

# GET FAMILIAR WITH LINUX

If you own a desktop computer or notebook computer, chances are it came pre-installed with Windows or Mac OS X. These are the most popular operating systems in the United States today, making up for about 96% of the overall market. However, there is a third, fast-growing operating system, named Linux that also deserves our attention.

Linux had become popular in many Third World and some European countries, particularly Germany, mostly due to its downloadable format and that it's usually free.



Linux was started in 1991 by Linus Torvalds, a Finnish developer. Torvalds used portions of the Unix-like MINIX (MINImal uniX) OS, which was intended for academic use and further developed it. He soon decided to license Linux under the GPL license, an open source license that liberally allows everyone to modify the program to their liking and needs. The idea was to develop the "kernel" of the operating system and then have third party developers enhance it with user-level applications. Soon enough the GNU organization stepped in and many of their user-level applications were ported to Linux, bringing in the first useful, full operating system, around 1992. Many different companies or individuals can put together the OS in their own way and so create what is called a "distribution", or "distro".

Since then, GNU/Linux has matured, further developed, innovated and even became



a leader on a couple server-related markets. The desktop side of Linux co-exists with the server and embedded sides. Linux had



become popular in many Third World and some European countries, particularly Germany, mostly due to its downloadable format and that it's usually free. There are

over 300 distros today, but the most popular in the Linux world

are Ubuntu, SuSE, Red Hat, Fedora and Debian. According to Google Trends, these

5 distros make up about 80% of all Linux distros in usage with Ubuntu leading the

way with about 25% of market share. In the United States, Ubuntu remains the most



successful distro, but very close behind is the Fedora project, a professional, commercial flavor known

as "Red Hat Linux".

There are several reasons Linux is growing so fast. One reason is because most of its distros are

downloadable free of charge. A second reason is that most of the source code used on the desktop

operating systems is "open". Another strong reason is the community aspect that it brings to the table,

with individuals from around the world working towards a common goal. Last but not least, Linux is

generally more secure than Windows because of the strong Unix influences in its design. UNIX

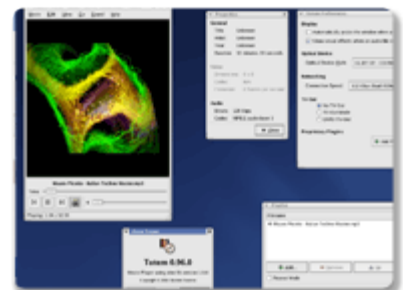
aggressively uses restricted "user policies" by default that helps the overall security of the system.

Moreover, downloaded binaries from the web don't have "executable" rights by default, which makes it difficult for viruses or spyware to get installed.

With Linux, users are able to use the same kind of applications that

they are accustomed to using on their Macs or Windows PCs. Some

examples of these Linux-friendly applications are OpenOffice.org, a



powerful office suite, Firefox, a popular alternative web browser, The Gimp for graphics manipulation, Skype and Gizmo Project for VoIP, Evolution for emailing with Exchange



support, Pidgin for multi-IM, Rhythm box for audio, Totem for video playback and a slew of other smaller utilities and applications. The

only area where consumer applications might fail the user is

in DV/HDV video editing. While there are at least 4-5 applications that

promise DV video editing abilities, none of them have the ease of use,

stability or features found on Windows Movie Maker or iMovie HD.

The basic needs of a modern computer user are all satisfied with Linux. For those who are craving to tweak their operating system to their liking, Linux is a powerful Unix-like command shell that allows you to get the most out of it.

Whether you are a power user or a simple Internet user, Linux's varied applications have you all covered.



Source: <http://www.geeks.com/techtips/2007/techtips-30SEP07.htm>