



Linux is a fast, safe & easy to use FREE alternative to Windows or macOS, with excellent hardware support & a vast catalogue of available software. Unlike how Windows looks, where there's very little customization (generally just colour themes), in Linux, the entire desktop presentation is changeable & there are many to choose from. Depending on your hardware specification (or personal choice), we recommend the following 'desktops' & 'distributions' of Linux:

desktop	description	resources	distro	desktop	description	upgrades
MATE	traditional	low-mid	Manjaro	C/K/M/X	cutting edge, easy to use & maintain, compatible, always up-to-date & lots of software	rolling
Cinnamon	visually appealing	mid-high	Mint	C/K/M/X	most popular Linux, easy to use, but not so up-to-date, so good for older computers	yearly
XFCE	minimalist	low	PCLinux	K/M/X	easy to use, compatible & always up-to-date, but less software (popular still covered)	rolling
KDE	visually appealing	high	Endless	android-ish	pre-loaded with 100+ apps, 50000+ Wikipedia articles & hours of games, music & videos!	yearly

**We always use the same username & passwords for Linux: username=owner, password=id (or password) &, if applicable, root password=root.** If you change password, the system will insist on a 'secure' password & it'll have to be longer with a mix of upper/lower case letters &/or numbers/symbols!

If not already present, we install the following programs (if compatible with the computer hardware & version of Linux installed):

- GUPFW firewall, to prevent web based attacks.
- Opera web browser with built-in pop-up & ad-blocker & compresses data to/from internet (meaning it's good for slow connections) & has a VPN, allowing access to websites that are blocked by region.
- Chromium basic web browser that supports services like NetFlix (requires free plug-in).
- Firefox very basic web browser, that supports very little (without adding plug-ins), but as such, can be quick.
- Adobe/Pepper Flash required by some websites (different versions required for different web browsers).
- Skype internet text/voice/video chat & reduced rate computer to telephone calls.  
NOTE: Microsoft have discontinued v4.37... please uninstall & replace with the latest version (could be 'beta').
- LibreOffice easy to use complete office package - compatible with Microsoft Word, Excel & PowerPoint.
- Thunderbird safe email client with built-in spell checker, anti-spam, anti-phishing & customizable interface.
- Deja-Dup file backup with scheduling.
- TeamViewer allows password protected remote (over internet) support, to save you bringing computer into shop.
- TimeShift create or schedule complete system 'snapshot' to allow rollback in the event of corruption/not booting.
- Wine/PlayOnLinux allows Windows programs/games to be installed & run in Linux (if compatible).
- Brasero CD/DVD audio/video/data (re)writer.
- Cairo Dock attractive animated program launcher.
- Cheese webcam viewer & recorder with visual effects.
- Clementine music player, manager, MP3 player synchronization & CD ripper.
- Midnight Commander twin window file manager. For system folder access, open Terminal, type: sudo mc
- Psensor monitors motherboard, CPU & HDD temperatures & alerts if too high.
- SANE/Xsane Scanner Access Now Easy - support for scanner usage (device drivers still required) & graphic front-end.
- GIMP a free alternative to commercial image editing programs, such as Adobe Photoshop or Corel Painter.
- Shotwell picture viewer, grouping pictures by year, month & date for quick locating.
- VLC media player for audio or video files with many built-in codecs.
- Aisleriot large selection of patience/solitaire card games.
- Astro Menace 2D scrolling space shooter game.
- Mahjongg classic game of matching pairs of tiles.
- Mines clear hidden mines from a minefield.
- Quardrapassel falling blocks game (like Tetris).

Not included (unless pre-installed in particular version of Linux), but popular optional programs:

- DVDStyler DVD authoring - make DVDs from pictures or videos. Includes lots of templates.
- Inkscape vector graphics editor (like Adobe Illustrator or Corel Draw) for drawing, painting & image enhancement.
- OpenShot non-linear video editor - make DVDs or video files from pictures or videos. Includes visual effects.
- Spotify streaming (over internet) music player with millions of available tracks.
- Steam world's biggest gaming platform with over 3200 games available for Linux.
- Super Tux Kart 3D racing game with go-karts.
- XnConvert batch picture/image converter - supports size, resolution, quality, file format
- Xonotic 3D first person online shooter game.

1. If you have a router for your internet connection & it was already setup & previously in use, then nothing more is required to reconnect to the internet. If you use a network cable from the router, just plug it into the LAN port on your computer & you're connected! If you use wireless, click the connection icon near the clock & it will display available, in-range networks... select yours from the list, enter your wireless password (either the password entered when router was setup or whatever was assigned by the internet provider - often either written on a sticker on the router or supplied on a card) when prompted & you're connected. Do NOT try to install ANY software from your internet provider - it's not required & it won't be compatible! If you have a 3G/4G USB modem, plug it in, click connection icon near clock & select mobile network, then follow the prompts to specify your internet provider & service type (contract/PayAsYouGo) & it'll automatically connect. If you have a MiFi or use tethering from your phone/tablet, connect as per wireless above. Until connection is (re)established, you CANNOT browse internet, check email, search/access/download/update ANYTHING from the internet! Linux supports storing network settings in a 'key ring' for which a password is required - for simplicity, you can (but don't have to) use the same as your user password.

