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What is Linux?

Linux is a *free, open source*, UNIX-like operating system created by Finnish programmer Linus Torvalds, with the assistance of hundreds of other people around the world. Linux is released under the terms of the Free Software Foundation's *General Public License (GPL)*, which means its source code is freely available to everyone.

Strictly-speaking, “Linux” is the kernel of a more complete operating system that involves additional tools, utilities, and other programs. Linux is usually packaged with a complete operating system – a

“distribution” (e.g. Debian, Fedora, Gentoo, Mandriva, Red Hat, Slackware, SuSE, Ubuntu, etc.).

What Can Linux Do?

Linux is used in a wide variety of applications. Because of its open source licensing and flexible design, it has been put to use in many different ways: desktop computers, web servers, firewalls, routers, graphics rendering, clustered computing, embedded systems, search engines, databases, and very much more. Since Linux is capable of performing so many different tasks, the better question is: “What *can't* Linux do?”

Why Should You Use Linux?

Everyone has a different reason for choosing Linux. Here are some of the most popular reasons why people are using it:

- It's free, and you don't have to pay for perpetual upgrades.
- It's very well supported by other Linux users, vendors, and programmers.
- Since it's open source, updates and fixes are frequent and

rapid.

- Most Linux distributions come with a wealth of free software – end-user programs, servers, games, programming tools, and more.
- Its design allows it to be used very securely.

What is Free Software

The Free Software Foundation's (FSF) definition of *Free Software* refers to software users' freedom to run the program for any purpose; study how the program works and adapt it to their own needs by modifying the source; redistribute the software freely; and to improve a program and release their improvements to the public.

To guarantee this kind of freedom, the Free Software Foundation created the *General Public License (GPL)*, which is used to license many free software projects, including the Linux kernel.

Note that you may sell *Free Software* for profit, but when you do, the source code must be distributed as well. See the Free Software Foundation's homepage for details.

What Is Open Source Software?

Open Source Software, as defined by the Open Source Initiative (OSI), is similar in scope to *Free Software*. It includes any software with source code that may be viewed, modified, and redistributed by anyone. This includes a wide range of open source licenses, including the FSF's *GPL*. The OSI's purpose is to promote open source licensed software to the community and business world.

Getting Started

Here are a few online resources to help you begin your Linux experience. First and foremost is the OCLUG website itself. You can learn more about us and subscribe to our mailing lists by visiting www.oclug.on.ca. On the lists, members will be happy to answer both technical and non-technical questions regarding Linux and Open Source. For further details, please visit some of the following sites:

Linux Websites

Website	Description
www.ubuntu.com	An easy to use Linux distribution that you can try before installing
www.kernel.org	The home of Linux kernel development
www.freshmeat.net	A Linux software directory
www.gnu.org	Home of the GNU project and Free Software Foundation
www.opensource.org	Promoters of open source software

What is OCLUG?

Founded in March of 1997, the Ottawa Canada Linux Users Group (OCLUG) is now a not-for-profit corporation. OCLUG's mission is to promote and support the use of Linux at the community level in Ottawa. Its membership is diverse, ranging from people who know little about computers to proverbial gurus. OCLUG also holds monthly general meetings and special events.

OCLUG meets on the first Tuesday of every month. In addition to these meetings, OCLUG maintains several mailing lists to provide support for Linux use in the Ottawa.



**Ottawa Canada
Linux Users Group**

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