

Pcbnew

The KiCad Team

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Reference manual

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Contributors

Jean-Pierre Charras, Fabrizio Tappero, Wayne Stambaugh, Jon Evans

Feedback

Please direct any bug reports, suggestions or new versions to here:

- About KiCad document: <https://gitlab.com/kicad/services/kicad-doc/issues>
- About KiCad software: <https://gitlab.com/kicad/code/kicad/issues>
- About KiCad translation: <https://gitlab.com/kicad/code/kicad-i18n/issues>

Introduction to Pcbnew

Initial configuration

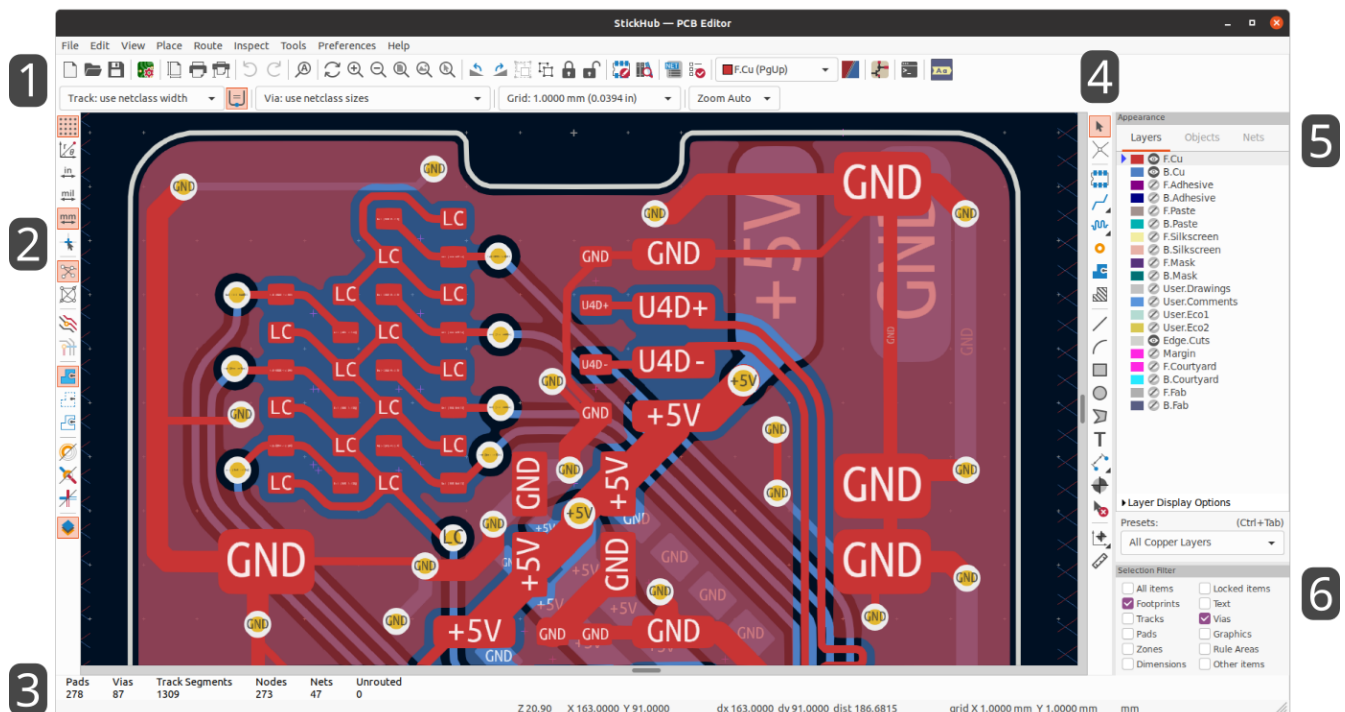
When Pcbnew is run for the first time, if the global footprint table file `fp-lib-table` is not found in the KiCad configuration folder then Pcbnew will ask how to create this file:

NOTE TODO: add screenshot

NOTE TODO: add instructions on what these options mean

The default footprint library table includes all of the standard footprint libraries that are installed as part of KiCad.

The Pcbnew user interface



The main Pcbnew user interface is shown above, with some key elements indicated:

1. Top toolbars (file management, zoom tools, editing tools)
2. Left toolbar (display options)
3. Message panel and status bar
4. Right toolbar (drawing and design tools)
5. Appearance panel
6. Selection filter panel

Navigating the editing canvas

The editing canvas is a view onto the board being designed. You can pan and zoom to different areas of the board, and also flip the view to show the board from the bottom.

By default, dragging with the middle or right mouse button will pan the canvas view and scrolling the mouse wheel will zoom the view in or out. You can change this behavior in the Mouse and Touchpad section of the preferences (see Configuration and Customization for details).

Hotkeys

NOTE

TODO: Write this section

The hotkeys described in this manual use the key labels that appear on a standard PC keyboard. On an Apple keyboard layout, use the `Cmd` key in place of `Ctrl`, and the `Option` key in place of `Alt`.

NOTE

Many of the actions available through hotkeys are also available in context menus. To access the context menu, right-click in the editing canvas. Different actions will be available depending on what is selected or what tool is active.

Display and selection controls

Board layers

Layers in Pcbnew represent physical copper layers on a board, as well as graphical layers used for defining things such as silkscreen, solder mask, and the board edge. There is always one layer that is active in the editor. The active layer is drawn on top of other layers and will be the layer assigned to newly-created objects. The active layer is indicated in the layer selector drop-down box in the top toolbar and is also highlighted in the appearance panel. To change the active layer, you can left-click a layer name in the appearance panel, use the drop-down layer selector in the top toolbar, or use a hotkey. Layers can be hidden to simplify the board view. You can hide a layer even if it is the active layer.

Display order for board layers

NOTE

TODO: Explain this.

The appearance panel

The appearance panel provides controls to manage the visibility, color, and opacity of objects in the Pcbnew drawing canvas. It has three tabs: the Layers tab contains controls for the board layers, the Objects tab contains controls for different types of graphical objects, and the Nets tab contains controls for the appearance of the ratsnest and copper items.

Layer controls

In the Layers tab of the appearance panel, each board layer is shown with its color and visibility state. The active layer is shown highlighted with an arrow indicator to the left of the color swatch. Left-click on a layer to choose it as the active layer. Left-click on the corresponding visibility icon to toggle the layer between visible and hidden. Double-click or middle-click on the color swatch to change the layer's color.

NOTE

You must first create a custom color theme in Preferences before you can change layer colors in the appearance panel.

Below the list of layers is an expandable panel that contains layer display options. The first setting controls how non-active layers are displayed: normal, dimmed, or hidden. The layer display mode can be used to simplify the view and focus on a single layer. Items on inactive layers cannot be selected when the non-active layer display mode is "Dim" or "Hide". You can use the hotkey **Ctrl** + **H** to cycle through these display modes quickly.

Flip board view will show the board as if you are looking from the bottom (that is, mirrored around the Y-axis). This option is also available in the View menu.

NOTE

Flipping the board view does not change the visual layer ordering, the active layer will remain in front followed by the other layers in their normal order.

Object controls

The Objects tab of the appearance panel is similar to the Layers tab. The main differences are that some objects have no color setting and that four types of objects (tracks, vias, pads, and zones) have opacity control sliders. The opacity setting here will be multiplied with any opacity set in the layer colors. By default,

all objects are fully opaque except for zones, which are set to translucent in order to make it easier to see objects through filled zone areas.

Layer presets

Layer presets store which layers and objects are visible and hidden for easy recall. There are several built-in layer presets and you can save your own custom presets. Custom presets are stored in the project settings for a board, as presets may be specific to a certain board stackup.

To load a preset, choose it from the Presets drop-down menu at the bottom of the appearance panel or use the quick switcher by holding down **Ctrl** and pressing **Tab**. Once the quick switcher window appears, you can press **Tab** and **Shift** + **Tab** to cycle through the available presets. When you let go of the **Ctrl** key, the highlighted preset will be loaded.

To save a custom preset, first use the visibility controls to choose which layers you want visible, then choose Save Preset... from the Presets drop-down menu. Give your preset a name and it will now be available via the drop-down menu and the quick switcher. To modify a custom preset, follow the same process and save the modified version with the same name to overwrite the existing version. To delete a custom preset, choose the Delete Preset... option from the drop-down menu and select the preset to be deleted from the list.

Net and net class controls

The Nets tab of the appearance panel shows a list of all nets and net classes in the board. Each net has a visibility control that controls the visibility of that net in the ratsnest. Hiding nets in the ratsnest does not change the connectivity of the board and will not impact the design rule checker; it only is intended to make the ratsnest easier to understand.

Each net and net class can also have a color assigned. By default, this color applies to the ratsnest lines for the net (or for all the nets in the net class). Nets have no color by default; this is indicated by a checkerboard pattern in the color swatch. Double-click or right-click a net or net class color swatch to set the color.

NOTE

The Default net class cannot have a color assigned, as nets in this class will just use the default ratsnest color defined by the color theme.

You can also select and highlight nets and net classes via the appearance panel: right-click on a net or net class to show these options in a menu.

Below the list of net classes is an expandable panel that contains net display options. The first option controls how net colors are applied. When "All" is selected, all copper items (pads, tracks, vias, and zones) belonging to a net or net class will take on the chosen color. When "Ratsnest" is selected (the default value), only the ratsnest is affected by net and net class colors. When "None" is selected, net and net class colors are ignored.

The second option controls how ratsnest lines are drawn. "All layers" means that ratsnest lines will be drawn between all unconnected items. "Visible layers" means that no ratsnest lines will be drawn to items that are on hidden layers, even when those items are unconnected.

Selection and the selection filter

Selecting items in the editing canvas is done with the left mouse button. Single-clicking on an object will select it and dragging will perform a box selection. A box selection from left to right will only select items

that are fully inside the box. A box selection from right to left will select any items that touch the box. A left-to-right selection box is drawn in yellow and a right-to-left selection box is drawn in blue.

The selection action can be modified by holding modifier keys while clicking or dragging. The following modifier keys apply when clicking to select single items:

Modifier Keys (Windows/Linux)	Modifier Keys (macOS)	Selection Effect
		Add the item to the existing selection.
		Remove the item from the existing selection.
		Toggle the selected state of the item.
		Clarify selection from a pop-up menu.
		Highlight the net of the selected copper item.

The following modifier keys apply when dragging to perform a box selection:

Modifier Keys (Windows/Linux)	Modifier Keys (macOS)	Selection Effect
		Add item(s) to the existing selection.
		Remove item(s) to the existing selection.
		Toggle the selected state of item(s).



The selection filter panel in the lower right corner of the Pcbnew window controls which types of objects can be selected with the mouse. Turning off selection of unwanted object types makes it easier to select items in a dense board. The "All items" checkbox is a shortcut to turn the other items on and off. The "Locked items" checkbox is independent of the rest, and controls whether or not items that have been locked can be selected. You can right-click any object type in the selection filter to quickly change the filter to only allow selecting that type of object.



When a connected copper item is selected, you can expand the selection to other copper items of the same net using the Expand Selection command in the right-click context menu or with the hotkey . The first time you run this command, the selection will be expanded to the nearest pad. The second time, the selection will be expanded to all connected items on all layers.

Pressing will always cancel the current tool or operation and return to the selection tool. Pressing while the selection tool is active will clear the current selection.

Net highlighting

An electrical net (or set of nets) can be highlighted in the PCB editor to visualize how the net is routed across the PCB. Net highlighting can be activated by selecting the net to highlight in the PCB editor or by selecting the corresponding net in the schematic editor when cross-probe highlighting is enabled (see below). When net highlighting is active, the highlighted net or nets will be shown in a brighter color and all other items will be shown in a dimmer color than normal.

There are three ways to select a net or nets to highlight in the PCB editor: by using the hotkey  after selecting a copper object, by using the context menu of any copper object, and the context menu of the Nets tab of the Appearance panel. When you press the Highlight Net hotkey, the nets of any selected copper items will be highlighted. If no copper items are selected, the net of the copper item under the editor cursor will be highlighted. If there is no copper item under the cursor, any existing highlighting will be cleared. The highlighting can also be cleared by using the Clear Highlight action (hotkey ).

When a net or nets have been selected for highlighting, the Toggle Net Highlighting action becomes enabled on the left toolbar (also accessible by hotkey,  + ). This action will turn the highlighting display on or off without choosing a new net to highlight.

Cross-probing from the schematic


















KiCad allows bi-directional cross-probing between the schematic and the PCB. There are several different types of cross-probing.

Selection cross-probing allows you to select a symbol or pin in the schematic to select the corresponding footprint or pad in the PCB (if one exists) and vice-versa. By default, cross-probing will result in the display centering on the cross-probed item and zooming to fit. This behavior can be disabled in the Display Options section of the Preferences dialog.

Highlight cross-probing allows you to highlight a net in the schematic and PCB at the same time. If the option "Highlight cross-probed nets" is enabled in the Display Options section of the Preferences dialog, highlighting a net or bus in the schematic editor will cause the corresponding net or nets to be highlighted in the PCB editor.

Left toolbar display controls

The left toolbar provides options to change the display of items in Pcbnew.

	Turns grid display on/off. Note: by default, hiding the grid will disable grid snapping. This behavior can be changed in the Display Options section of Preferences.
	Switch between polar and Cartesian coordinate display in the status bar.
  	Display/entry of coordinates and dimensions in inches, mils, or millimeters.
	Switches between full-screen and small editing cursor (crosshairs).
	Turns the ratsnest display on/off.
	Switches between straight and curved ratsnest lines.
	Switches the non-active layer display mode between Normal and Dim. Note: this button will be highlighted when the non-active layer display mode is either Dim or Hide. In both cases, pressing the button will change the layer display mode to Normal. The Hide mode can only be accessed via the controls in the Appearance Panel or via the hotkey Ctrl + H .
	When a net has been selected for highlighting, switches the highlighting on or off. Note: this button will be disabled when no net has been highlighted. To highlight a net, use the hotkey Ctrl + H , right-click any copper object in the net and choose Highlight Net from the Net Tools menu, or right-click the net in the list in the Nets tab of the Appearance panel.
	Show zone filled areas.
	Show zone outlines only.
	Show zone filled areas as outlines.
	Switches display of pads between filled and outline mode.
	Switches display of vias between filled and outline mode.
	Switches display of tracks between filled and outline mode.
	Shows or hides the Appearance and Selection Filter panels on the right side of the editor.

Creating a PCB

Basic PCB concepts

A printed circuit board in KiCad is generally made up of **footprints** representing electronic components and their pads, **nets** defining how those pads connect to each other, **tracks**, **vias**, and **filled zones** that form the copper connections between pads in each net, and various graphic shapes defining the board edge, silkscreen markings, and any other desired information.

KiCad normally keeps the information about nets on a PCB synchronized with an associated schematic, but nets can also be created and edited directly within the PCB editor.

Capabilities

KiCad is capable of creating printed circuit boards with up to 32 copper layers, 14 technical layers (silkscreen, solder mask, component adhesive, solder paste, etc), and 13 general-purpose drawing layers.

The internal measurement resolution of all objects in KiCad is 1 nanometer, and measurements are stored as 32-bit integers. This means it is possible to create boards up to approximately 4 meters by 4 meters.

KiCad currently supports one board file per project / schematic.


Starting from a schematic

Creating a board from a schematic is the recommended workflow for KiCad. When you create a new project, KiCad will generate an empty board file with the same name as the project. To start designing the board after you have created a schematic, simply open the board file. You can do this either from the KiCad project manager, or by clicking the "Open PCB in board editor" button in the schematic editor.

Starting from scratch

It is also possible to create a board with no matching schematic, although this workflow has some limitations and is not recommended for most users. To do this, you must start the PCB editor standalone (not from the KiCad project manager). Before beginning your design, it is a good idea to save the board file, which will also create a project file to store board settings. Use "Save As..." from the File menu to choose where to save your board file. A project file with the same name will be created in the same location you choose to save the board file in.

Board setup

Before beginning your board design, use the Board Setup dialog to configure the basic parameters of the board. To open Board Setup, click the  icon in the top toolbar or choose "Board Setup..." from the File menu.

Configuring board stackup and physical parameters

There are two sections of Board Setup used to configure the stackup and layers of the board. The Board Editor Layers section is used to enable or disable technical (non-copper) layers, and give custom names to layers if desired. The Physical Stackup section is used to configure the number of copper layers, as well as the physical parameters of the copper and dielectric layers such as thickness and material type.

To configure the board stackup, start on the Physical Stackup section:

Board Setup

Copper layers: **2** ☐ Impedance controlled

Buttons: Add Dielectric Layer, Remove Dielectric Layer

Layer	Id	Type	Material	Thickness	Color	Epsilon	Loss
F.Silkscreen	Top Silk Screen	Not specified	...		Not specified		
F.Paste	Top Solder Paste						
F.Mask	Top Solder Mask	Not specified	...	0.01 mm	Green	3.30	0
F.Cu	Copper			0.035 mm			
Dielectric 1	Core	FR4	...	1.51 mm		4.50	0.02
B.Cu	Copper			0.035 mm			
B.Mask	Bottom Solder Mask	Not specified	...	0.01 mm	Green	3.30	0
B.Paste	Bottom Solder Paste						
B.Silkscreen	Bottom Silk Screen	Not specified	...		Not specified		

Board thickness from stackup: **1.6 mm**

Buttons: Import Settings from Another Board..., Export to Clipboard, Cancel, OK

Set the number of copper layers in the upper left corner and then enter the physical parameters of the stackup if desired. These parameters may be left at their default values, but note that the board thickness value will be used when exporting a 3D model of the board. If you plan to use this feature, it is a good idea to ensure that the stackup thickness is correct.

