

PCLinuxOS **MAGAZINE**

Issue No. 10 · June, 2007

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From the Chief Editor's Desk

As I sit here at my computer to write my monthly introduction to PCLinuxOS Magazine, our favorite distro is having to deal with several problems. First, apparently the popularity of PCLinuxOS has resulted in our forum host suffering too high a load on their resources and they have taken down our site. Second, PCLinuxOS's main repository, Ibiblio suffered a major hardware failure, and almost all the Linux distros (and perhaps other things they handled as well) were lost.

The PCLinuxOS Community has responded in amazing fashion. Almost immediately, a temporary help forum (<http://pclossupport.forumsland.com/>) was established, and shortly thereafter the donations from concerned PCLinuxOS users began pouring in. Many of the people who posted there have offered server space and other support. The mods and members have been providing ongoing help with problems.

Speaking of problems... There have been those out there that wanted to use our misfortune to claim that PCLinuxOS is dead. The news of PCLinuxOS's demise has been greatly exaggerated. The distro is healthy, development continues apace on TR4, and Final will arrive soon after. Tex and the gang are hard at work, addressing both the hosting problem and the drive to Final.

So don't despair. Things will get better. With this distro, that is what we have come to expect, and I know Tex and the Rippers will not let us down.

Ordinarily, I'd take space here to tell you about the articles in this issue. There are a bunch of good ones this month. Explore and enjoy.

That said, I'd like to ask every PCLOS magazine reader to take time right now and send a donation to Tex. You can make a donation via the Amazon Honor system to help our current problems.

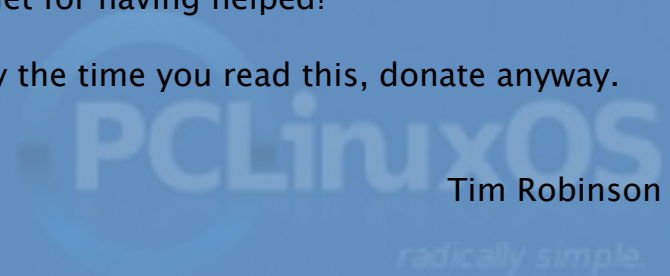
If you do not already have PASS access, don't forget to click the link to pass your details through to the recipient, else Tex won't know about your donation and won't be able to send PASS access details to you.

<http://www.amazon.com/paypage/P213461NKM3JQ4>

For those that do not already know, PASS is the server where updated packages appear first before going onto the public servers, and where only donors get access. It's a small reward for those that contribute development funds.

That's apart from the warm fuzzy feeling you get for having helped!

And if our main forum is up and functioning by the time you read this, donate anyway. Do it now!



Tim Robinson

PCLinuxOS 2007 FINAL Released

Written by Texstar, Sunday, 20 May 2007

Texstar and the Ripper Gang are pleased to announce the final release of PCLinuxOS 2007. Featuring kernel 2.6.18.8, KDE 3.5.6, Open Office 2.2.0, Firefox 2.0.0.3, Thunderbird 2.0, Frostwire, Ktorrent, Amarok, Flash, Java JRE, Beryl 3D and much much more. Almost 2 gigs of software compressed on a single self bootable livecd that can be installed to your hard drive provided it is compatible with your system and you like the distribution. Over 5000+ additional packages available after hard drive install through our Synaptic Software Manager. Please note PCLinuxOS does not ship with Win32codes or DVD decryption software. Proprietary Nvidia and ATI drivers available after hard drive install.

In addition we'd like to give out a special thanks to the PCLinuxOS community who stepped up last month to help us out and kept us going. Thank you for all your support and we'll keep working hard to bring you a good Linux distribution you can be proud of. We also want to thank Enki Consulting for providing hosting for our website and ibiblio.org for hosting our distribution.

Currently available via torrent only as the mirrors continue to populate: <http://linuxtracker.org/torrents-details.php?id=4143>

Purchase disk from On-Disk.com



PCLinuxOS Magazine is a community project of MyPCLinuxOS.com to provide an additional means of communication to the PCLinuxOS community.

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Letters to the Editors

Dear PCLOS Magazine:

I want to thank you for the magazine, it has been very helpfull for me and some partners interested in PCLINUXOS as the default OS in our boxes. I met the magazine just few months ago and I would like to ask you if you can write more or at least one example per issue about linux commands: cat, grep, etc; how are they used and all that stuffs.

Thanks again and keep walking the magazine...

Regards.....Noe C.

Thanks, Noe, for the suggestion. Look for us to begin providing just such CLI usage information in the near future. I'm sure you realize, though that PCLinuxOS has very detailed information on the CLI command set in the man pages. We will try to provide a "real world approach" to using those commands, as the man pages can be very daunting if you just need to accomplish a simple task. -- Ed.

