

## THE COMPUTER CORNER

# No. 219: Getting Ready for Linux

Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR 715 N. Dries Street Saukville, WI 53080-1664  
(262) 268-1949 skaplan@mcw.edu

So what approach is best in dealing with Linux? Let me suggest this. Find an old computer, one of your own or buy one at a swapfest. It does not matter what software is on it. Use that to install one or another “distro” (distribution) of Linux, overwriting whatever might be there. Work with it as a second computer for several months, or until you feel comfortable with it and until you decide it will do everything that you want. When you are satisfied that it will work for you, dump Windows off of your main machine, and install Linux. OR, make your main machine dual-boot, with both Windows and Linux on it. Then you can freely jump back and forth between them. Yes, that is possible and easy to do. I have one like that (Linux/XP) running right now. Just remember to put Linux on second. It won't mind that Windows exists already on the hard drive. However, if you put Linux on first and then try to install Windows, Windows will likely destroy the dual-boot properties of the drive, and you will have to boot Linux from a CD or floppy. Windows does not play well with others.

What about distros? Well, here is a link to a short story outlining the Best Linux Distros of 2016 <https://www.linux.com/news/software/applications/878620-the-best-linux-distros-of-2016> that should answer your questions. This article will tell you which distro is the best comeback, most customizable, best looking, best newcomer, best cloud-based, best for laptops, best for old hardware, best to control smart devices, best for games, best for privacy, best for multimedia production, best for enterprise activity, best to act as a server, best to use for a mobile device, and best to use with ARM devices (Raspberry pi, Android and others). In a nutshell, as a newcomer you will probably be most interested in Ubuntu Mate (best laptop OS) or Linux Mint Cinnamon (best desktop OS).

Actually, you can switch distros as your interest, capability and hardware changes. That is the great thing about free Linux distros. It costs you nothing to try one or another.

By the way, all distros take updating. That is, one part or another of a distro will be rewritten from time to time, as improvements are made, submitted and approved for release. It is really easy to do the installation with the update manager (or whatever it may be called in your distro). Simply let it go to work and it will download and install whatever is available. As always, it will cost you not one red cent! You just cannot beat it.

Now that Microsoft is moving to the cloud (soon you won't be able to purchase a copy of Word; rather, you will pay rent to use it on the Internet), Linux is the logical answer. Current distros already contain software that does everything Microsoft can do and more. For example, the MS Office equivalent that comes with many distros (Libre Office) contains units that are compatible with Word, Access, PowerPoint and all the other Word accessories. You can even jump back and forth between MS Office and Linux-supplied software, saving everything in Office format if you wish. And current Linux distros have non-Adobe ZIP, PDF and other similar utilities. Indeed, right today, why would anyone continue to use dangerous Adobe products when there are so many free, safe alternatives out there?

Happy, Safe and Smart Computing!