NOTE

KiCad currently only supports stackups with an even number of copper layers. To create designs with an odd number of layers (for example, flexible printed circuits or metal-core printed circuits), simply choose the next highest even number and ignore the extra layer.

Next, if desired, use the Board Editor Layers section to rename layers or hide non-copper layers that you will not be using in the design. For example, if you will not use a back silkscreen on the design, uncheck the box next to the **B.Silkscreen** layer.

Board Setup

Buttons: Add User Defined Layer

Layer	Description
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F.Courtyard	Off-board, testing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F.Fab	Off-board, manufacturing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F.Adhesive	On-board, non-copper
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F.Paste	On-board, non-copper
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F.Silkscreen	On-board, non-copper
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F.Mask	On-board, non-copper
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> F.Cu	signal
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B.Cu	signal
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B.Mask	On-board, non-copper
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B.Silkscreen	On-board, non-copper
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B.Paste	On-board, non-copper

Buttons: Import Settings from Another Board..., Cancel, OK

NOTE

Copper layers can be designated as signal, power plane, mixed, or jumper in the Board Editor Layers section. This designation is intended as a guide for the user only. Tracks and zones can be routed on any copper layer, no matter what the type is configured to in this dialog.

Some additional board stackup settings are found on the Board Finish and Solder Mask/Paste sections of the Board Setup dialog. The Board Finish section has settings for defining the copper finish and special features such as castellations or edge plating. Note that these settings only impact the board attributes output as part of Gerber job files at this time.

The Solder Mask/Paste section allow global adjustment of the clearance (positive or negative) between the copper shapes and solder mask / solder paste shapes of pads on the board. These values will be added to any clearance overrides set on individual footprints or pads. Positive clearance values will result in the shape of the solder mask or paste opening being *larger* than the copper shape. Negative clearance values will result in the opening being *smaller* than the copper shape.

WARNING

Most commercial PCB fabricators expect these values to be zero and make their own adjustments to solder mask and paste openings as part of their CAM process. It is usually best to leave these values at their default of zero unless you are making the PCB yourself or have specific advice from your fabricator to use different values.

Configuring default text and graphic settings

The Text & Graphics Defaults section of the Board Setup dialog can be used to configure the properties that will be used for new text and graphic shapes that are placed on the board.

pcbnew board setup text and graphics

Line thickness, text size, and text appearance can be configured for the six different categories of layers shown in the dialog. Additionally, the properties for dimension objects can be configured for all layers. For more details about dimension properties, see the Dimensions section below.

Text replacement variables can be created in the Text Variables section. These variables allow you to substitute the variable name for any text string. This substitution happens anywhere the variable name is used inside the variable replacement syntax of `${VARIABLENAME}`.

For example, you could create a variable named `VERSION` and set the text substitution to `1.0`. Now, in any text object on the PCB, you can enter `${VERSION}` and KiCad will substitute `1.0`. If you change the substitution to `2.0`, every text object that includes `${VERSION}` will be updated automatically. You can also mix regular text and variables. For example, you can create a text object with the text `Version: ${VERSION}` which will be substituted as `Version: 1.0`.

Configuring design rules

Design rules control the behavior of the interactive router, the filling of copper zones, and the design rule checker. Design rules can be modified at any time, but we recommend that you establish all known design rules at the beginning of the board design process.

Constraints

Basic design rules are configured in the Constraints section of the Board Setup dialog. Constraints in this section apply to the entire board and should be set to the values recommended by your board manufacturer. Any minimum value set here is an *absolute* minimum and cannot be overridden with a more specific design rule. For example, if you need the copper clearance on part of a board to be 0.2mm and in the rest 0.3mm, you must enter 0.2mm for the minimum copper clearance in the Constraints section and use a netclass or custom rule to set the larger 0.3mm clearance.

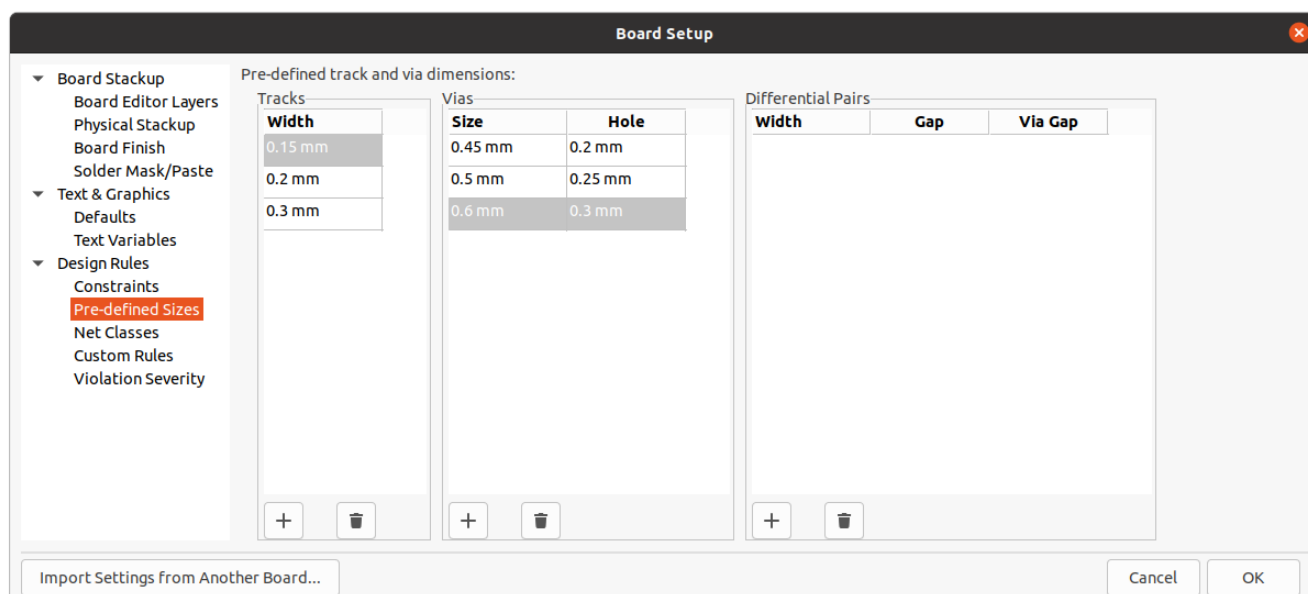


In addition to setting minimum clearances, a number of features can be configured here:

Setting	Description
Allow blind/buried vias	This setting must be enabled before you can place blind or buried vias using the router. Blind vias are mechanically-drilled vias that start at one of the outer copper layers but end at one of the inner layers. Buried vias are mechanically-drilled vias that start and end at inner copper layers.
Allow micro vias	This setting must be enabled before you can place microvias using the router. Microvias are typically laser-drilled vias that connect an outer copper layer to the adjacent inner layer. KiCad supports a separate size constraint for microvias as they typically can be smaller than mechanically-drilled vias.
Arc/circle approximated by segments	In some situations, KiCad must use a series of straight line segments to approximate round shapes such as those of arcs and circles. This setting controls the maximum error allowed by this approximation: in other words, the maximum distance between a point on one of these line segments and the true shape of the arc or circle. Setting this to a lower number than the default value of 0.005mm will result in smoother shapes, but can be very slow on larger boards. The default value typically results in arc approximation error that is not detectable in the manufactured board due to manufacturing tolerances.
Zone fill strategy	KiCad's zone filling algorithm has been improved to give better results and faster performance. The new algorithm produces slightly different results from the old algorithm, so this setting allows the old behavior to be preserved to prevent producing different Gerber outputs when opening an old design in the latest version of KiCad. We recommend using the Smoothed Polygons mode for all new designs.
Allow fillets outside zone outline	Zones can have fillets (rounded corners) added in the Zone Properties dialog. By default, no zone copper, including fillets, is allowed outside the zone outline. This effectively means that inside corners of the zone outline will not be filleted even when a fillet is configured. By enabling this setting, inside corners of the zone outline will be filleted even though this results in copper from the zone extending outside the zone outline.
Include stackup height in track length calculations	By default, the height of the stackup is used to calculate the additional length of a track that travels through vias from one layer to another. This calculation relies on the board stackup height being correctly configured. In some situations, it is preferable to ignore the height of vias and just calculate the track length assuming that vias add no length. Disabling this setting will exclude via length from track length calculations.

Pre-defined Sizes

The pre-defined sizes section allows you to define the track and via dimensions you want to have available while routing tracks. Net classes can be used to define the default dimensions for tracks and vias in different nets (see below) but defining a list of sizes in this section will allow you to step through these sizes while routing. For example, you may want the default track width on a board to be 0.2 mm, but use 0.3 mm for some sections that carry more current, and 0.15 mm for some sections where space is limited. You can define each of these track widths in the Board Setup dialog and then switch between them when routing traces.



Net Classes

The Net Classes section allows you to configure routing and clearance rules for different classes of nets. In KiCad, each net is part of exactly one net class. If you do not add a net to a specific class, it will be part of the Default class, which always exists. Nets may be added to net classes from either the schematic or PCB editor, via the Schematic Setup and Board Setup dialogs.



The upper portion of the Net Classes section contains a table showing the design rules that apply to each net class. Every class has values for copper clearance, track width, via sizes, and differential pair sizes. These values will be used when creating tracks and vias unless a more specific rule overrides them (see Custom Rules below).

NOTE

No rule may override the minimum values set in the Constraints section of Board Setup. For example, if you set a net class clearance to 0.1 mm, but the Minimum Clearance in the Constraints section is set to 0.2 mm, nets in that class will have a clearance of 0.2 mm.

The track widths and via sizes defined for each net class are used when the track width and via size controls are set to "use netclass values" in the PCB editor. These widths and sizes are considered the default, or optimal, sizes for that netclass. They are not minimum or maximum values. Manually changing the track width or via size to a different value from that defined in the Net Classes section will not result in a DRC violation. To restrict track width or via size to specific values, use Custom Rules.

Custom Rules

The Custom Rules section contains a text editor for creating design rules using the custom rules language. Custom rules are used to create specific design rule checks that are not covered by the basic constraints or net class settings.

Custom rules will only be applied if there are no errors in the custom rules definitions. Use the Check Rule Syntax button to test the definitions and fix any problems before closing Board Setup.

See Custom Design Rules in the Advanced Topics chapter for more information on the custom rules language as well as example rules.

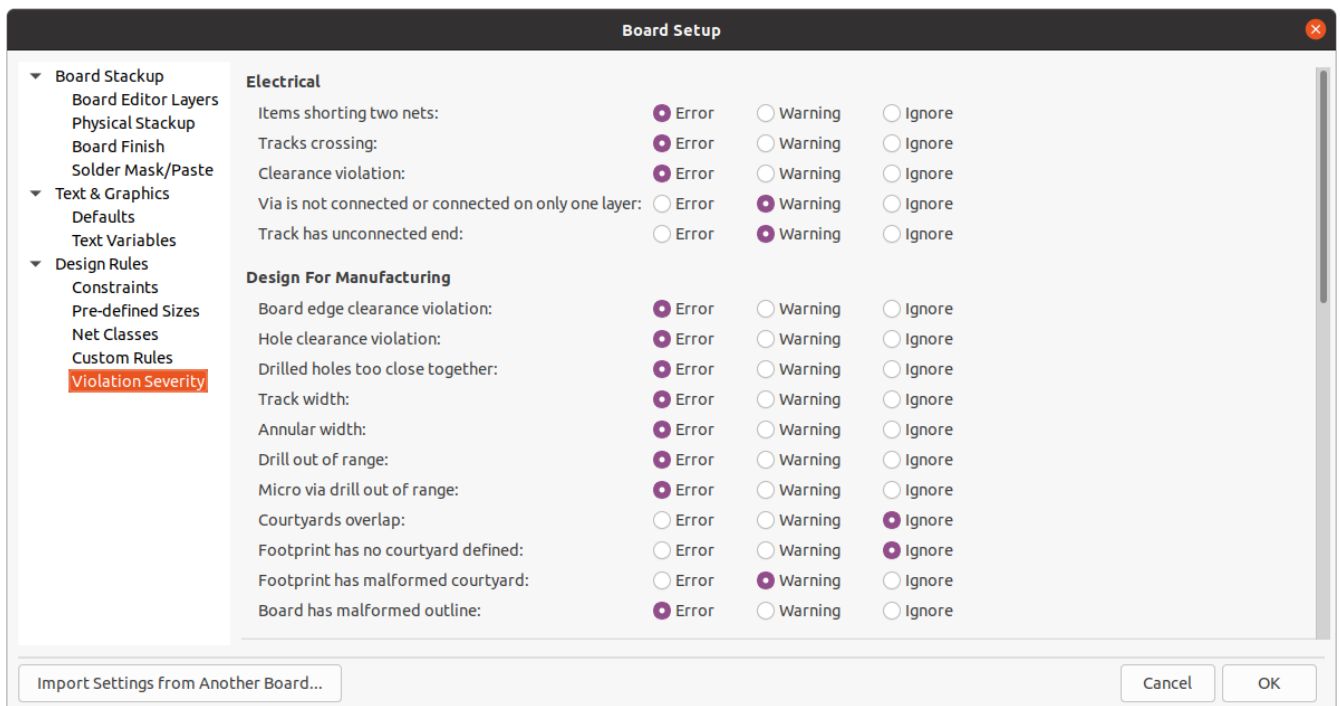


Violation Severity

The Violation Severity section allows you to configure the severity of each type of design rule check. Each rule may be set to create an error marker, a warning marker, or no marker (ignored).

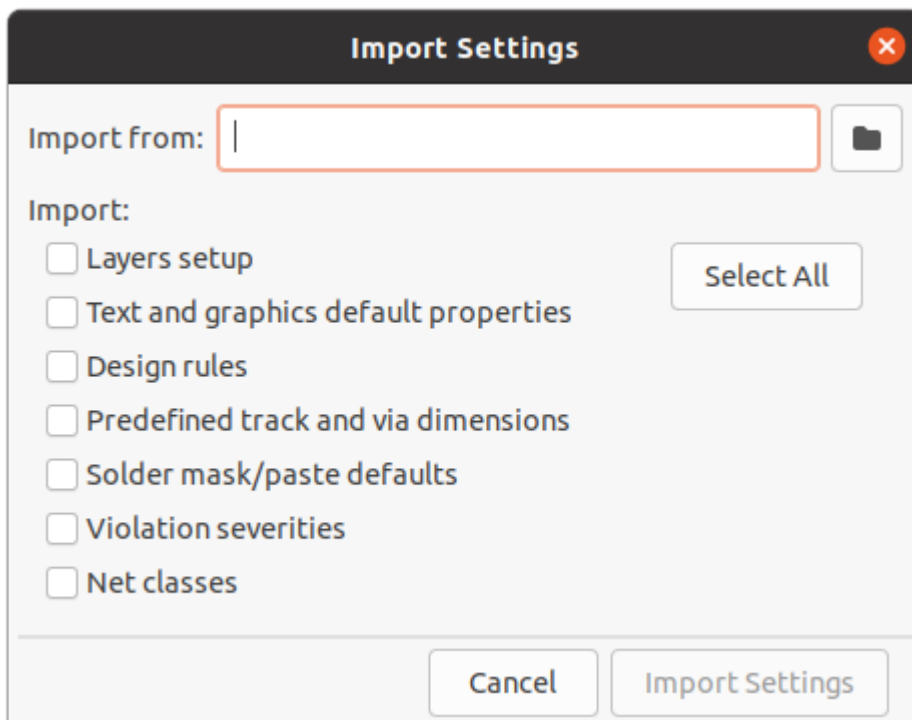
NOTE

Individual rule violations may be ignored in the Design Rule Checker. Setting a rule to Ignore in the Violation Severity section will completely disable the corresponding design rule check. Use this setting with caution.



Importing settings

You can import part or all of the board setup from an existing board. This technique can be used to create a "template" board that has the settings you want to use on multiple designs, and then importing these settings from the template board into each new board rather than entering them manually.



To import settings, click the Import Settings from Another Board... button at the bottom of the Board Setup dialog and then choose the `kicad_pcb` file you want to import from. Select which settings you want to import and the current settings will be overwritten with the values from the chosen board.

Editing a board

Placement and drawing operations












Placement and drawing tools are located in the right toolbar. When a tool is activated, it stays active until a different tool is selected or the tool is canceled with the Esc key. The selection tool is always activated when any other tool is canceled.

Some toolbar buttons have more than one tool available in a palette. These tools are indicated with a small arrow in the lower-right corner of the button:





To show the palette, you can click and hold the mouse button on the tool or click and drag the mouse. The palette will show the most recently used tool when it is closed.

