

Ubuntu - Linux for Human Beings!

This section is an introduction to Ubuntu. It explains the Ubuntu philosophy and roots, gives information about how to contribute to Ubuntu, and shows how to get help with Ubuntu.

Thank you for your interest in Ubuntu 8.04 - the *Hardy Heron* - released in April 2008.

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, and that people should have the freedom to customise 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 release is made 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.

Find out more at [the Ubuntu website](#).

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1. About the Name

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 Linux, the Ubuntu operating system brings the spirit of ubuntu to the software

world.

2. Free Software

The Ubuntu project is entirely committed to the principles of free software development; people are encouraged to use free software, improve it, and pass it on.

"Free software" doesn't mean that you shouldn't have to pay for it (although Ubuntu is committed to being free of charge as well); it 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. Alongside ideological benefits, 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!

You can find out more about free software and the ideological and technical philosophy behind it at the [GNU website](#).

3. The Difference

There are many different operating systems based on Linux: Debian, SuSE, Gentoo, Red Hat, 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. 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 Sun UltraSPARC architectures.

4. The Desktop

The desktop is what you see after you log in to your computer and what you use to manage and run applications. The default desktop environment for Ubuntu is [GNOME](#), a leading UNIX and Linux desktop suite and development platform.

You can optionally install the [KDE](#) and [Xfce](#) desktop environments, which have their own distinctive look and feel. KDE and Xfce are made available in Ubuntu by the [Kubuntu](#) and [Xubuntu](#) projects respectively. You can even install a KDE-only or Xfce-only version of Ubuntu if you wish.

5. Version and Release Numbers

The Ubuntu version numbering scheme is based on the date we release a version of the distribution. The version number comes from the year and month of the release rather than reflecting the actual version of the software.

Our first release (Warty Warthog) was in October 2004 so its version was 4.10. This version (Hardy Heron) was released in April 2008 so its version number is 8.04.

6. 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 website](#).

7. What is Linux?

The [Linux kernel](#), pronounced 'linuks' 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.

8. What is GNU?

The *GNU Project*, pronounced "guh-noo", 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.

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. The concept of free software is explained at [Section 2 — Free Software](#).