

The Difference

There are many different operating systems based on GNU/Linux: Debian, SuSE, Gentoo, RedHat, Fedora and Mandriva are examples. Ubuntu is yet another contender in what is already a highly competitive world. So what makes Ubuntu different? Based on Debian, one of the most widely acclaimed, technologically advanced, and well-supported distributions, Ubuntu aims to create a distribution that provides an up-to-date and coherent Linux system for desktop and server computing. Ubuntu includes a number of carefully selected packages from the Debian distribution and retains its powerful package management system which allows easy installation and clean removal of programs, which insures that package management is much simpler on Ubuntu than it is on most other distributions.

For many years, Linux has been considered an operating system that is only suitable for advanced computer users and developers. As the slogan "Linux for human beings" implies, Ubuntu is rapidly changing this. One of the prime goals in the development of Ubuntu is to make it simple, user-friendly and usable by anyone.

The meaning of ubuntu

Ubuntu is a South African ethical ideology focusing on people's allegiances and relations with each other. The word comes from the Zulu and Xhosa languages. Ubuntu (pronounced "oo-BOON-too") is seen as a traditional African concept, is regarded as one of the founding principles of the new republic of South Africa and is connected to the idea of an African Renaissance. A rough translation of the principle of Ubuntu is "humanity towards others". Another translation could be: "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity".

"A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed."

--Archbishop Desmond Tutu

As a platform based on GNU/Linux, the Ubuntu operating system brings the spirit of ubuntu to the software world. Apologists for proprietary software like to say, "free software is a nice dream, but we all know that only the proprietary system can produce reliable products." Empirical evidence disagrees, however; scientific tests, have found GNU software to be more reliable than comparable proprietary software.

What is Linux?

The Linux kernel is the heart of the Ubuntu operating system. A kernel is an important part of any operating system, providing the communication bridge between hardware and software.

Linux was brought to life in 1991 by a Finnish student named Linus Torvalds. At the time, it would run only on i386 systems, and was essentially an independently created clone of the UNIX kernel, intended to take advantage of the then-new i386 architecture.

Nowadays, thanks to a substantial amount of development effort by people all around the world, Linux runs on virtually every modern architecture.

The Linux kernel has gained an ideological importance as well as a technical one. There is an entire community of people who believe in the ideals of free software and spend their time helping to make open source technology as good as it can be. People in this community gave rise to initiatives such as Ubuntu, standards committees that shape the development of the Internet, organizations like the Mozilla Foundation (responsible for creating Mozilla Firefox) and countless other software projects from which you've certainly benefited in the past.

The spirit of open source, commonly attributed to Linux, is influencing software developers and users everywhere to drive communities with common goals.

What is GNU?

The GNU Project was launched in 1984 to develop a complete UNIX style operating system which is comprised of free software: the GNU system. Variants of the GNU operating system, which use the Linux kernel, are now widely used; though these systems are often referred to as "Linux," they are more accurately called GNU/Linux systems. The GNU project is closely linked to the philosophy of free software, which is central to the projects that derive from it, such as Ubuntu.



ubuntu
linux for human beings

The free operating system
for Zimbabweans



Ubuntu Principles

Thank you for your interest in Ubuntu.

Ubuntu is an entirely open source operating system built around the Linux kernel.

The Ubuntu community is built around the ideals enshrined in the Ubuntu Philosophy:

- That software should be available free of charge
- That software tools should be usable by people in their local language and despite any disabilities
- That people should have the freedom to customize and alter their software in whatever way they see fit.

For those reasons:

Ubuntu will always be free of charge, and there is no extra fee for the "enterprise edition". We make our very best work available to everyone on the same Free terms.

Ubuntu includes the very best in translations and accessibility infrastructure that the free software community has to offer, to make Ubuntu usable for as many people as possible.

Ubuntu is released regularly and predictably; a new version is released every six months. You can use the current stable release or the current development release. Each release is supported for at least 18 months.