	Selection tool (the default tool).
	Local ratsnest tool: when the board ratsnest is hidden, selecting footprints with this tool will show the ratsnest for the selected footprint only. Selecting the same footprint again will hide its ratsnest. The local ratsnest setting for each footprint will remain in effect even after the local ratsnest tool is no longer active.
	Footprint placement tool: click on the board to open the footprint chooser, then click again after choosing a footprint to confirm its location.
	Route tracks / route differential pairs: These tools activate the interactive router and allow placing tracks and vias. The interactive router is described in more detail in the Routing Tracks section below.
	Tune length: These tools allow you to tune the length of single tracks or the length or skew of differential pairs, after they have been routed. See the Routing Tracks section for details.
	<p>Add vias: allows placing vias without routing tracks.</p> <p>Vias placed on top of tracks using this tool will take on the net of the closest track segment and will become part of that track (the via net will be updated if the pads connected to the tracks are updated).</p> <p>Vias placed anywhere else will take on the net of a copper zone at that location, if one exists. These vias will not automatically take on a new net if the net of the copper zone is changed.</p>
	Add filled zone: Click to set the start point of a zone, then configure its properties before drawing the rest of the zone outline. Zone properties are described in more detail below.
	Add rule area: Rule areas, formerly known as keepouts, can restrict the placement of items and the filling of zones and can also define named areas to apply specific custom design rules to.


	Draw lines. Note: Lines are graphical objects and are not the same as tracks placed with the Route Tracks tool. Graphical objects cannot be assigned to a net.
	Draw arcs: pick the center point of the arc, then the start and end points.
	Draw rectangles. Rectangles can be filled or outlines.
	Draw circles. Circles can be filled or outlines.
	Draw graphical polygons. Polygons can be filled our outlines. Note: Filled graphical polygons are not the same as filled zones: graphical polygons cannot be assigned to a net and will not keep clearance from other items.
	Add text.
	Add dimensions. Dimension types are described in more detail below.
	Add layer alignment mark.
	Deletion tool: click objects to delete them.
	Set drill/place origin. Used for fabrication outputs.
	Set grid origin.

Snapping

When moving, dragging, and drawing board elements, the grid, pads, and other elements can have snapping points depending upon the settings in the user preferences. In complex designs, snap points can be so close together that it makes the current tool action difficult. Both grid and object snapping can be disabled while moving the mouse by using the modifier keys in the table below.

Modifier Key	Effect
	Disable grid snapping.
	Disable object snapping.

Editing object properties

All objects have properties that are editable in a dialog. Use the hotkey  or select Properties from the right-click context menu to edit the properties of selected item(s). You can only open the properties dialog if all the items you have selected are of the same type. To edit the properties of different types of items at one time, see the section below on bulk editing tools.

In properties dialogs, any field that contains a numeric value can also accept a basic math expression that results in a numeric value. For example, a dimension may be entered as `2 * 2mm`, resulting in a value of `4mm`. Basic arithmetic operators as well as parentheses for defining order of operations are supported.

Working with footprints

NOTE | TODO: Write this section - covers footprint properties, updating from library, etc.

Working with pads

NOTE | TODO: Write this section - covers pad properties

Working with zones

NOTE | TODO: Write this section

Graphical objects

Graphical objects (lines, arcs, rectangles, circles, polygons, and text) can exist on any layer but cannot be assigned to a net. Rectangles, circles, and polygons can be set to be filled or outlines in their properties dialogs. The line width property will control the width of the outline even for filled shapes. Line width can be set to `0` for filled shapes to disable the outline.

Creating graphical shapes

NOTE | TODO: Write this section

Creating text objects


NOTE | TODO: Write this section


Board outlines (Edge Cuts)

KiCad uses graphical objects on the `Edge.Cuts` layer to define the board outline. The outline must be a continuous (closed) shape, but can be made up of different types of graphical object such as lines and arcs, or be a single object such as a rectangle or polygon. If no board outline is defined, or the board outline is invalid, some functions such as the 3D viewer and some design rule checks will not be functional.


Dimensions

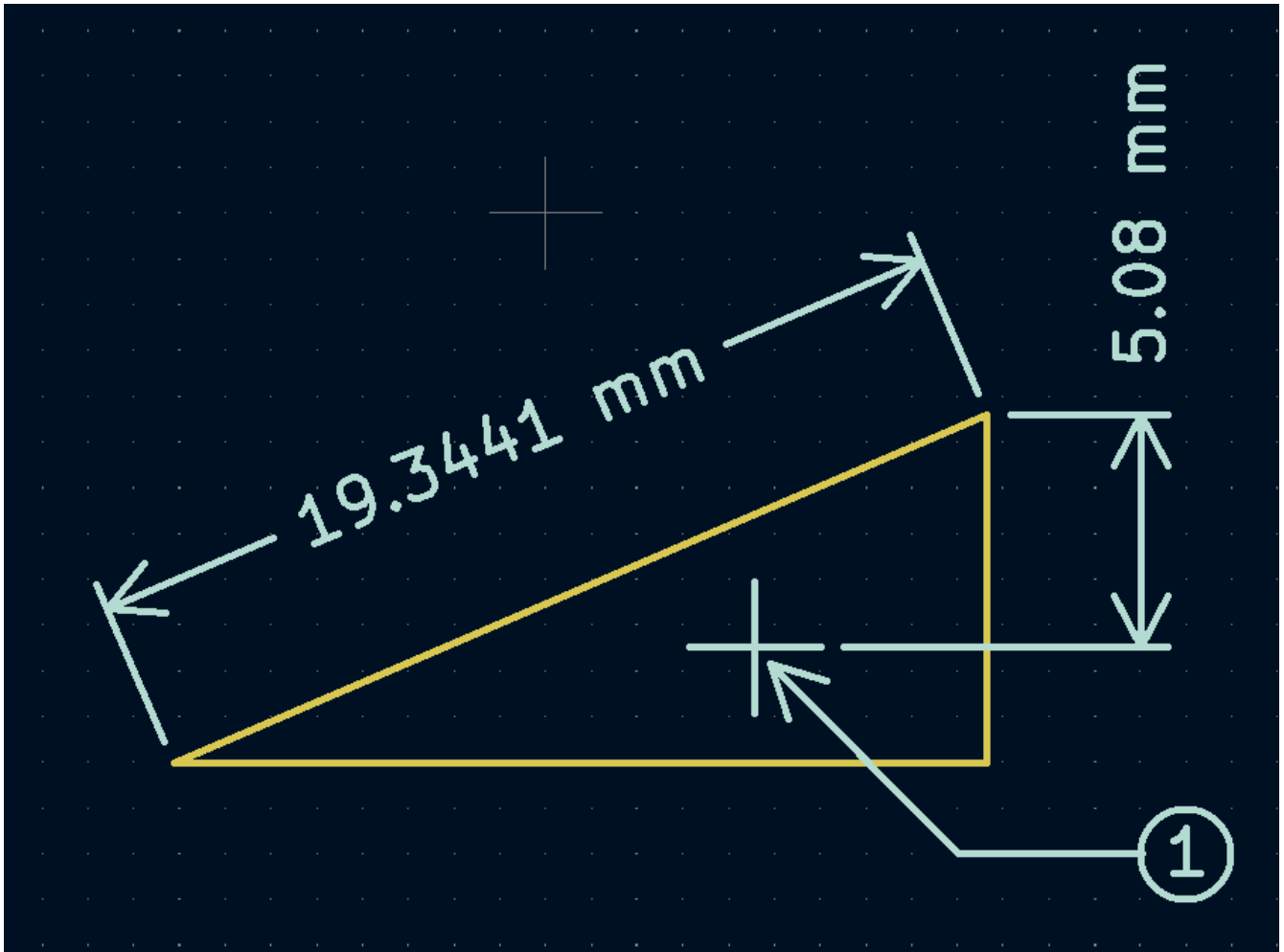
Dimensions are graphical objects used to show a measurement or other marking on a board design. They may be added on any drawing layer, but are normally added to one of the User layers. KiCad currently supports four different types of dimension: aligned, orthogonal, center, and leader.

Aligned dimensions () show a measurement of distance between two points. The measurement axis is the line that connects those two points, and the dimension graphics are kept parallel to that axis.

Orthogonal dimensions () also measure the distance between two points, but the measurement axis is either the X or Y axis. In other words, these dimensions show the horizontal or vertical component of the distance between two points. When creating orthogonal dimensions, you can select which axis to use as the measurement axis based on where you place the dimension after selecting the two points to measure.

Center dimensions () create a cross mark to indicate a point or the center of a circle or arc.

Leader dimensions () create an arrow with a leader line connected to a text field. This text field can contain any text, and an optional circular or rectangular frame around the text. This type of dimension is often used to call attention to parts of the design for reference in fabrication notes.



After creating a dimension, its properties may be edited (hotkey ) to change the format of the displayed number and the style of the text and graphic lines.

NOTE

You may customize the default style of newly-created dimension objects in the Text & Graphics Defaults section of the Board Setup dialog.

Dimension Properties

Dimension Format

Value: 5.08

☐ Override value

Units: Automatic

Prefix:

Units format: 1234 mm

Suffix:

Precision: 0.0000

Layer: User.Eco1

☒ Suppress trailing zeroes

Preview: 5.08 mm

Dimension Text

Width: 1 mm

Position X: 171 mm

Height: 1 mm

Position Y: 54 mm

Thickness: 0.15 mm

Position mode: Manual

☐ Italic

Orientation: 90.0

☐ Mirrored

☒ Keep aligned with dimension

Justification: Center

Dimension Line

Line thickness: 0.15 mm

Arrow length: 1.27 mm

Extension line offset: 0.5 mm

Cancel

OK

Dimension format options

Override value: When enabled, you may enter a measurement value directly into the **Value** field that will be used instead of the actual measured value.

Prefix: Any text entered here will be shown before the measurement value.

Suffix: Any text entered here will be shown after the measurement value.

Layer: Selects which layer the dimension object exists on.

Units: Selects which units to display the measured value in. **Automatic** units will result in the dimension units changing when the display units of the board editor are changed.

Units format: Select from several built-in styles of unit display.

Precision: Select how many digits of precision to display.

Dimension text options

Most of the dimension text options are identical to those options available for other graphical text objects (see the Graphical Objects section above). Some specific options for dimension text are also available:

Position mode: Choose whether to position the dimension text manually, or to automatically keep it aligned with the dimension measurement lines.

Keep aligned with dimension: When enabled, the orientation of the dimension text will be adjusted automatically to keep the text parallel with the measurement axis.

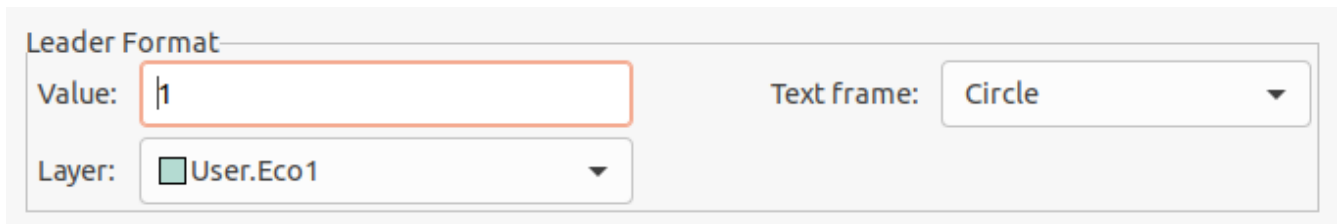
Dimension line options

Line thickness: Sets the thickness of the graphical lines that make up a dimension's shape.

Extension line offset: Sets the distance from the measurement point to the start of the extension lines.

Arrow length: Sets the length of the arrow segments of the dimension's shape.

Leader options



Leader Format

Value:

Text frame: Circle

Layer: User.Eco1

Value: Enter the text to show at the end of the leader line.

Text frame: Select the desired border around the text (circle, rectangle, or none).

Routing tracks

KiCad features an interactive router that:

- Allows manual or guided (semi-automatic) routing of single tracks and differential pairs.
- Enables modifications of existing designs by:
 - Re-routing existing tracks when they are dragged
 - Re-routing tracks attached to footprint pads when the footprint is dragged
- Allows tuning of track lengths and differential pair skew (phase) by inserting serpentine tuning shapes for designs with tight timing requirements

By default, the router respects the configured design rules when placing tracks: the size (width) of new tracks will be taken from the design rules and the router will respect the copper clearance set in the design rules when determining where new tracks and vias can be placed. It is possible to disable this behavior if desired by using the Highlight Collisions router mode and turning on the Allow DRC Violations option in the router settings (see below).



The router has three modes that can be selected at any time. The router mode is used for routing new tracks, but also when dragging existing tracks using the Drag (hotkey D) command. These modes are:

Highlight Collisions: in this mode, most of the router features are disabled and routing is fully manual. When routing, *collisions* (clearance violations) will be highlighted in green and the newly-routed tracks cannot be fixed in place if there is a collision unless the Allow DRC Violations option is turned on. In this mode, up to two track segments may be placed at a time (for example, one horizontal and one diagonal segment).

- **Shove:** in this mode, the track being routed will walk around obstacles that cannot be moved (for example, pads and locked tracks/vias) and *shove* obstacles that can be moved out of the way. The router prevents DRC violations in this mode: if there is no way to route to the cursor position that does not violate DRC, no new tracks will be created.
- **Walk Around:** in this mode, the router behaves the same as in Shove mode, except no obstacles will be moved out of the way.




Which mode to use is a matter of preference. For most users, we recommend using Shove mode for the most efficient routing experience or Walk Around mode if you do not want the router to modify tracks that are not being routed. Note that Shove and Walk Around modes always create horizontal, vertical, and 45-degree (H/V/45) track segments. If you need to route tracks with angles other than H/V/45, you must use Highlight Collisions mode and enable the Free Angle Mode option in the Interactive Router Settings dialog.


There are five main routing functions: Route Single Track, Route Differential Pair, Tune length of a single track, Tune length of a differential pair, and Tune skew of a differential pair. All of these are present in both the Route menu dropdown (individually) on the top toolbar and the drawing toolbar in two overloaded icons on the drawing toolbar on the right. The use of the overloaded icons is described above. One is for the two Route functions and one is for the three Tune functions. In addition, the Route menu allows the selection of Set Layer Pair and Interactive Router Settings.


To route tracks, click the Route Tracks  icon (from the drawing toolbar or from the top toolbar under **Route**) or use the hotkey . Click on a starting location to select which net to route and begin routing. The net being routed will automatically be highlighted and the allowable clearance for the net will be indicated with a gray outline around the tracks being routed. The clearance outline can be disabled by changing the Clearance Outlines setting in the Display Options section of the Preferences dialog.

NOTE

The clearance outline shows the maximum clearance from the routed net to any other copper on the PCB. It is possible to use custom design rules to specify different clearances for a net to different objects. These clearances will be respected by the router, but only the largest clearance value will be shown visually.

When the router is active, new track segments will be drawn from the routing start point to the editor cursor. These tracks are *unfixed* temporary objects that show what tracks will be created when you use a left-click or the  key to *fix* the route. The unfixed track segments are shown in a brighter color than the fixed track segments. When you exit the router using the  key or by selecting another tool, only the fixed track segments will be saved. The Finish Route action (hotkey ) will fix all tracks and exit the router.

While you are routing, you can use the Undo Last Segment command (hotkey ) to unfix the tracks you most recently fixed. You can use this command repeatedly to step back through the route that you have already fixed.

In previous versions of KiCad, using the left mouse button or  to fix the routed segments would fix all segments up to but *not including* the segment ending at the mouse cursor location. In KiCad 6, this behavior

is now optional, and by default, all segments *including* the one ending at the mouse cursor location will be fixed. The old behavior can be restored by disabling the "Fix all segments on click" option in the Interactive Router Settings dialog.

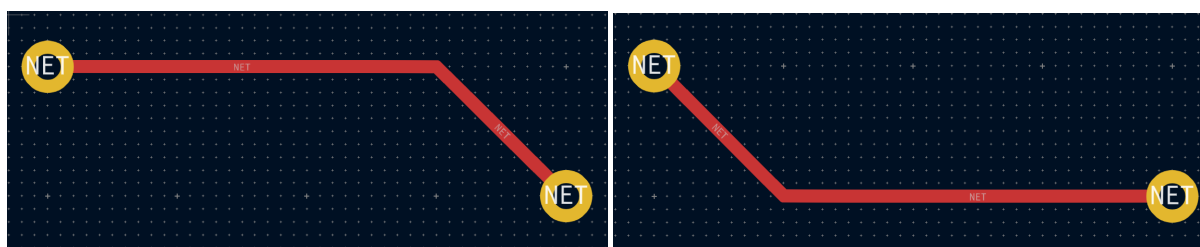
While routing, you can hold the **Ctrl** key to disable grid snapping, and hold the **Shift** key to disable snapping to objects such as pads and vias.

NOTE

Snapping to objects can also be disabled by changing the Magnetic Points preferences in the Editing Options section of the Preferences dialog. We recommend that you leave object snapping enabled in general, so that you do not accidentally end tracks slightly off-center on a pad or via.

Track posture

When routing in H/V/45 mode, the *posture* refers to how a set of two track segments connect two points that cannot be reached by a single H/V/45-degree segment. In such a case, the points will be connected by one horizontal or vertical segment and one diagonal (45-degree) segment. The posture refers to the order of these segments: whether the horizontal/vertical segment or the diagonal segment comes first.



KiCad's router attempts to pick the best posture automatically based on a number of factors. In general, the router will attempt to minimize the number of corners in a route, and will avoid "bad" corners such as acute angles whenever possible. When routing from or to a pad, KiCad will choose the posture that lines up the route with the longest edge of the pad.

In some cases, KiCad cannot guess the posture you intend correctly. To switch the posture of the track while routing, use the Switch Track Posture command (hotkey **/**).

