

Linux was designed from the ground up with security and hardware compatibility in mind, and is currently one of the most popular Unix-based operating systems. One of the benefits of Linux is that it is incredibly flexible and can be configured to run on almost any device—from the smallest micro-computers and cellphones to larger super-computers. Initially, Unix was entirely command line-based until graphical user interfaces (GUIs) began to emerge in the early 1990s.

These early GUIs were difficult to configure and clunky at best, and generally only used by seasoned computer programmers. In the past decade, however, graphical user interfaces have come a long way in terms of usability, reliability and appearance. Ubuntu is just one of many different Linux *distributions*, and uses one of the more popular graphical desktop environments called GNOME.

Is Ubuntu right for you?

New users to Ubuntu may find that it takes some time to feel comfortable with the operating system. You will no doubt notice many similarities to both Microsoft Windows and Mac OS X, as well as some things that work very differently. Users coming from Mac OS X are more likely to notice similarities due to the fact that both Mac OS X and Ubuntu originated from Unix.

Before you decide whether or not Ubuntu is right for you, we suggest giving yourself some time to grow accustomed to the way things are done—and expect to find that some things are different to what you are used to. We also suggest taking the following into account:

- ▶ **Ubuntu is community based.** That is, Ubuntu is made, developed, and maintained by the community. Because of this, support is probably not available at your local computer store. Thankfully, the Ubuntu community is here to help. There are many articles, guides, and manuals available, as well as users on various Internet forums and Internet relay chat (IRC) rooms that are willing to help out beginners. Additionally, near the end of this guide we include a troubleshooting chapter: [Chapter 8: Troubleshooting](#).
- ▶ **Many applications designed for Microsoft Windows or Mac OS X will not run on Ubuntu.** For the vast majority of tasks that people use their computers for every day, there are suitable alternative applications available in Ubuntu. However, many professional applications (such as the Adobe Creative Suite) are not developed to work with Ubuntu. If you rely on commercial software that is not compatible with Ubuntu, yet still want to give Ubuntu a try, you may want to consider dual-booting. Alternatively, some applications developed for Windows will work in Ubuntu with a program called Wine.
- ▶ **Many commercial games will not run on Ubuntu.** If you are a heavy gamer, then Ubuntu may not be for you. Game developers usually design games for the largest market, where they can make the most profit. Since

Whilst modern graphical **desktop environments** have generally replaced early command line-based operating systems, the command line can still be a quick and efficient way of performing many tasks. See [Chapter 6: The Command Line](#) for more information, and [Chapter 2: The Ubuntu Desktop](#) to learn more about **gnome** and other desktop environments.

A desktop environment is a sophisticated and integrated user interface that provides the basis for humans to interact with a computer using a monitor, keyboard and a mouse.

To learn more about Linux distributions, see [Chapter 9: Learning More](#).

A popular forum for Ubuntu discussion and support is the Ubuntu Forums, <http://ubuntuforums.org>.

See [Chapter 5: Software Management](#) to learn more about Ubuntu Software Center. To learn more about dual-booting (running Ubuntu side-by-side with another operating system), see [Chapter 1: Installation](#). For more information on Wine, go to <http://www.winehq.org/>.