2. For wireless security on your router, make sure you're using WPA2 encryption (check router's manual for how to access settings). WEP (slow) & WPS are both easily 'crackable' & WPA1 isn't encrypted at all! Additionally, always change the default router name & password as there's software available to display default passwords based on router name. If someone (nearby) can access your router & they use your internet YOU could be faced with a large usage bill if they take you over your limit. It's illegal (fines & prison) & you should report such activity to the police! Most modern routers would already be set to WPA2, but if yours isn't, although it isn't required you change settings, obviously, it's highly recommended!

3. Similar to Microsoft & Apple app stores, Linux uses a software 'repository' (add/remove programs or software/package manager on menu) - this lists all programs compatible with that version of Linux & you can just browse or search list to install any program (click 'tick box' next to program & then click 'Apply'). As a general rule, do NOT put CD/DVD into computer to install (certainly not Windows based!) software. Mint, Endless & PCLinux also support installing downloaded (.DEB .RPM for PCLinux) programs (see below for recommended websites) & Manjaro has the AUR (Arch User Repository, enabled via 'preferences' in package manager) which contains community maintained programs (e.g. Skype is by Microsoft, Chrome is by Google, etc) that are downloaded & compiled (takes longer than installing programs from main repository). Programs in the AUR may not be compatible with your hardware or Linux version (e.g. installing Epson printer driver for Canon printer!). Generally, look for 'Gnome', rather than 'KDE' versions of programs as most versions of Linux we install are Gnome based.

4. Currently, Microsoft do not offer a version of Microsoft Office for Linux (if they did, it wouldn't be free!), so we install LibreOffice (the new name for OpenOffice), which is FREE & compatible with Microsoft's Word (word processor), Excel (spreadsheets), PowerPoint (presentations) & also includes database & drawing. However, for greater compatibility if sending documents, it is recommended to set default file formats to use Microsoft 2003 (tools, options, load/save).

5. Currently, Apple, despite using (a heavily cut-down version of) Linux themselves (macOS/iOS), do not offer a version of iTunes for Linux, so for most iPhones, iPads, etc, use Clementine to copy/sync music. Whilst any files can just be copied to/from, some Apple devices (e.g. 7th gen iPod, iPhone 5, etc) are so basic they offer no option to update lists! For these, you'll have to use a computer with Windows & iTunes (iFunbox is better/quicker/easier) or just get a better phone, tablet, etc! There are similar limitations for GPS devices... although many use Linux on the device, they don't support Linux! However, with most, you can just copy the maps onto the memory card. It's also possible the Windows program (e.g. iTunes, TomTom, Garmin, etc) will run in Wine (see below), which is updated frequently to enhance compatibility. Web streaming services that use Microsoft's SilverLight (e.g. NetFlix, BT Sport, etc), will need a browser plug-in to support it as, despite being a premium member of The Linux Foundation, Microsoft don't have a Linux version!

6. If you had requested a data backup, then your data files (i.e. documents, downloads, pictures, music & videos) will either be reintegrated, for single user backups, or stored in a folder called "My Backup", in the downloads folder. This folder will also contain any other files that can't just be 'copied back'.

7. To install Windows software, use PlayOnLinux & if it's in the supported program list, just select it to automatically download & install the program. For anything else, try installing the downloaded ".exe" program through Wine, but be mindful not everything will be compatible.

8. For email, if you used a 'web based' service (e.g. Yahoo, Outlook (the new name for Hotmail), Gmail, etc) then it's not stored on your computer so you just go to their website via an internet browser (after (re)connecting to internet (see above)) & sign-in to access your email & contacts as before. If you used 'client based' email (e.g. Microsoft Outlook, Windows Mail, Thunderbird, Incredimail, etc) then you may be able to import your contacts & old emails into Mozilla Thunderbird email client (already installed). You'll need to re-enter your email account details (e.g. email address, password, inbound/outbound mail servers, etc) & then import the email & contacts from the backup folder. Most internet providers include help on their website on how to do this.

9. Unlike Windows, Linux has substantial hardware support already built-in, so for the vast majority of devices (e.g. WiFi, Bluetooth, printer, scanner, webcam, etc), just plug it in & it'll be automatically & instantly recognized! Anything not supported, like Windows, will need device drivers installed (check AUR in Manjaro or manufacturer's website for other Linux). Also, like Windows, not everything is compatible!