In situations where there is no obvious "best" posture (for example, when starting a route from a via), KiCad will use the movement of your mouse cursor to select the posture. If you would like the route to begin with a straight (horizontal or vertical) segment, move the mouse away from the starting location in a mostly horizontal or vertical direction. If you would like the route to begin diagonally, move in a diagonal direction. Once the cursor is a sufficient distance away from the routing start location, the posture is "locked" and will no longer change unless the cursor is brought back to the starting location. Detection of posture from the movement of the mouse cursor can be disabled in the Interactive Router Settings dialog as described below.

NOTE

If you use the Switch Track Posture command to override the posture chosen by KiCad, the automatic detection of posture from mouse movement will be disabled for the remainder of the current routing operation.

Track corner mode

KiCad's router can place tracks with either sharp or rounded (arc) corners when routing in H/V/45 mode. To switch between sharp and rounded corners, use the Track Corner Mode command (hotkey **Ctrl** + **/**). When routing with rounded corners, each routing step will place either a straight segment, a single arc, or both a


straight segment and an arc. The track posture determines whether the arc or the straight segment will be placed first.

Track corners can also be rounded after routing by using the Fillet Tracks command after selecting the desired tracks.

NOTE



Dragging of tracks with arcs is not yet supported. Arcs will be converted back to sharp corners when dragging tracks or when tracks are moved by the router in Shove mode.

Track width

The width of the track being routed is determined in one of three ways: if the routing start point is the end of an existing track and the  button on the top toolbar is enabled, the width will be set to the width of the existing track. Otherwise, if the track width dropdown in the top toolbar is set to "use netclass width", the width will be taken from the netclass of the net being routed (or from any custom design rules that specify a different width for the net, such as inside a neckdown area). Finally, if the track width dropdown is set to one of the pre-defined track sizes configured in the Board Setup dialog, this width will be used.







NOTE



The track width can never be lower than the minimum track width configured in the Constraints section of the Board Setup dialog. If a pre-defined width is added that is lower than this minimum constraint, the minimum constraint value will be used instead.

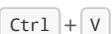
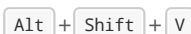
KiCad's router supports a single track width for the active route. In other words, to change widths in the middle of a track, you must end the route and then restart a new route from the end of the previous route. To change the width of the active route, use the hotkeys  and  to step through the track widths configured in the Board Setup dialog.

Placing vias

While routing tracks, switching layers will insert a through via at the end of the current (unfixed) track. Once you place the via, routing will continue on the new layer. There are several ways to select a new layer and insert a via:

- By using the hotkey to select a specific layer, such as  to select F.Cu or  to select B.Cu.
- By using the "next layer" or "previous layer" hotkeys ( and .
- By using the "Place Via" hotkey () , which will switch to the next layer in the active layer pair.
- By using the Select Layer and Place Through Via action (hotkey ) , which will open a dialog to select the target layer.


The size of the via will be taken from the active Via Size setting, accessible from the drop-down in the top toolbar or the Increase Via Size () and Decrease Via Size () hotkeys. Much like track width, when the via size is set to "use netclass sizes", the via sizes configured in the Net Classes section of the Board Setup will be used (unless overridden by a custom design rule).

If microvias or blind/buried vias are enabled in the Constraints section of the Board Setup dialog, these vias can be placed while routing. Use the hotkey  to place a microvia and  to place a blind/buried via. Microvias may only be placed such that they connect one of the outer copper layers to an adjacent layer. Blind/buried vias may be placed on any layer.

Vias placed by the router are considered to be part of a routed track. This means that the via net can be updated automatically (just like track nets can), for example when updating the PCB from the schematic changes the net name of the track. In some cases this may not be desired, such as when creating stitching vias. The automatic update of via nets can be disabled for specific vias by turning off the "automatically update via nets" checkbox in the via properties dialog. Vias placed with the Add Free-standing Vias tool are created with this setting disabled.

Routing differential pairs


Differential pairs in KiCad are defined as nets with a common *base name* and a positive and negative suffix. KiCad supports using `+` and `-`, or `P` and `N` as the suffix. For example, the nets `USB+` and `USB-` form a differential pair, as do the nets `USB_P` and `USB_N`. In the first example, the base name is `USB`, and `USB_` in the second. The suffix styles cannot be mixed: the nets `USB+` and `USB_N` do not form a differential pair. Make sure you name your differential pair nets accordingly in the schematic in order to allow use of the differential pair router in the PCB editor.

To route a differential pair, click the Route Differential Pairs  icon (from the drawing toolbar or from the top toolbar under **Route**) or use the hotkey `[6]`. Click on a pad, via, or the end of an existing differential pair track to start routing. You can start routing from either the positive or negative net of a differential pair.

NOTE

It is not currently possible to start routing a differential pair in the middle of an existing differential pair track.

The differential pair router will attempt to route the pair of tracks with a gap taken from the design rules (differential pair gap can be configured in the Net Classes section of the Board Setup dialog, or by using custom design rules). If the starting or ending location of the route is a different distance apart from the configured gap, the router will create a short "fan out" section to minimize the length of track where the differential pair is not coupled.


When switching layers or using the Place Via () action, the differential pair router will create two vias next to each other. These vias will be placed as close as possible to each other while respecting the design rules for copper and hole-to-hole clearance.


Modifying tracks


After tracks have been routed, they can be modified by moving or dragging, or deleted and re-routed. When a single track segment is selected, the hotkey `[U]` can be used to expand the selection to all connected track segments. The first press of `[U]` will select track segments between the nearest junctions with pads or vias. The second press of `[U]` will expand the selection again to include all track segments connected to the selected track on all layers. Selecting tracks with this technique can be used to quickly delete an entire routed net.

There are two different drag commands that can be used to modify a track segment. The Drag (45-degree mode) command, hotkey `[D]`, is used to drag tracks using the router. If the router mode is set to Shove, dragging with this command will shove nearby tracks. If the router mode is set to Walk Around, dragging with this command will walk around or stop at obstacles. The Drag Free Angle command, hotkey `[G]`, is used to split a track segment into two and drag the new corner to any location. Drag Free Angle behaves like the Highlight Collisions router mode: obstacles will not be avoided or shoved, only highlighted.

NOTE







Dragging of tracks containing arcs is not yet possible. Attempting to drag these tracks will result in the arcs being removed in some cases. It is possible to resize a particular arc by selecting it and using the drag command () **D**). When resizing an arc using this command, no DRC checking is performed.



The Move command (hotkey ) **M**) can also be used on track segments. This command will pick up the selected track segments, ignoring any attached track segments or vias that are not selected. No DRC checking is done when moving tracks using the Move command.

It is possible to re-route tracks attached to footprints while moving the footprints. To do so, use the drag command () **D**) with a footprint selected. Any tracks that end at one of the footprint's pads will be dragged along with the footprint. This feature has some limitations: it only operates in Highlight Collisions mode, so the tracks attached to footprints will not walk around obstacles or shove nearby tracks out of the way. Additionally, only tracks that end at the origin of the footprint's pads will be dragged. Tracks that simply pass through the pad or that end on the pad at a location other than the origin will not be dragged.

It is possible to modify the width of tracks and the size of vias without re-routing them using the Edit Tracks and Vias dialog. See the section below on bulk editing tools for details.

Length tuning

The length tuning tools can be used to add serpentine tuning shapes to tracks after routing. To tune the length of a track, first pick the appropriate length tuning tool. The single track tuning tool (icon  or hotkey ) **7**) will add serpentine shapes to bring the length of a single track up to the target value. The differential pair tuning tool (icon  or hotkey ) **8**) will do the same for a differential pair. The differential pair skew tuning tool (icon  or hotkey ) **9**) will add length to the shorter member of a differential pair in order to eliminate skew (phase difference) between the positive and negative sides of the pair. As with the Routing icons, the Tuning icons are found in both the Route menu dropdown from the top toolbar and the drawing toolbar on the right.

To select the target length for the length tuning tools, open the Length Tuning Settings dialog from the context menu or with the hotkey  **Ctrl** +  **L** after activating the length tuning tool:

Single Track Length Tuning

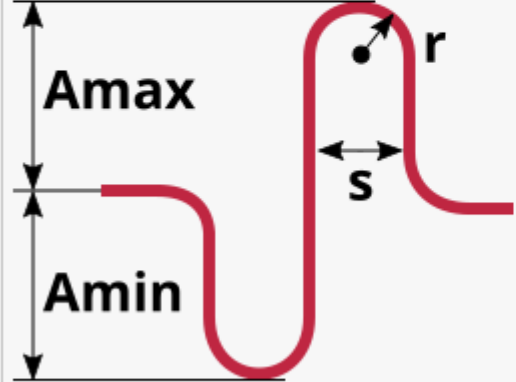
Length / Skew

Target length:

100

mm

Meandering



Min amplitude (Amin):

0.1

mm

Max amplitude (Amax):

1

mm

Spacing (s):

0.6

mm

Miter style:

arc

Miter radius (r):

100

%

Cancel

OK

This dialog can also be used to configure the size, shape, and spacing of the meander shapes.

After configuring the target length, click a track in the area that you wish to start placing meander shapes. Move the mouse cursor along the track, and meander shapes will be added. A status window will appear next to the cursor showing the current length of the track and the target length. Click again to finish placing the current meander. Multiple meanders can be placed on the same track if desired.

NOTE

The length tuning tools only support tuning the length of point-to-point nets between two pads. Tuning the length of nets with different topologies is not yet supported.

Interactive router settings

The interactive router settings can be accessed through the Route menu, or by right-clicking on the Route Tracks button in the toolbar. These settings control the router behavior when routing tracks as well as when dragging existing tracks.

Interactive Router Settings

Mode

☐ Highlight collisions

☐ Shove

☒ Walk around

Options

Mouse drag behavior:

Interactive drag

☐ Free angle mode (no shove/walkaround)

☒ Jump over obstacles

☒ Remove redundant tracks

☒ Optimize pad connections

☒ Smooth dragged segments

☐ Allow DRC violations

☒ Optimize entire track being dragged

☒ Use mouse path to set track posture

☒ Fix all segments on click

Cancel

OK

Setting	Description
Mode	Sets the operating mode of the router for creating new tracks and dragging existing tracks. See above for more information.
Free angle mode	Allows routing tracks at any angle, instead of just at 45-degree increments. This option is only available if the router mode is set to Highlight collisions.
Jump over obstacles	In Shove mode, allows the router to attempt to move colliding tracks behind solid obstacles (such as pads).
Remove redundant tracks	Automatically removes loops created in the currently-routed track, keeping only the most recently routed section of the loop.
Optimize pad connections	When this setting is enabled, the router attempts to avoid acute angles and other undesirable routing when exiting pads and vias.
Smooth dragged segments	When dragging tracks, attempts to combine track segments together to minimize direction changes.
Allow DRC violations	In Highlight collisions mode, allows placing tracks and vias that violate DRC rules. It has no effect in other modes.
Optimize entire track being dragged	When enabled, dragging a track segment will result in KiCad optimizing the rest of the track that is visible on the screen. The optimization process removes unnecessary corners, avoids acute angles, and generally tries to find the shortest path for the track. When disabled, no optimizations are performed to the track outside of the immediate section being dragged.
Use mouse path to set track posture	Attempts to pick the track posture based on the mouse path from the routing start location.
Fix all segments on click	When enabled, clicking while routing will fix the position of all the track segments that have been routed, including the segment that ends at the mouse cursor. A new segment will be started from the mouse cursor location. When disabled, the last segment (the one that ends at the mouse cursor) will not be fixed in place and can be adjusted by further mouse movement.

Forward and back annotation

NOTE

TODO: Write this section

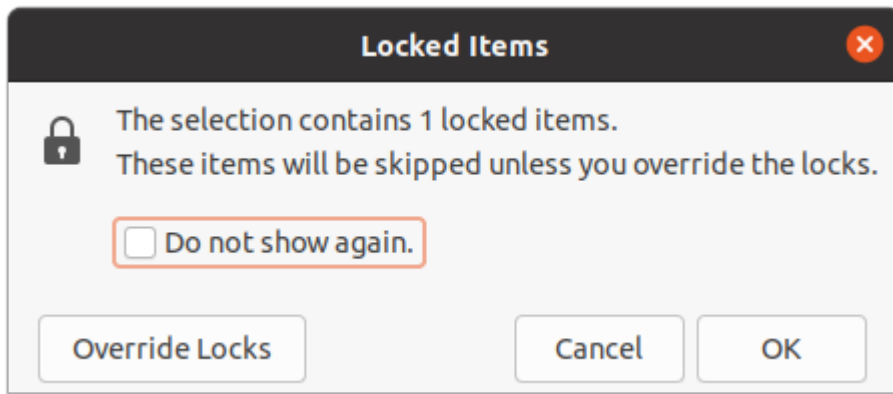
Geographical re-annotation

NOTE

TODO: Write this section

Locking

Most objects can be locked through their properties dialogs, by using the right-click context menu, or by using the Toggle Lock hotkey (**L**). Locked objects cannot be selected unless the "Locked items" checkbox is enabled in the selection filter. Attempting to move locked items will result in a warning dialog:



Selecting "Override Locks" in this dialog will allow moving the locked items. Selecting "OK" will allow you to move any unlocked items in the selection; leaving the locked items behind. Selecting "Do not show again" will remember your choice for the rest of your session.

Bulk editing tools

NOTE | TODO: Write this section

Cleanup tools

NOTE | TODO: Write this section

Importing graphics

NOTE | TODO: Write this section

Importing vector drawings from DXF and SVG files


NOTE | TODO: Write this section

Importing bitmap images

NOTE | TODO: Write this section

Inspecting a board

Measurement tool


The measurement tool allows you to make distance and angle measurements between points on the PCB. To activate the tool, click the  icon in the right toolbar, or use the hotkey `Ctrl + Shift + M`. Once the tool is active, click once to set the measurement start point, then click again to finish a measurement.

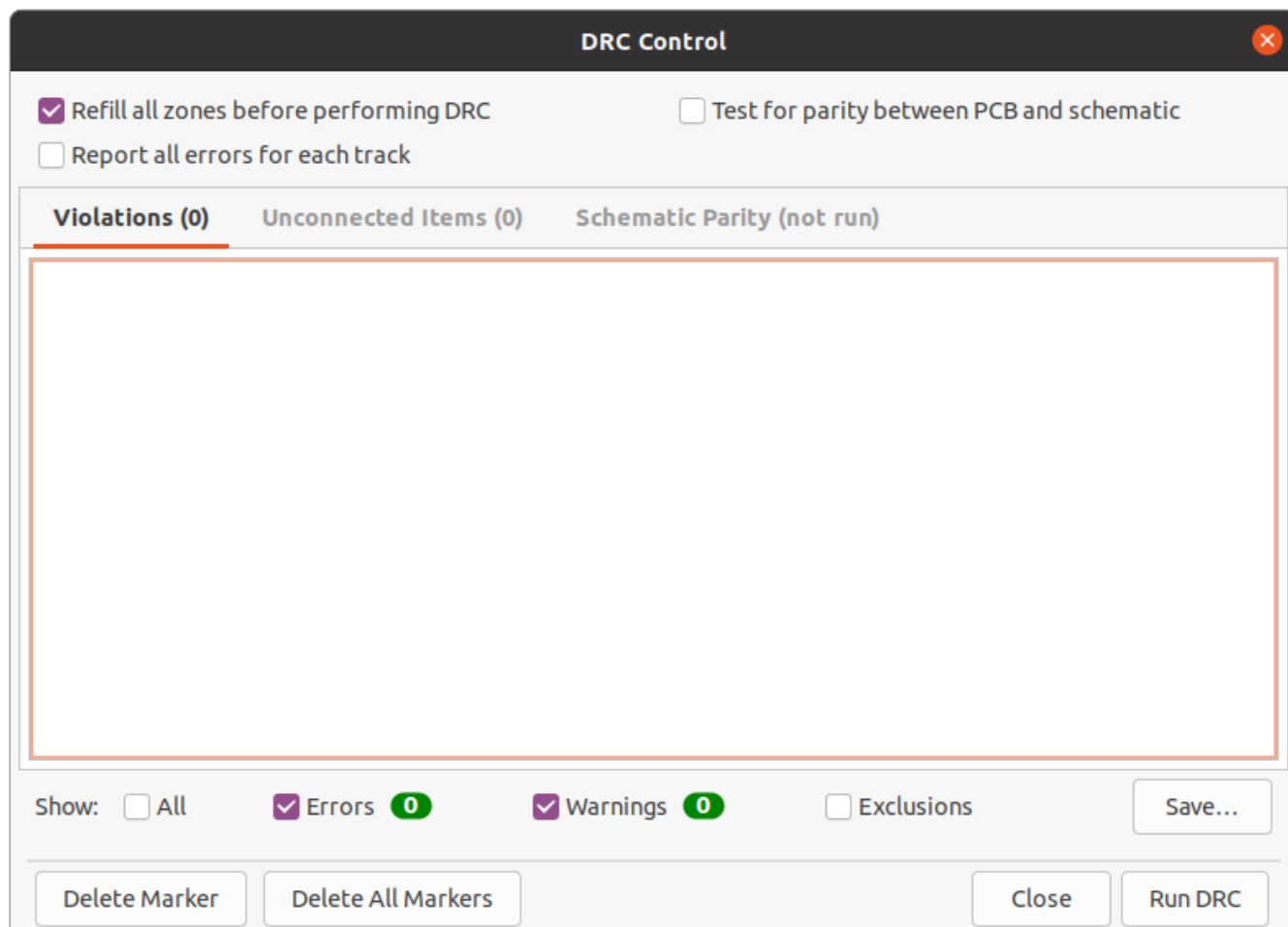
NOTE

The measurement tool is used for quick measurements that do not need to be displayed permanently. Any measurement you make will only be shown while the tool is active. To create permanent dimensions that will appear in printouts and plots, use the Dimension tools.

