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The 10 Best Linux Distributions of 2009

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It was exactly one year ago today that I published my original "The 10 Best Linux Distributions" and it's time to put forth a new list for this year's best. Without looking at the old list, I've decided to compile this one from scratch. This 2009 list takes several factors into account for placement in the list: Community support, commercial support, software variety, update engine and distribution frequency. Even for old Linux salts, there are a few surprises on this list. For starters, Ubuntu is not number one.

1. gNewSense - Ever since my conversation with Richard Stallman, I've decided that gNewSense is the distro that claims the top spot for this year. Based on Ubuntu, which is based on Debian, gNewSense contains only free software. It's also the distro that Stallman himself uses--how can you beat that?

2. Debian - Debian is a GNU/Linux distribution that has it all: Great support, unsurpassed stability, awesome developers, a huge community, dozens of offspring including Ubuntu and gNewSense, regular updates, apt-get, thousands of ready-to-install programs and it makes a great user computer or server system. Debian also has the best hardware discovery of any distribution, which is probably why it's used to parent so many other distributions. If Debian has one weakness, it's commercial support. There's no Debian, Inc. for businesses to point to should something go awry. For businesses to adopt a particular distribution, it must have commercial support. For some, the risk is too great otherwise.

3. Ubuntu -

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