

A guide to Slackware and Arch Linux: getting your hands dirty with Linux

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Back in 1991, a computer science student named Linus Torvalds announced on a newsgroup that he was creating a "hobby OS." That hobby was Linux, and today it's much more than a tinkerer's operating system, with availability on all manner of hardware and a seemingly unlimited array of flavors, or "distributions." Maybe you're new to Linux, or maybe you're itching to graduate from Ubuntu to something with a little more geek cred. Whatever the case, we're going to take the sting out of all those command prompts, using two great distros as examples.

What is Linux?

If you wanna be a jerk about it, Linux technically isn't an operating system. Linux proper is actually a kernel, which is only a portion of an OS (albeit, the main portion). When most people say "Linux" however, they are talking about a Linux distribution, which is indeed a full-fledged operating system. Luckily for any beginners out there, it's not as complicated as you might think -- what makes Linux Linux is a small combination of components, that kernel included. In fact, we can break them down into four main parts, in no specific order:

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