Design rule checking

The design rule checker is used to verify that the PCB meets all the requirements established in the Board Setup dialog and that all pads are connected according to the netlist or schematic. KiCad can automatically prevent some design rule violations while routing tracks, but many others cannot be prevented automatically. This means it is important to use the design rule checker before creating manufacturing files for a PCB.

To use the design rule checker, click the  icon in the top toolbar, or select Design Rules Checker from the Inspect menu.



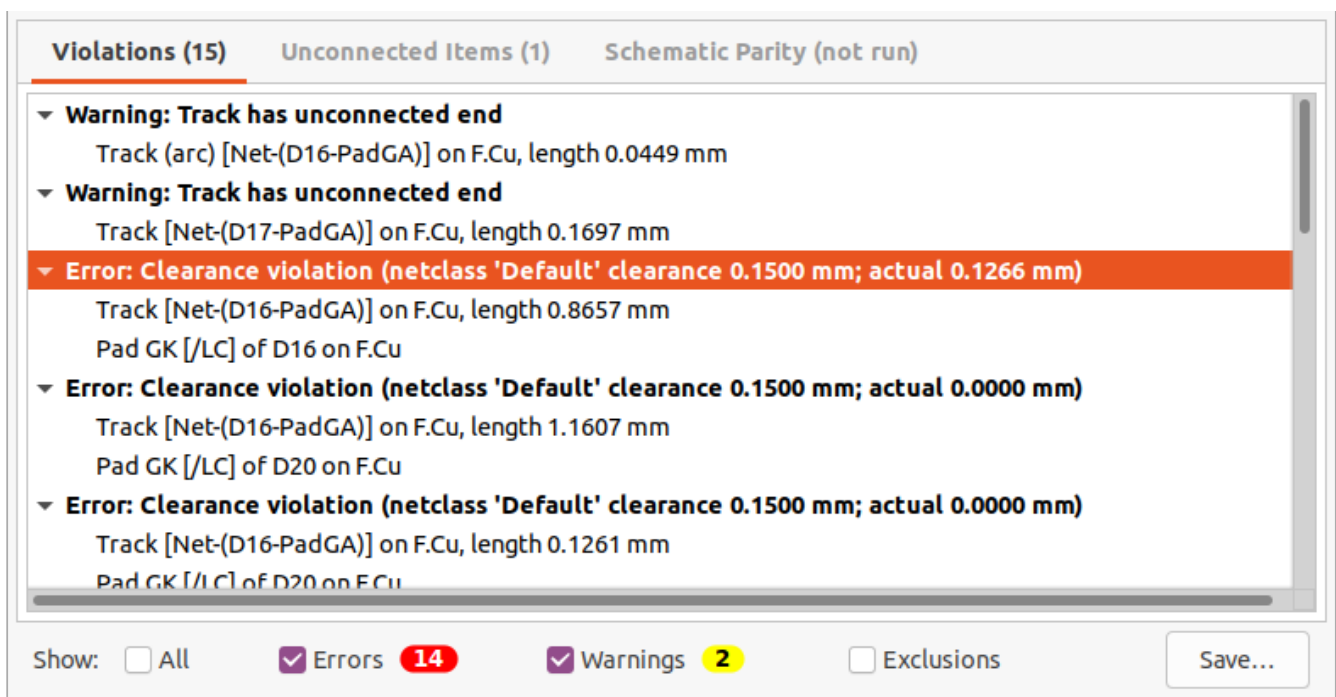
The top section of the DRC Control window contains some options that control the design rule checker:

Refill all zones before performing DRC: when enabled, zones will be refilled every time the design rule checker is run. Disabling this option may result in incorrect DRC results if zones have not been refilled manually.

Report all errors for each track: when enabled, all clearance errors will be reported for each track segment. When disabled, only the first error will be reported. Enabling this option will result in the design rule checker running more slowly.

Test for parity between PCB and schematic: when enabled, the design rule checker will test for differences between the schematic and PCB in addition to testing the PCB design rules. This option has no effect when running the PCB editor in standalone mode.

After running DRC, any violations will be shown in the center part of the DRC Control window. Rule violations, unconnected items, and differences between the schematic and the PCB are shown in three different tabs. The controls below the list of violations can be used to show or hide violations depending on their severity. A report file in plain text format can be created after running DRC using the Save button.



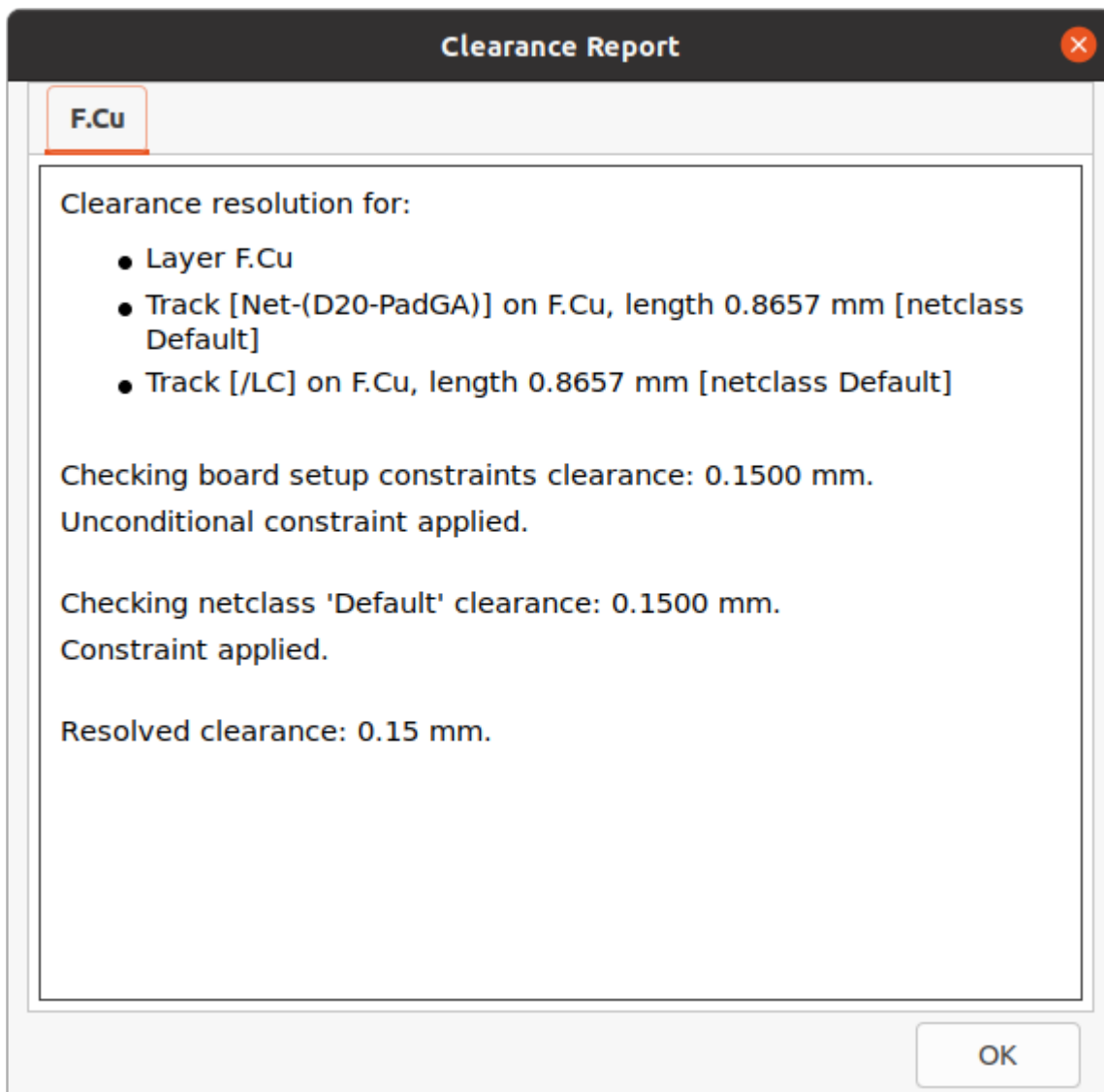
Each violation involves one or more object on the PCB. In the list of violations, the objects involved are listed below the violation. Clicking on the violation in the list view will move the PCB Editor view so that the affected area is centered. Clicking on one of the objects involved in a violation will highlight the object.

Right-clicking a violation in the list view will open a context menu with additional actions including excluding the selected violation. **Excluded** violations are hidden unless the Exclusions checkbox is enabled at the bottom of the DRC Control window. Excluded violations are remembered between runs of the design rule checker.

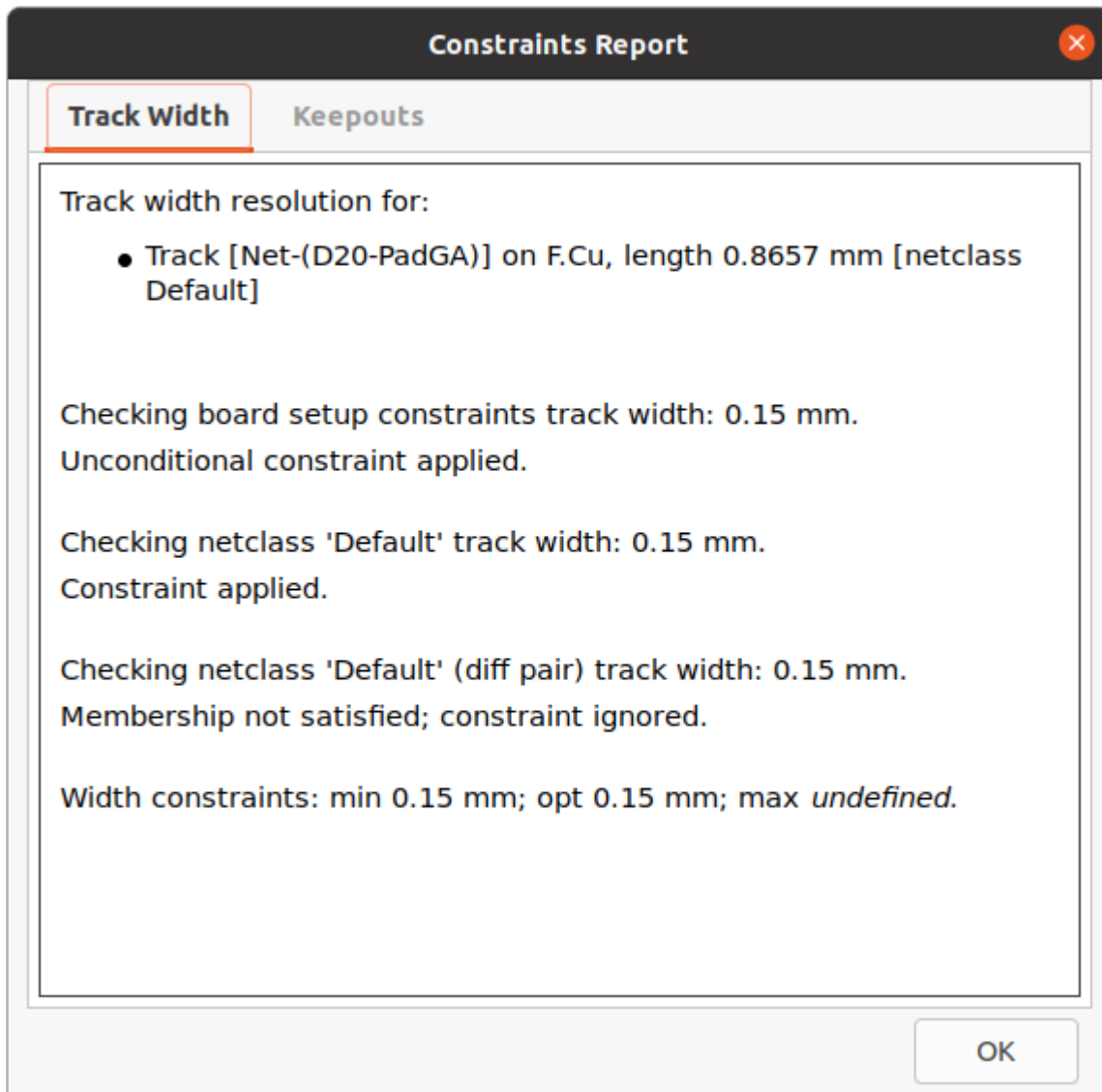
Clearance and constraint resolution

The clearance and constraint resolution tools allow you to inspect which clearance and design constraint rules apply to selected items. These tools can help when designing PCBs with complex design rules where it is not always clear which rules apply to an object.

To inspect the clearance rules that apply between two objects, select both objects and choose Clearance Resolution from the Inspect menu. The Clearance Report dialog will show the clearance required between the objects on each copper layer, as well as the design rules that resulted in that clearance.



To inspect the design constraints that apply to an object, select it and choose Constraints Resolution from the Inspect menu. The Constraints Report dialog will show any constraints that apply to the object.




3D viewer

NOTE

TODO: Write this section

Net inspector

The Net Inspector allows you to view statistics about all the nets in a board. To open the inspector, click the  icon at the top of the Nets section of the Appearance panel, or select Net Inspector from the Inspect menu.

Net Inspector

Net name filter:

☒ Show zero pad nets

☐ Group by:

Wildcard

Net	Name	Pad Count	Via Count	Via Length	Track Length	Die Length	Total Length
001	GND	87	49	75.7050 mm	196.5256 mm	0.0000 mm	272.2306 mm
002	+5V	35	9	13.9050 mm	87.6956 mm	0.0000 mm	101.6006 mm
003	Net-(C2-Pad1)	4	0	0.0000 mm	4.4157 mm	0.0000 mm	4.4157 mm
004	+3V3	17	0	0.0000 mm	43.0460 mm	0.0000 mm	43.0460 mm
005	+1V8	8	2	3.0900 mm	20.5597 mm	0.0000 mm	23.6497 mm
006	Net-(R3-Pad2)	2	0	0.0000 mm	1.7030 mm	0.0000 mm	1.7030 mm
007	Net-(R4-Pad2)	2	0	0.0000 mm	1.6197 mm	0.0000 mm	1.6197 mm
008	Net-(R5-Pad2)	2	0	0.0000 mm	1.7104 mm	0.0000 mm	1.7104 mm
009	Net-(R6-Pad1)	2	0	0.0000 mm	1.4346 mm	0.0000 mm	1.4346 mm
012	Net-(D15-PadGA)	3	1	1.5450 mm	12.6927 mm	0.0000 mm	14.2377 mm
013	Net-(D16-PadGA)	3	1	1.5450 mm	16.5495 mm	0.0000 mm	18.0945 mm
014	Net-(D17-PadGA)	3	1	1.5450 mm	15.1970 mm	0.0000 mm	16.7420 mm
015	Net-(D18-PadGA)	3	1	1.5450 mm	17.1834 mm	0.0000 mm	18.7284 mm
016	Net-(D19-PadGA)	3	1	1.5450 mm	9.8005 mm	0.0000 mm	11.3455 mm
017	Net-(D20-PadGA)	3	1	1.5450 mm	12.1082 mm	0.0000 mm	13.6532 mm
018	Net-(D21-PadGA)	3	1	1.5450 mm	13.9298 mm	0.0000 mm	15.4748 mm

+

Create Report...

OK

Clicking a net in the list will highlight that net on the board. Clicking a column title allows you to sort the list of nets by that column.

The Group By field allows you to combine different nets together and view the total length of the combined nets. For example, if you have two nets named `DATA0` and `DATA0_EXT`, using a Group By value of `DATA0*` will create a group containing both nets. More complicated groupings can be created by changing the Group By mode from Wildcard to RegEx (regular expressions). The substring (Substr) variants of the Group By mode will create groups for each set of nets that matches the pattern differently.

For example, if you have the nets `U1D+`, `U1D-`, `U2D+`, and `U2D-`, the grouping pattern `U*D` will match all four nets in Wildcard mode, creating a single group `U*D`. In Wildcard Substr mode, it will match all four nets, but create two different groups: `U1D` and `U2D`.

Pad Count and **Via Count** show the number of pads (surface mount and through hole) and vias on a net. **Via Length** shows the total height of each via (not accounting for which copper layers the via connects to). In other words, Via Length is equal to Via Count multiplied by the stackup height of the board. **Track Length** shows the total length of all track segments in a net, not accounting for topology. **Die length** shows the total of all Pad to Die Length values set for pads on the net.

NOTE

The lengths shown in the Net Inspector differ from those shown in the length tuning tools, because the Net Inspector shows the sum of all tracks connected to a net, and the length tuning tools show the distance between the closest two pads or branching vias. See the Routing section for more information about the length tuner.

Generating outputs

KiCad can generate and export files in a number of different formats useful for manufacturing PCBs and interfacing with external software. This functionality is available in the File menu in a few different sections. The Fabrication Outputs section contains the most common operations needed to prepare a PCB for fabrication. The Export section contains tools for generating files that can be read by external software. The Plot function allows you to export 2D line drawings of the PCB in various formats. The Print function allows you to send a view of the PCB to a 2D printer.

Fabrication outputs and plotting

KiCad uses Gerber files as its primary plotting format for PCB manufacturing. To create Gerber files, open the Plot dialog from the File menu, or select Gerbers from the Fabrication Outputs section of the File menu. The Plot dialog will open, allowing you to configure and generate Gerber files.

