

Ubuntu is composed of many software packages, of which the vast majority are distributed under a free software license, making an exception only for some proprietary hardware drivers.[21] The main license used is the GNU General Public License (GNU GPL) which, along with the GNU Lesser General Public License (GNU LGPL), explicitly declares that users are free to run, copy, distribute, study, change, develop and improve the software. On the other hand, there is also proprietary software available that can run on Ubuntu. Ubuntu focuses on usability, security and stability.[22] The Ubiquity installer allows Ubuntu to be installed to the hard disk from within the Live CD environment, without the need for restarting the computer prior to installation. Ubuntu also emphasizes accessibility and internationalization to reach as many people as possible. Beginning with 5.04, UTF-8 became the default character encoding,[23] which allows for support of a variety of non-Roman scripts. As a security feature, the sudo tool is used to assign temporary privileges for performing administrative tasks, allowing the root account to remain locked, and preventing inexperienced users from inadvertently making catastrophic system changes or opening security holes.[24] PolicyKit is also being widely implemented into the desktop to further harden the system through the principle of least privilege.

Ubuntu comes installed with a wide range of software that includes OpenOffice, Firefox, Empathy (Pidgin in versions before 9.10), Transmission, GIMP (in versions prior to 10.04), and several lightweight games (such as Sudoku and chess). Additional software that is not installed by default can be downloaded and installed using the Ubuntu Software Center[25] or the package manager Synaptic, which come pre-installed. Ubuntu allows networking ports to be closed using its firewall, with customized port selection available. End-users can install Gufw (GUI for Uncomplicated Firewall) and keep it enabled.[26] GNOME (the current default desktop) offers support for more than 46 languages.[27] Ubuntu can also run many programs designed for Microsoft Windows (such as Microsoft Office), through Wine or using a Virtual Machine (such as VMware Workstation or VirtualBox). For the upcoming 11.04 release, Canonical intends to drop the GNOME Shell as the default window manager in favor of Unity, a graphical interface it first developed for the netbook edition of Ubuntu.[28]

[edit] System requirements