



by Guido Socher ([homepage](#))

*About the author:*

Guido likes Linux because of the community. It is a huge project and somehow all the different people around the world are working towards the same goal: Making it better every day.

## LF Tip: Changing the keyboard layout on the fly



*Abstract:*

This is a small tip. From now on LinuxFocus will have at least one new tip every month. If you have some ideas for a new tip then send them to [guido\(Q\)linuxfocus.org](mailto:guido(Q)linuxfocus.org)

---

## Introduction

When I write a text on the computer I have my eyes on the screen and not the keyboard. Recently I visited a friend in France and he borrowed me his computer for a while. French keyboard layout! It took at least 10 seconds per key to find it because I am used to US or German keyboards ;-)  
I did not want to edit the `/etc/X11/XF86Config-4` as it was his PC. .... KDE and Gnome have some tools to change the keyboard layout but it did not seem to be installed here. What now?

## The solution

XFree86 has a standard command called `setxkbmap` which you can use to change the layout on the fly (no X server restart). It is similar to the `loadkeys` command on the Linux console.

I typed:

```
setxkbmap -layout us
```

and voila I had a US keyboard layout. Before

I gave to computer back to my friend I just typed:

```
setxkbmap -layout fr
```

and it was as if nothing was changed.

---

<p>Webpages maintained by the LinuxFocus Editor team © Guido Socher "some rights reserved" see <a href="http://linuxfocus.org/license/">linuxfocus.org/license/</a> <a href="http://www.LinuxFocus.org">http://www.LinuxFocus.org</a></p>
---

<p>Translation information: en --&gt; -- : Guido Socher (homepage)</p>
--