Plot

Plot format: **Gerber** Output directory: **./CAM**

Include Layers

- ☒ F.Cu
- ☒ B.Cu
- ☒ F.Adhesive
- ☒ B.Adhesive
- ☒ F.Paste
- ☒ B.Paste
- ☒ F.Silkscreen
- ☒ B.Silkscreen
- ☒ F.Mask
- ☒ B.Mask
- ☐ User.Drawings
- ☐ User.Comments
- ☐ User.Eco1
- ☐ User.Eco2
- ☒ Edge.Cuts
- ☐ Margin
- ☐ F.Courtyard
- ☐ B.Courtyard

General Options

- ☐ Plot border and title block
- ☒ Plot footprint values
- ☒ Plot reference designators
- ☐ Force plotting of invisible values / refs
- ☒ Plot Edge.Cuts on all layers
- ☐ Sketch pads on fabrication layers
- ☐ Do not tent vias
- Drill marks: **None**
- Scaling: **1:1**
- Plot mode: **Filled**
- ☒ Use drill/place file origin
- ☐ Mirrored plot
- ☐ Negative plot
- ☒ Check zone fills before plotting

Gerber Options

- ☐ Use Protel filename extensions
- ☒ Generate Gerber job file
- ☐ Subtract soldermask from silkscreen
- Coordinate format: **4.6, unit mm**
- ☐ Use extended X2 format (recommended)
- ☒ Include netlist attributes
- ☐ Disable aperture macros (not recommended)

Output Messages

Show: ☐ All ☒ Errors **0** ☒ Warnings **0** ☒ Actions ☒ Infos **Save...**

Run DRC... (15 known DRC violations; 0 exclusions) **Generate Drill Files...** **Close** **Plot**

Plotting options

Include Layers: Check that every layer used on your board is enabled in the list. Disabled layers will not be plotted.

Output directory: Specify the location to save plotted files. If this is a relative path, it is created relative to the project directory.

Plot border and title block: If enabled, the drawing sheet border and title block will be plotted on each layer. This should usually be disabled when plotting Gerber files.

Plot footprint values: If enabled, the Value field of each footprint will be plotted on whatever layer it exists on (unless the field visibility is disabled for a specific footprint).

Plot reference designators: If enabled, the Reference Designator field of each footprint will be plotted on whatever layer it exists on (unless the field visibility is disabled for a specific footprint).

Force plotting of invisible values / refs: If enabled, all footprint values and reference designators will be plotted, even if the field visibility is disabled for some of these fields.

Plot Edge.Cuts on all layers: If enabled, the Edge.Cuts (board outline) layer will be added to all other layers. Check with your manufacturer to see what the correct value of this setting is for their manufacturing process.

Sketch pads on fabrication layers: If enabled, footprint pads on fabrication (F.Fab, B.Fab) layers will be drawn as unfilled outlines rather than filled shapes.

Do not tent vias: If enabled, vias will be left uncovered on the solder mask layers (F.Mask, B.Mask). If disabled, vias will be covered by solder mask (tented).

NOTE

KiCad does not support tenting or uncovering specific vias. Tenting may only be controlled globally (for all vias on a board).

Drill marks: For plot formats other than Gerber, marks may be plotted at the location of all drilled holes. Drill marks may be created at the actual size (diameter) of the finished hole, or at a smaller size.

Scaling: For plot formats that support scaling other than 1:1, the plot scale may be set. The Auto scaling setting will scale the plot to fit the specified page size.

Plot mode: For some plot formats, filled shapes may be plotted as outlines only (sketch mode).

Use drill/place file origin: When enabled, the coordinate origin for plotted files will be the drill/place file origin set in the board editor. When disabled, the coordinate origin will be the absolute origin (top left corner of the worksheet).

Mirrored plot: For some plot formats, the output may be mirrored horizontally when this option is set.

Negative plot: For some plot formats, the output may be set to negative mode. In this mode, shapes will be drawn for the empty space inside the board outline, and empty space will be left where objects are present in the PCB.

Check zone fills before plotting: When enabled, zone fills will be checked (and refilled if outdated) before generating outputs. Plot outputs may be incorrect if this option is disabled!

Gerber options

Use Protel filename extensions: When enabled, the plotted Gerber files will be named with file extensions based on Protel (.GBL , .GTL , etc). When disabled, the files will have the .gbr extension.

Generate Gerber job file: When enabled, a Gerber job file (.gbrjob) will be generated along with any Gerber files. The Gerber job file is an extension to the Gerber format that includes information about the PCB stackup, materials, and finish. More information about Gerber job files is available at [the Ucamco website](#).

Coordinate format: Configure how coordinates will be stored in the plotted Gerber files. Check with your manufacturer for their recommended setting for this option.

Use extended X2 format: When enabled, the plotted Gerber files will use the X2 format, which includes information about the netlist and other extended attributes. This format may not be compatible with older CAM software used by some manufacturers.

Include netlist attributes: When enabled, the plotted Gerber files will include netlist information that can be used for checking the design in CAM software. When X2 format mode is disabled, this information is included as comments in the Gerber files.

Disable aperture macros: When enabled, all shapes will be plotted as primitives rather than by using aperture macros. This setting should only be used for compatibility with old or buggy CAM software when requested by your manufacturer.

PostScript options

Scale factor: Controls how coordinates in the board file will be scaled to coordinates in the PostScript file. Using a different value for X and Y scale factors will result in a stretched / distorted output. These factors may be used to correct for scaling in the PostScript output device to achieve an exact-scale output.

Track width correction: A global factor that is added (or subtracted, if negative) from the size of tracks, vias, and pads when plotting a PostScript file. This factor may be used to correct for errors in the PostScript output device to achieve an exact-scale output.

Force A4 output: When enabled, the generated PostScript file will be A4 size even if the KiCad board file is a different size.

SVG options

Units: Controls the units that will be used in the SVG file. Since the SVG format has no specified units system, you must export using the same units setting that you want to use for importing into other software.

Precision: Controls how many significant digits will be used to store coordinates.

DXF options

Plot graphic items using their contours: Graphic shapes in DXF files have no width. This option controls how graphic shapes with a width (thickness) in a KiCad board are plotted to a DXF file. When this option is enabled, the outer contour of the shape will be plotted. When this option is disabled, the centerline of the shape will be plotted (and the shape's thickness will not be visible in the resulting DXF file).

Use KiCad font to plot text: When enabled, text in the KiCad design will be plotted as graphic shapes using the KiCad font. When disabled, text will be plotted as DXF text objects, which will use a different font and will not appear in exactly the same position and size as shown in the KiCad board editor.

Export units: Controls the units that will be used in the DXF file. Since the DXF format has no specified units system, you must export using the same units setting that you want to use for importing into other software.

HPGL options

Default pen size: Controls the plotter pen size used to create graphics.

Drill files

KiCad can generate CNC drilling files required by most PCB manufacturing processes in either Excellon or Gerber X2 format. KiCad can also generate a drill map: a graphical plot of the board showing drill locations. Select the Generate Drill Files option from the Fabrication Outputs menu to open the dialog:

Generate Drill Files

Output folder:

Drill File Format:

- ☒ Excellon
 - ☐ Mirror Y axis
 - ☐ Minimal header
 - ☐ PTH and NPTH in single file
- ☐ Gerber X2

Map File Format:

- ☐ HPGL
- ☒ PostScript
- ☐ Gerber
- ☐ DXF
- ☐ SVG
- ☐ PDF

Oval Holes Drill Mode:

- ☒ Use route command (recommended)
- ☐ Use alternate drill mode

Drill Origin:

- ☐ Absolute
- ☒ Drill/place file origin

Drill Units:

- ☐ Millimeters
- ☒ Inches

Zeros Format:

- ☒ Decimal format (recommended)
- ☐ Suppress leading zeros
- ☐ Suppress trailing zeros
- ☐ Keep zeros

Precision: 2:4

Hole Counts:

Plated pads:	0
Non-plated pads:	1
Through vias:	87
Micro vias:	0
Buried vias:	0

Messages

Output folder: Choose the folder to save generated drill and map files to. If a relative path is entered, it will be relative to the project directory.

Drill file format: Choose whether to generate Excellon drill files (required by most PCB manufacturers) or Gerber X2 files.

Mirror Y axis: For Excellon files, choose whether or not to mirror the Y-axis coordinate. This option should in general not be used when having PCBs manufactured by a third party, and is provided for convenience for users who are making PCBs themselves.

Minimal header: For Excellon files, choose whether to output a minimal header rather than a full file header. This option should not be enabled unless requested by your manufacturer.

PTH and NPTH in single file: By default, plated holes and non-plated holes will be generated in two different Excellon files. With this option enabled, both will be merged into a single file. This option should not be enabled unless requested by your manufacturer.

Oval holes drill mode: Controls how oval holes are represented in an Excellon drill file. The default setting, **Use route command**, is correct for most manufacturers. Only choose the **Use alternate drill mode** setting if requested by your manufacturer.

Map file format: Choose the output format for plotting a drill map.

Drill origin: Choose the coordinate origin for drill files. **Absolute** will use the page origin at the top left corner. **Drill/place file origin** will use the origin specified in the board design.

Drill units: Choose the units for drill coordinates and sizes.

Zeros format: Controls how numbers are formatted in an Excellon drill file. Select an option here based on your manufacturer's recommendations.

Component placement files

Component placement files are text files that list each component (footprint) on the board along with its center position and orientation. These files are usually used for programming pick-and-place machines, and may be required by your manufacturer if you are ordering fully-assembled PCBs.

NOTE

A footprint will not appear in generated placement files if the "Exclude from position files" option is enabled for that footprint. This may be used for excluding certain footprints that do not represent physical components to be assembled.

Generate Placement Files

Output directory:

Format

☒ ASCII

☐ CSV

☐ Gerber (experimental)

Units

☐ Inches

☒ Millimeters

Files

☒ Separate files for front, back

☐ Single file for board

☐ Include only SMD footprints

☐ Exclude all footprints with through hole pads

☐ Include board edge layer

☒ Use drill/place file origin

Output Messages

Show: ☐ All ☒ Errors **0** ☒ Warnings **0** ☒ Actions ☒ Infos

Format: Choose between generating a plain text (ASCII), comma-separated text (CSV), or Gerber placement file format.

Units: Choose the units for component locations in the placement file.

Files: Choose whether to generate separate files for footprints on the front and back of the board or a single file combining both sides.

Include only SMD footprints: When enabled, only footprints with the SMD fabrication attribute will be included. Check with your manufacturer to determine if non-SMD footprints should be included or excluded from the position file.

Exclude all footprints with through hole pads: When enabled, footprints will be excluded from the placement file if they contain any through-hole pads, even if their fabrication type is set to SMD.

Include board edge layer: For Gerber placement files, controls whether or not the board outline is included with the footprint placement data.

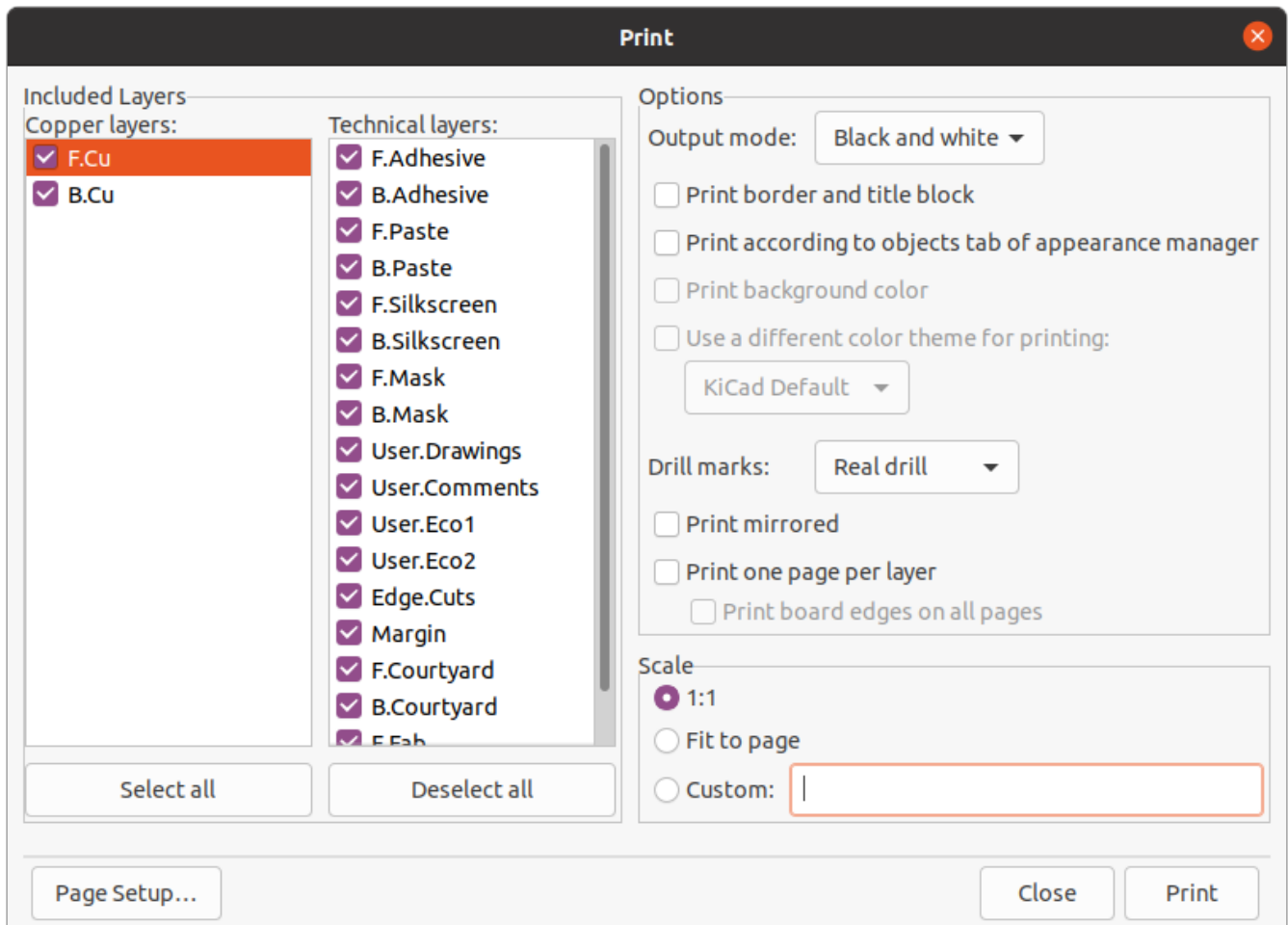
Use drill/place file origin: When enabled, component positions will be relative to the drill/place file origin set in the board design. When disabled, the positions will be relative to the page origin (upper left corner).

Additional fabrication outputs

KiCad can also generate footprint report files, IPC-D-356 netlist files, and a bill of materials (BOM) from the board design. These output formats have no configurable options.

Printing

KiCad can print the board view to a standard printer using the Print action in the File menu.



Included layers: Select the layers to include in the printout. Unselected layers will be invisible.

Output mode: Choose whether to print in black and white or full color.

Print border and title block: When enabled, the page border and title block will be printed.

Print according to objects tab of appearance manager: When enabled, any objects that have been hidden in the Objects tab of the Appearance panel will be hidden in the printout. When disabled, these objects will be printed if the layer they appear on is selected in the Included Layers area.

Print background color: When printing in full color, this option controls whether or not the view background color will be printed.

Use a different color theme for printing: When printing in full color, this option allows a different color theme to be used for printing. When disabled, the color theme used by the board editor will be used for printing.

Drill marks: Controls whether to show drilled holes at their actual size, at a small size, or hide them from the printout.

Print mirrored: When enabled, the printout will be mirrored horizontally.

Print one page per layer: When enabled, each layer selected in the Included Layers area will be printed to an individual page. If this option is enabled, the **Print board edges on all pages** option controls whether to add the Edge.Cuts layer to each printed page.

Scale: controls the scale of the printout relative to the page size configured in Page Setup.

Exporting files

KiCad can export a board design to various third-party formats for use with external software. These functions are found in the Export section of the File menu.

Specctra .DSN: creates a file suitable for importing into certain third-party autorouter software. This exporter has no configurable options.

NOTE	TODO: Document GenCAD exporter
NOTE	TODO: Document VRML exporter
NOTE	TODO: Bring IDF exporter docs in to here
NOTE	TODO: Document STEP exporter
NOTE	TODO: Document SVG exporter
NOTE	TODO: Document CMP file exporter

Hyperlynx: creates a file suitable for importing into Mentor Graphics (Siemens) HyperLynx simulation and analysis software.

Footprints and footprint libraries

Managing footprint libraries

NOTE

TODO: Write this section

Creating and editing footprints

NOTE

TODO: Write this section

Custom pad shapes

Footprint attributes

NOTE

Mention net ties here

Footprint wizards

For more information about creating new footprint wizards, see the Scripting section of the Advanced Topics chapter.

