770, I don't want to use the nice little raised button—in the middle of the scroll keys—to change the rotation of the page. What a waste of good real estate! Instead I want it to move ahead or back a page. Later on in this post, you'll learn how.

1. To change a key assignment, you'll be work within the Keys menu within the main Options tabs. Remember, tap on the little right arrow at the top of the screen if need be to reach to reach that menu.
2. To modify a specific key, do a tap within the rectangle near the words Action for Key, and then press the key in question. Hit OK when you're done.
3. If you want the key assignments to change according to whether you're using the Nokia in the sideways landscape mode or the vertical portrait mode, just check Keybindings Depend on Orientation. The setting for the usual portrait mode is Clockwise.
4. In some cases—this might depend on the machine—the key assignment may vanish next time you use FBReader. Oh, the vagaries of technology! But enough of the tweaks will almost surely have stuck to make it worth your while.

Got it? Meanwhile big thanks to Alan Wallcraft for letting us reproduce his post below from the FBReader mailing list. I've edited it slightly; I'm the villain if there are glitches.

Tip #9: Alan Wallcraft's key assignments, written by A.W.

Two recent posts suggest that FBReader's defaults are not optimal. The first is [TeleRead's review of the N800](#), and the second is on [Internet Tablet Talk](#). Key assignments are not difficult for readers who like to tinker, but they seem to be a barrier for those who like things to work well without tuning.

On the Nokia 770 the default is:

Scroll key <R>: Redo
Scroll key <L>: Undo
Scroll key <U>: Small Scroll Backward
Scroll key <D>: Small Scroll Forward
Scroll key <C>: Rotate Screen
Escape (center button): Cancel
Menu: None
Full Screen: Toggle Full screen
Zoom key <->: Large Scroll Backwards
Zoom key (+): Large Scroll Forward

The main problem seems to be the scroll keys.

On a Windows PC, both Adobe's Digital Edition and Mobipocket's Reader map both the Right and the Down arrows (and PageDown) to a full page forward and both the Left and Up arrows (and PageUp) to a full page back.

This is overkill when the number of keys is limited, but mapping scroll key <U> and <D> to Large Scroll (and having this be no overlapping) might be all that is needed to improve FBReader's out of the box experience.

Alan's layout for FBReader

My layout is:

Right scroll key <R>: Next Table of Contents Section
Left <L>: Previous TOC Section
Up <U>: Large Scroll Backwards
Down <D>: Large Scroll Forward
Center <C>—*raised button in the middle of the scroll keys*: Toggle Position Indicator (the line at the bottom of the screen)
Escape (center button): Rotate Screen
Menu: Show Library
Full Screen: Toggle Full Screen
Zoom key <->: Large Scroll Backwards
Zoom key (+): Large Scroll Forward

The Escape key has a rotate sign on it, and Menu seems to map best to the library. If you don't read books with a Table of Contents, then Redo and Undo may be better defaults than Next and Prev TOC section.

Each device with a limited number of keys probably needs its own default. Also, on some devices keys can be overloaded (e.g., modifier or long key press), although new users may not realize this.

For the Desktop version of FBReader, the arrow defaults and my choices are as on the 770. I map mouse scrolling to no overlapping, and the + key to increase font size (same as =), because on my Pepper Pad + and = don't share a physical key.

On the [FBReader site](#), I [list](#) the PP3 (desktop) defaults, but I misstated my arrow choices as the defaults.

Tip #10: David's key assignments

OK, this is David again. Here are the key assignments I'm using in the portrait mode on my Nokia 770 —after having checked the option of Keybindings Depend on Orientation:

Right scroll key <R>: Move back. Please note that for simplicity's sake I'm using "Right" as you'll perceive it when in the portrait mode, the vertical one. To the machine's software, "right" or <R> is something else, Scroll Down, the same as in the landscape mode.

Left <L>: A way of moving ahead. Hey, you spend most of the time reading forwards, not backwards, right? So it's nice to have the Scroll Forward at the lower left edge as perceived in portrait mode.

Up <U>: Another way to move back.

Down <D>: Scroll ahead. This overlaps with the left key, but I didn't want to have to fumble around—I wanted keys near the edge.

Center <C> (the raised button in the middle of the scroll keys): Move ahead a page via a small scroll. Remember, I've made the "100 percent" modification discussed earlier in this past..

Zoom key (+) off to the left side when I'm in portrait/vertical: Make type larger. You'll see that as one of the action choices, Increase Font Size.

Zoom key minus (-): Smaller. Achieved via the action Decrease Font Size.

As for the landscape mode, the same basics would apply with some commonsense tweaks, allowing for such factors as your favorite positions for your fingers For example, what is Page Back key in landscape might become Page Ahead in portrait.

In either mode, landscape or portrait, don't forget to consider Alan's modifications as well as mine. Work things out key by key. It's *your* preferences that count in the end.

Note: Sorry to be yet one more day late, but I felt the key tips would be more useful if I preceded them with some basics.