Ubuntu is entirely committed to the principles of open source software development; we encourage people to use open source software, improve it and pass it on.

Ubuntu Elements

The elements of Ubuntu are known as packages. These can be application programs such as word processors and web browsers, or utilities such as font configuration. Ubuntu has over 1000 officially supported packages. There is also a way of using other packages, which are not officially

For more information, visit the Ubuntu web site:
www.ubuntu.com

supported by Ubuntu, but may work anyway. Other Free programs, such as the "Office Suite" project, replaces Microsoft Office with OpenOffice. This software is compatible with Microsoft Office, so you can easily exchange documents with friends and colleagues who use Windows and Microsoft Office. The Mozilla Web Browser project, gave us "Firefox", replacing "Internet Explorer". Firefox is fast and secure, and has many features to improve your web surfing experience. With all-round enhanced security & popup blocking capabilities, you can determine which sites are allowed to create new popup windows and adverts. Ubuntu has an excellent e-mail and calendar application (Evolution) which sets the pace in the e-mail world in terms of searching and organizing your mail.

There are now a wide range of applications that run on Linux computers, and they can be used by anyone, regardless of his/her knowledge of computers. Those curious to see the capabilities of Ubuntu can download or order a live CD version. It comes with everything you might need to carry out day-to-day tasks on the computer and it needs no installation. It will run directly from the CD in any computer capable of booting from the CD drive. Ubuntu is completely free software. It is free to download and use, and Ubuntu will even send you a CD free of charge, anywhere in the world.

You can share them with your friends or show off Ubuntu at a conference with these professionally packaged discs. What's more, the code used to make Ubuntu is freely available to modify and improve. This means that Ubuntu is built on the high quality work of thousands of software developers, worldwide.

Free Software

The philosophy of free software is that people should be free to use software in all the ways that are socially useful. "Free software" doesn't just mean that you shouldn't have to pay for it. It also means that you should be able to use the software in any way you wish; the code that makes up free software is available for anyone to download, change, fix, and use in any way. So apart from the fact that free software is often available without charge, this freedom also has technical advantages. When programs are developed, the hard work of others can be used and built upon. With non-free software, this cannot happen and when programs are developed, they have to start from scratch. For this reason the development of free software is fast, efficient and exciting!

The Desktop

The default desktop environment for Ubuntu is GNOME, a leading UNIX and Linux desktop suite and development platform.

Another leading UNIX and Linux desktop is KDE. The Kubuntu project offers Ubuntu users an alternative choice to the default GNOME desktop environment. Thanks to the efforts of the Kubuntu team, Ubuntu users are now able to install and use the KDE desktop easily on their system. To get a working install of Kubuntu on an Ubuntu install, install the kubuntu-desktop package. Once kubuntu-desktop is installed, one can choose to use either a Gnome or KDE desktop environment.

Unlike most distributions that ship with a large amount of software that may or may not be of use, Ubuntu's list of packages is reduced to a number of important applications of high quality. By focusing on quality, Ubuntu produces a robust and feature-rich computing environment that is suitable for use in both home and commercial environments. The project takes the time required to focus on finer details and is able to release a version featuring the latest and greatest of today's software once every 6 months.

Ubuntu is available in flavours for the i386 (386/486/Pentium(II/III/IV) and Athlon/Duron/Sempron processors), AMD64 (Athlon64, Opteron, and new 64-bit Intel processors), and PowerPC (iBook/Powerbook, G4 and G5) architectures. Ubuntu for handheld devices is currently under development.

Backing and Support

Ubuntu is maintained by a quickly growing community. The project is sponsored by Canonical Ltd., a holding company founded by Mark Shuttleworth. Canonical employs the core Ubuntu developers and offers support and consulting services for Ubuntu.

Canonical Ltd also sponsors a number of other Open Source software projects, about which more information can be found on the Canonical web site (www.canonical.com).

A great wealth of knowledge and support is also available from a number of free online forums dedicated to the growth and overall awareness of Ubuntu.