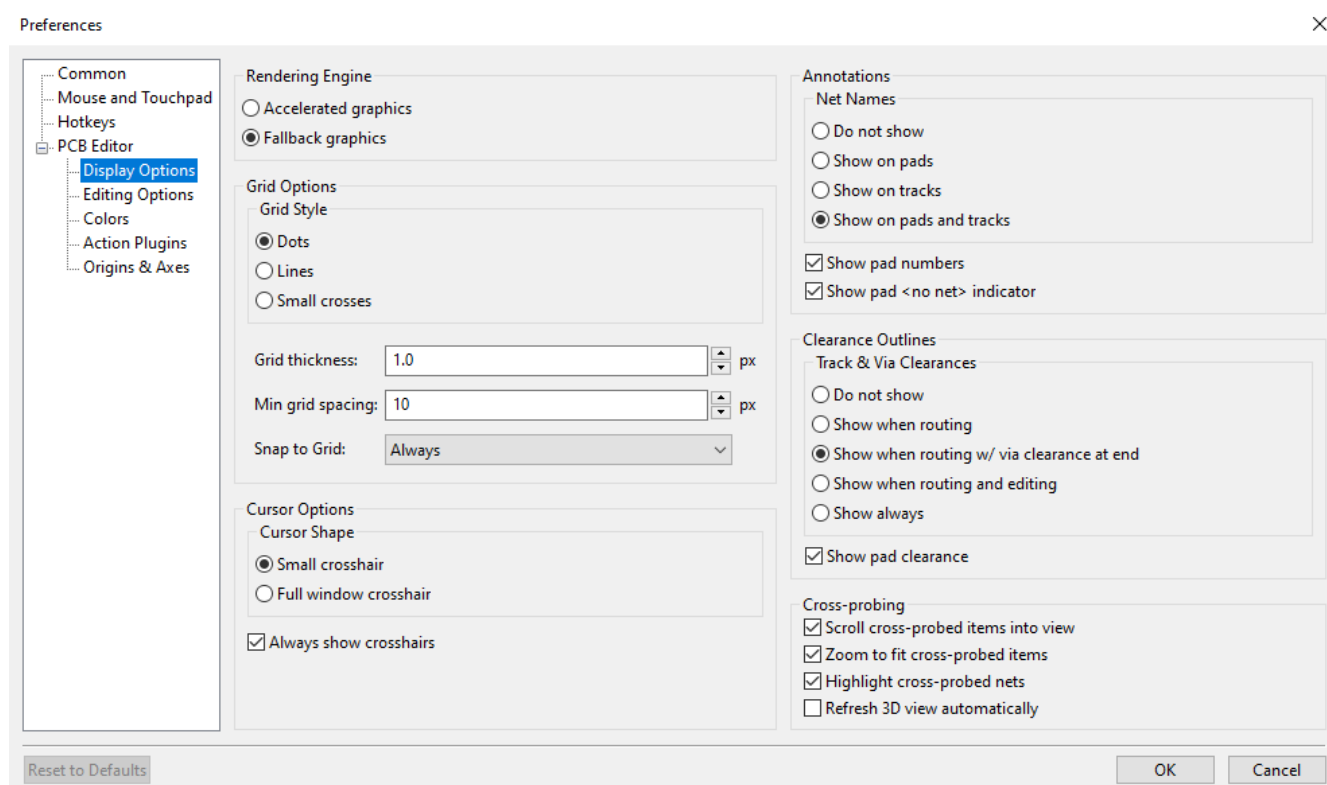
Advanced topics

Configuration and Customization

Pcbnew has a variety of preferences that can be configured through the Preferences dialog. Like all parts of KiCad, the preferences for Pcbnew are stored in the user configuration directory and are independent between KiCad minor versions to allow multiple versions to run side-by-side with independent preferences.

The first sections of the Preferences dialog (Common, Mouse and Touchpad, and Hotkeys) are shared between all KiCad programs. These sections are described in detail in the KiCad manual under the "Common preferences" section. Note that even though the Hotkeys section is shared between all programs, there are many Pcbnew-specific hotkeys that only appear in the list when Pcbnew is running.

Display options



Rendering Engine: Controls if Accelerated graphics or Fallback graphics are used.

Grid style: Controls how the alignment grid is drawn.

Grid thickness: Controls how thick grid lines or dots are drawn.

Min grid spacing: Controls the minimum distance, in pixels, between two grid lines. Grid lines that violate this minimum spacing will not be drawn, regardless of the current grid setting.

Snap to grid: Controls when drawing and editing operations will be snapped to coordinates on the active grid. "Always" will enable snapping even when the grid is hidden; "When grid shown" will enable snapping only when the grid is visible.

NOTE

Grid snapping can be temporarily disabled by holding down **Ctrl**.

Cursor shape: Controls whether the editing cursor is drawn as a small crosshair or a full-screen crosshair (a set of lines covering the entire drawing canvas). The editing cursor shows where the next drawing or editing action will occur and will be snapped to a grid location if snapping is enabled.

Always show crosshairs: Controls whether the editing cursor is shown all the time or only when an editing or drawing tool is active.

Net names: Controls whether or not net name labels are drawn on copper objects. These labels are guides for editing only and do not appear in fabrication outputs.

Show pad numbers: Controls whether or not pad number labels are drawn on footprint pads.

Show pad <no net> indicator: Controls whether or not pads with no net are indicated with a special marker.

Track clearance: Controls whether or not clearance outlines around tracks and vias are shown. Clearance outlines are shown as thin shapes around objects that indicate the minimum clearance to other objects, as defined by constraints and design rules.

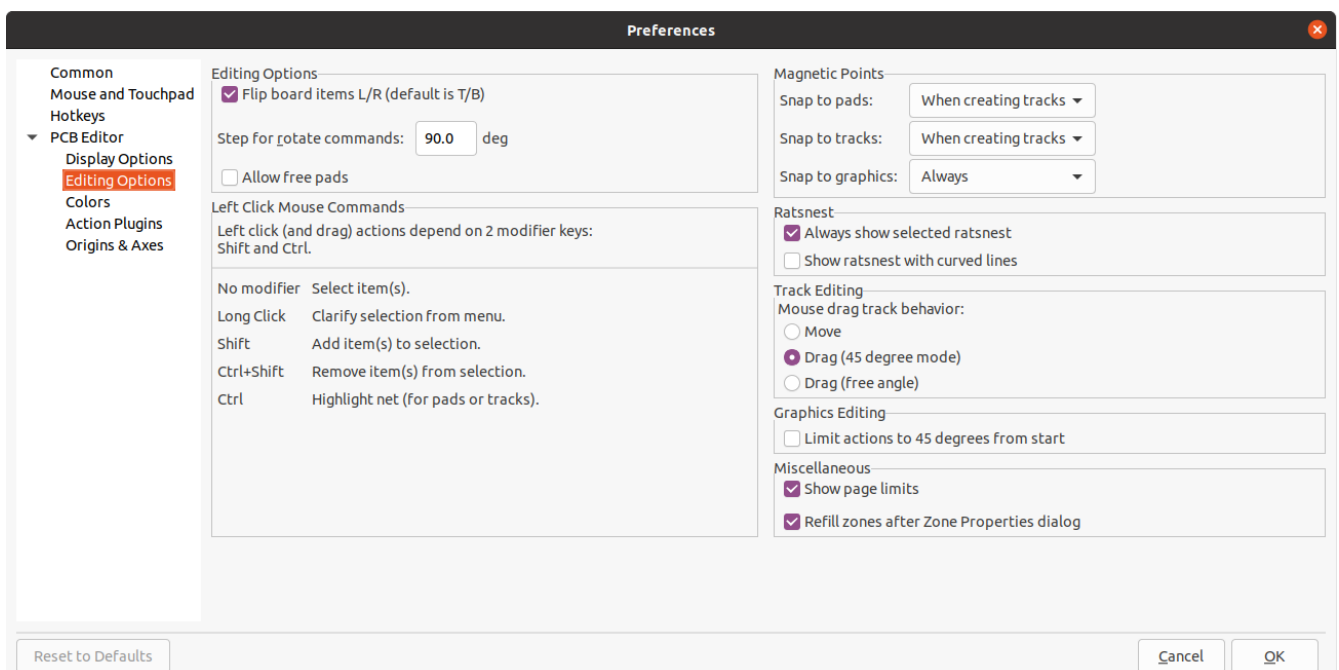
Show pad clearance: Controls whether or not clearance outlines around pads are shown.

Center view on cross-probed items: When both Eeschema and Pcbnew are running, controls whether clicking a component or pin in Eeschema will center the Pcbnew view on the corresponding footprint or pad.

Zoom to fit cross-probed items: Controls whether the view will be zoomed to show a cross-probed footprint or pad.

Highlight cross-probed nets: Controls whether or not nets highlighted in Eeschema will be highlighted in Pcbnew when the highlight tool is activated in both tools.


Editing options



Flip board items L/R: Controls the direction board items will be flipped when moving them between the top and bottom layers. When checked, items are flipped Left-to-Right (about the Vertical axis); when unchecked, items are flipped Top-to-Bottom (about the Horizontal axis).

Step for rotate commands: Controls how far the selected object(s) will be rotated each time the Rotate command is used.

Allow free pads: Controls whether or not the pads of footprints can be unlocked and edited or moved separately from the footprint.

Magnetic points: This section controls object snapping, also called magnetic points. Object snapping takes precedence over grid snapping when it is enabled. Object snapping only works to objects on the active layer. Hold  to temporarily disable object snapping.

Snap to pads: Controls when the editing cursor will snap to pad origins.

Snap to tracks: Controls when the editing cursor will snap to track segment endpoints.

Snap to graphics: Controls when the editing cursor will snap to graphic shape points.

Always show selected ratsnest: When enabled, the ratsnest for a selected footprint will always be shown even if the global ratsnest is hidden.

Show ratsnest with curved lines: Controls whether ratsnest lines are drawn straight or curved.

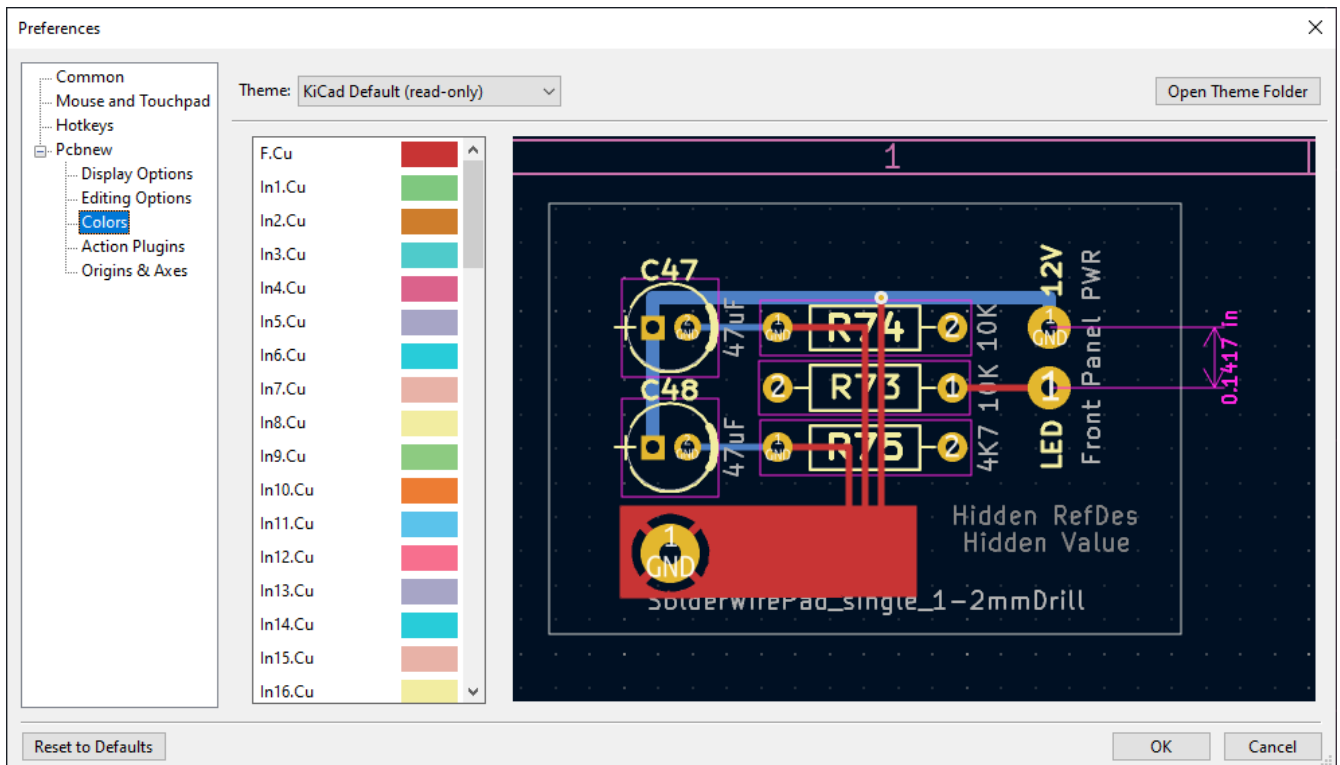
Mouse drag track behavior: Controls the action that will occur when you drag a track segment with the mouse: "Move" will move the track segment independent of any others. "Drag (45 degree mode)" will invoke the push-and-shove router to drag the track, respecting design rules and keeping other track segments attached. "Drag (free angle)" will move the nearest corner of the track segment, highlighting collisions with other objects but not moving them out of the way.

Limit actions to 45 degrees from start Controls whether lines drawn with the graphic drawing tools can take on any angle. Note that this only affects drawing new lines: lines can be edited to take on any angle.

Show page limits: Controls whether or not the page boundary is drawn as a rectangle.

Refill zones after Zone Properties dialog: Controls whether or not zones are automatically refilled after editing the properties of any zone. This may be disabled on complicated designs or slower computers to improve responsiveness.

Colors



Pcbnew supports switching between different color themes to match your preferences. KiCad 6.0 comes with two built-in color themes: "KiCad Default" is a new theme designed to have good contrast and balance for most cases and is the default for new installations. "KiCad Classic" is the default theme from KiCad 5.1 and earlier versions. Neither of these built-in themes can be modified, but you can create new themes to customize the look of Pcbnew as well as install themes made by other users.

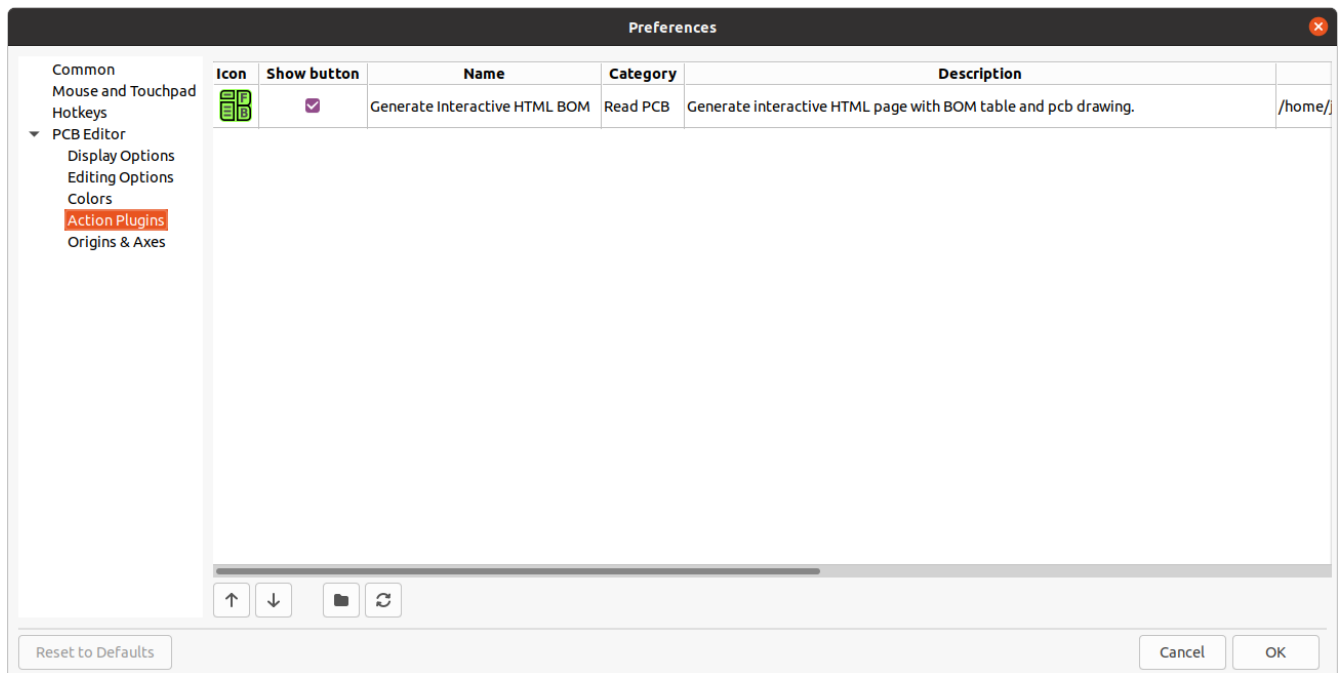
Color themes are stored in JSON files located in the `colors` subdirectory of the KiCad configuration directory. The "Open Theme Folder" button will open this location in your system file manager, making it easy to manage your installed themes. To install a new theme, place it in this folder and restart KiCad. The new theme will be available from the drop-down list of color themes if the file is a valid color theme file.

To create a new color theme, choose New Theme... from the drop-down list of color themes. Enter a name for your theme and then begin editing colors. The colors in the new theme will be copied from whatever theme was selected before you created the new theme.

To change a color, double-click or middle-click the color swatch in the list. The "Reset to Default" button will reset that color to its corresponding entry in the "KiCad Default" color theme.

Color themes are saved automatically; all changes are reflected immediately when you close the Preferences dialog. The window on the right side of the dialog shows a preview of how the selected theme will look.

Action plugins

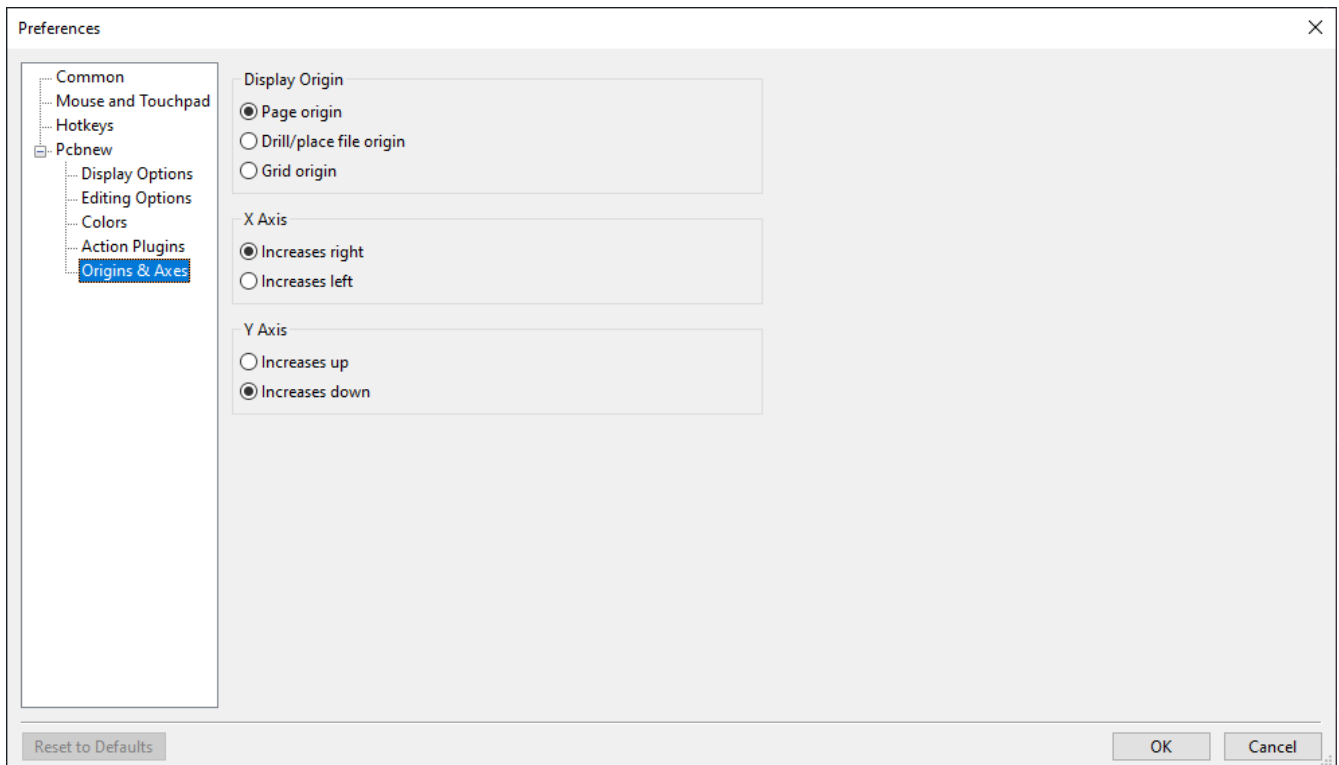


The KiCad PCB editor supports plugins written in Python that can perform actions on the board being edited. These plugins can be installed using the built-in Plugin and Content Manager (see the KiCad chapter for details) or by placing the plugin files inside the user plugins directory. See the Scripting section below for details.

Each plugin that is detected will be shown in a row on this preferences page. Plugins may show a button on the top toolbar of the PCB editor. If the "Show button" control is unchecked for a plugin, it may still be accessed from the Tools > External Plugins menu.

The arrow controls at the bottom of the list allow changing the order that the plugins appear in the toolbar and menu. The folder button will launch a file explorer to the plugin folder, to make installing new plugins easier. The refresh button will scan the plugin folder for any new or removed plugins and update the list.

Origin & axes



Display origin: Determines which coordinate origin is used for coordinate display in the editing canvas. The page origin is fixed at the corner of the page. The drill/place file origin and the grid origin can be moved by the user.

X axis: Controls whether X-coordinates increase to the right or to the left.

Y axis: Controls whether Y-coordinates increase upwards or downwards.

Custom design rules

KiCad's custom design rule system allows creating design rules that are more specific than the generic rules available in the Constraints page of the Board Setup dialog. Custom design rules have many applications, but in general they are used to apply certain rules to a portion of the board, such as a specific net or netclass, a specific area, or a specific footprint.

Custom design rules are stored in a separate file with the extension `kicad_dru`. This file is created automatically when you start adding custom rules to a project. If you are using custom rules in your project, make sure to save the `kicad_dru` file along with the `kicad_pcb` and `kicad_pro` files when making backups or committing to a version control system.

NOTE

The `kicad_dru` file is managed automatically by KiCad and should not be edited with an external text editor. Always use the Custom Rules page of the Board Setup dialog to edit custom design rules.

The Custom Rules editor

The custom rules editor is located in the Board Setup dialog and provides a text editor for entering custom rules, a syntax checker that will test your custom rules and note any errors, and a syntax help dialog that contains a quick reference to the custom rules language and some example rules.

It is a good idea to use the **Check rule syntax** button after editing custom rules to make sure there are no syntax errors. Any errors in the custom rules will prevent the design rule checker from running.

Custom rule syntax

The custom design rule language is based on s-expressions and allows you to create design constraints that are not possible with the built-in constraints. Each design rule generally contains a **condition** defining what objects to match, and a **constraint** defining the rule to be applied to the matched objects.

The language uses parentheses ((and)) to define clauses of related tokens and values. Parentheses must always be matched: for every (there must be a matching). Inside a clause, tokens and values are separated by whitespace. By convention, a single space is used, but any number of whitespace characters between tokens is acceptable. In places where text strings are valid, strings without any whitespace may be quoted with " or ' , or unquoted. Strings that contain whitespace must always be quoted. Where nested quotes are required, a single level of nesting is possible by using " for the outer quote character and ' for the inner (or vice versa). Newlines are not required, but are typically used in examples for clarity.

In the syntax descriptions below, items in <angle brackets> represent tokens that must be present and items in [square brackets] represent tokens that are optional or only sometimes required.

The Custom Rules file must start with a version header defining the version of the rules language. As of KiCad 6.0, the version is 1. The syntax of the version header is (version <number>). So in KiCad 6.0 the header should read:

```
(version 1)
```

After the version header, you can enter any number of rules. Rules are evaluated in reverse order, meaning the last rule in the file is checked first. Once a matching rule is found for a given set of objects being tested, no further rules will be checked. In practice, this means that more specific rules should be later in the file, so that they are evaluated before more general rules.

For example, if you create one rule that limits the minimum clearance between tracks in the net HV and tracks in any other net and a second rule that limits the minimum clearance for all objects inside a certain rule area, make sure the first rule appears later in the custom rules file than the second rule. Otherwise tracks in the HV net could have the wrong clearance if they fall inside the rule area.

Each rule must have a name and one or more constraint clause. The name can be any string and is used to refer to the rule in DRC reports. The constraint defines the behavior of the rule. Rules may also have a condition clause that determines which objects should have the rule applied and an optional layer clause, which specifies which board layers the rule applies to.

```
(rule <name>
  [(layer <layer_name>)]
  [(condition <expression>)]
  (constraint <constraint_type> [constraint_arguments]))
```

The custom rules file may also include comments to describe rules. Comments are denoted by any line that begins with the # character (not including whitespace).

```
# Clearance for 400V nets to anything else
(rule HV
  (condition "A.NetClass == 'HV'")
  (constraint clearance (min 1.5mm)))
```

Layer Clause

The `layer` clause determines which layers the rule will work on. While the layer of objects can be tested in the `condition` clause as described below, using the `layer` clause is more efficient.

The value of the `layer` clause can be any board layer name, or the shortcuts `outer` to match the front and back copper layers (`F.Cu` and `B.Cu`) and `inner` to match any internal copper layers.

If the `layer` clause is omitted, the rule will apply to all layers.

Some examples:

```
# Do not allow footprints on back layer (no condition clause means this rule always
applies)
(rule "Top side footprints only"
  (layer B.Cu)
  (constraint disallow footprint))

# This rule does the same thing, but is less efficient
(rule "Top side footprints only"
  (condition "A.Layer == 'B.Cu'")
  (constraint disallow footprint))

# Larger clearance on outer layers (inner layer clearance set by board minimum clearance)
(rule "clearance_outer"
  (layer outer)
  (constraint clearance (min 0.25mm)))
```

Condition Clause

The rule **condition** is an expression contained inside a text string (and therefore usually surrounded by quotes in order to allow whitespace for clarity). The expression is evaluated against each pair of objects that is being tested by the design rule checker. For example, when checking for clearance between copper objects, each copper object (track segment, pad, via, etc.) on each net is checked against other copper objects on other nets. If a custom rule exists where the expression matches the two given copper objects and the constraint defines a copper clearance, this custom rule could be used to determine the required clearance between the two objects.

The objects being tested are referred to as `A` and `B` in the expression language. The order of the two objects is not important because the design rule checker will test both possible orderings. For example, you can write a rule that assumes that `A` is a track and `B` is a via. There are some expression functions that test both objects together; these use `AB` as the object name.

The expression in a condition must resolve to a boolean value (`true` or `false`). If the expression resolves to `true` , the rule is applied to the given objects.

Each object being tested has **properties** that can be compared, as well as **functions** that can be used to perform certain tests. The syntax for using properties and functions is `<object>.<property>` and `<object>.<function>([arguments])` respectively.

NOTE

When you type `<object>.` in the text editor (A., B., or AB.), an autocomplete list will open that contains all the object properties that can be used.

The object properties and functions are compared using **boolean operators** to result in a boolean expression. The boolean operators are based on C/C++ syntax, and the following operators are supported:

<code>==</code>	Equal to
<code>!=</code>	Not equal to
<code>></code> , <code>>=</code>	Greater than, greater than or equal to
<code><</code> , <code><=</code>	Less than, less than or equal to
<code>&&</code>	And
<code> </code>	Or

For example, `A.NetClass == 'HV'` will apply to any objects that are part of the "HV" netclass and `A.NetClass != B.NetClass` will apply to any objects that are in different netclasses. Parentheses can be used to clarify the order of operations in complex expressions but they are not required.

Some properties represent a physical measurement, such as a size, angle, length, position, etc. On these properties, **unit suffixes** can be used in the custom rules language to specify what units are being used. If no unit suffix is used, the internal representation of the property will be used instead (nanometers for distances and degrees for most angles). The following suffixes are supported:

<code>mm</code>	Millimeters
<code>mil</code> , <code>th</code>	Thousandths of an inch (mils)
<code>in</code> , <code>"</code>	Inches
<code>deg</code>	Degrees
<code>rad</code>	Radians

NOTE

The units used in custom design rules are independent of the display units in the PCB editor.

Constraints

The **constraint** clause of the rule defines the behavior of the rule on the objects that are matched by the condition. Each constraint clause has a **constraint type** and one or more arguments that set the behavior of the constraint. A single rule may have multiple constraint clauses, in order to set multiple constraints (for example, `clearance` and `track_width`) for objects that match the same rule conditions.

Many constraints take arguments that specify a physical measurement or quantity. These constraints support minimum, optimal, and maximum value specification (abbreviated "min/opt/max"). The **minimum** and **maximum** values are used for design rule checking: if the actual value is less than the minimum or is greater than the maximum value in the constraint, a DRC error is created. The **optimal** value is only used for some constraints, and informs KiCad of a "best" value to use by default. For example, the optimal `diff_pair_gap` is used by the router when placing new differential pairs. No errors will be created if the differential pair is later modified such that the gap between the pair is different from the optimal value, as long as the gap is between the minimum and maximum values (if these are specified). In all cases where a min/opt/max value is accepted, any or all of the minimum, optimal, and maximum value can be specified.

Min/opt/max values are specified as `(min <value>)`, `(opt <value>)`, and `(max <value>)`. For example, a track width constraint may be written as `(constraint track_width (min 0.5mm) (opt 0.5mm) (max 1.0mm))` or simply `(constraint track_width (min 0.5mm))` if only the minimum width is to be constrained.

Constraint type	Argument type	Description
<code>annular_width</code>	min/opt/max	Checks the width of annular rings on vias.
<code>clearance</code>	min	<p>Checks the clearance between copper objects of different nets. KiCad's design rule system does not permit constraining clearance between objects on the same net at this time.</p> <p>To allow copper objects to overlap (collide), create a <code>clearance</code> constraint with the <code>min</code> value less than zero (for example, <code>-1</code>).</p>
<code>courtyard_clearance</code>	min	Checks the clearance between footprint courtyards and generates an error if any two courtyards are closer than the <code>min</code> distance. If a footprint does not have a courtyard shape, no errors will be generated from this constraint.
<code>diff_pair_gap</code>	min/opt/max	Checks the gap between coupled tracks in a differential pair. Coupled tracks are segments that are parallel to each other. Differential pair gap is not tested on uncoupled portions of a differential pair (for example, the fanout from a component).
<code>diff_pair_uncoupled</code>	max	Checks the distance that a differential pair track is routed uncoupled from the other polarity track in the pair (for example, where the pair fans out from a component, or becomes uncoupled to pass around another object such as a via).

Constraint type	Argument type	Description
disallow	track via micro_via buried_via pad zone text graphic hole footprint	Specify one or more object types to disallow, separated by spaces. For example, (constraint disallow track) or (constraint disallow track via pad) . If an object of this type matches the rule condition, a DRC error will be created. This constraint is essentially the same as a keepout rule area, but can be used to create more specific keepout restrictions.
edge_clearance	min/opt/max	Checks the clearance between objects and graphical items on the Edge . Cuts layer (the board outline, as well as any board cutouts or slots defined on that layer).
length	min/max	Checks the total routed length for the nets that match the rule condition and generates an error for each net that is below the min value (if specified) or above the max value (if specified) of the constraint.
hole	min/max	Checks the size (diameter) of a drilled hole in a pad or via. For oval holes, the smaller (minor) diameter will be tested against the min value (if specified) and the larger (major) diameter will be tested against the max value (if specified).
hole_clearance	min	Checks the clearance between a drilled hole in a pad or via and copper objects on a different net. The clearance is measured from the diameter of the hole, not its center.
hole_to_hole	min	Checks the clearance between mechanically-drilled holes in pads and vias. The clearance is measured between the diameters of the holes, not between their centers. HDI vias (microvias, blind vias, and buried vias) are not tested by this constraint.
silk_clearance	min/opt/max	Checks the clearance between objects on silkscreen layers and other objects.
skew	max	Checks the total skew for the nets that match the rule condition, that is, the difference between the length of each net and the average of all the lengths of each net that is matched by the rule. If the absolute value of the difference between that average and the length of any one net is above the constraint max value, an error will be generated.
track_width	min/opt/max	Checks the width of track and arc segments. An error will be generated for each segment that has a width below the min value (if specified) or above the max value (if specified).

Object property and function reference

The following properties can be tested in custom rule expressions:

Common Properties

These properties apply to all PCB objects.

Property	Data type	Description
Layer	string	The board layer on which the object exists. For objects that exist on more than one layer, this property will return the first layer (for example, F.Cu for most through-hole pads/vias).
Locked	boolean	True if the object is locked.
Parent	string	Returns the unique identifier of the parent object of this object.
Position_X	dimension	The position of the object's origin in the X-axis. Note that the origin of an object is not always the same as the center of the object's bounding box. For example, the origin of a footprint is the location of the (0, 0) coordinate of that footprint in the footprint editor, but the footprint may have been designed such that this location is not in the center of the courtyard shape.
Position_Y	dimension	The position of the object's origin in the Y-axis. Note that KiCad always uses Y-coordinates that increase from the top to bottom of the screen internally, even if you have configured your settings to show the Y-coordinates increasing from bottom to top.
Type	string	One of "Footprint", "Pad", "Graphic Shape", "Board Text", "Footprint Text", "Zone", "Track", "Via", "Zone", or "Group".

Connected Object Properties

These properties apply to copper objects that can have a net assigned (pads, vias, zones, tracks).

Property	Data type	Description
Net	integer	The net code of the copper object. Note that net codes should not be relied upon to remain constant: if you need to refer to a specific net in a rule, use <code>NetName</code> instead. <code>Net</code> can be used to compare the nets of two objects with better performance, for example <code>A.Net == B.Net</code> is faster than <code>A.NetName == B.NetName</code> .
NetClass	string	The name of the netclass for the copper object.
NetName	string	The name of the net for the copper object.

Footprint Properties

Property	Data type	Description
Clearance_Override	dimension	The copper clearance override set for the footprint.
Orientation	double	The orientation (rotation) of the footprint in degrees.
Reference	string	The reference designator of the footprint.
Solderpaste_Margin_Override	dimension	The solder paste margin override set for the footprint.
Solderpaste_Margin_Ratio_Override	dimension	The solder paste margin ratio override set for the footprint.
Thermal_Relief_Gap	dimension	The thermal relief gap set for the footprint.
Thermal_Relief_Width	dimension	The thermal relief connection width set for the footprint.
Value	string	The contents of the "Value" field of the footprint.

Pad Properties