Dear PCLOS Magazine:

I have been watching PCLinuxOS with a lot of interest and this magazine makes me seriously want to change to Linux (Windows Vista also helped me change my mind).

I started with computers back in the late 70's and early 80's and have watched M\$ grow into a monster.

Your magazine is a breath of fresh air for me and I will be downloading every issue and also PCLOS 2007 when the final version is released in the next few weeks.

Keep up the great work - a magazine is perfect for newbies to Linux like me who don't want to trawl through hundreds of pages of forums.

Thank you for the great read. Thomas M.

Thanks for the kind words Thomas. We hope you enjoy every issue. In spite of the recent problems with our hosting service and the coincidental failure of the Ibiblio repository, PCLinuxOS is alive and well, the forum is now back up and development on TR4 (and Final) has proceeded apace. The forum can indeed be a bit daunting, but if you join in and spend time using the search function, you will find an enormous amount of information available, to say nothing of the hundreds of helpful members that will jump at the opportunity to help with any problems you have. -- Ed.

Dear PCLOS Magazine:

I realize that this is the form for the April issue but the May issue does not seem to be up in HTML format yet, so I am using this. At any rate what I wanted to comment about was in this April issue anyway.

In your reply to Padma quoted below

‘It's really just a nit-pick , but it grated on my eyes to see Free as in Beer being defined as Free as in Speech . - Padma

‘Dear Padma, did you check the free beer website? Did you research other sources? I did. While I do not claim any great expertise , I stand by what I said. The free in "free beer" is liberty. The free in closed source software is 'without monetary cost'. The two are not the same thing. There are open source companies that charge , though

their code is open. That makes them free (as in liberty). Freeware companies hide their code , thus they are not free , no matter that they give away their software . Open is free . Closed is not free . The exchange of money or lack there of has nothing to do with it. - Merlin Whitewolf, Editor”

Your views are correct but the wording is a little off. As Padma said it is a nitpick but it was one of those things that just scratched me wrong.

Don't misunderstand; you and the others are doing a fine job on the magazine and while I don't read every single issue, my computer time is limited these days, the ones I have read I've enjoyed. With that in mind here is the quote from The Free Software Foundation.

Free software is a matter of liberty, not price. To understand the concept, you should think of free as in free speech, not as in free beer. <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>

Your point is still valid but by mixing the free beer and free speech around it sounds just a little off to people who have heard or read that phrase before.

Keep up the good work with the magazine. yetiman

Thank you for those comments, yetiman. The "free as in beer" phrase has been a source of confusion for lots of people new to the FOSS environment. Hopefully, between the information provided in the original article, and the comments received since that article was published, our readers will have a clearer understanding and appreciation for BOTH forms of freedom. -- Ed

Dear PCLOS Magazine:

You had an article running in May about updating to final from TR4. It stated that it was not recommended as there were hidden files that were specific to each application and might not load.

As I understand an up date process, would not the files hidden or not be over written from TR4 to the final? Therefore I cannot see a problem happening if you were to go that way.

If you could give some clarification on this in the next issue it would be appreciated.

Thanks for a great magazine. T.Watcher

Since Final has not been released as of this date (05/17/07), this matter is still up in the air. As a general statement, is is always advisable to do a clean install when switching from a test release to a final version. During the test release cycle, the primary goal of the developers is to receive feedback regarding problems and fix those that are identified. It is doubtful that their goal is to absolutely maintain compatibility that would make upgrades possible without a clean install. That being said, Tex is the final word. When Final is released, I am certain that he will post on the forum whether it is safe to simply upgrade or if he advises a clean install. We are all waiting expectantly now to see what happens. --Ed.

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This guide has been modified by Papawoob to reflect the Linux distribution of PCLinuxOS 2007.

CHAPTER 3: FILES AND FOLDERS

The File System

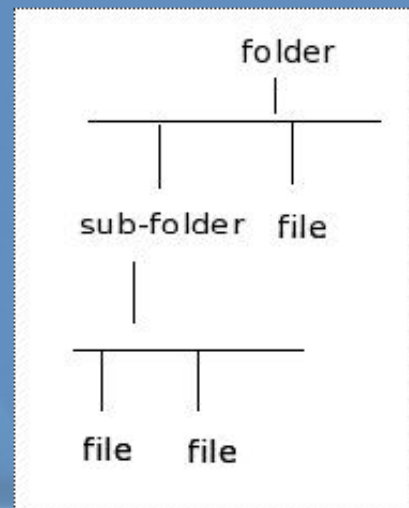
One of the most powerful features of a modern computer system is the ability to store data in a form which can be easily retrieved and transported or copied across to other computer systems or media. Data created and accessed by a user in the computer is stored in what is called a file. This concept of an electronic file to store electronic data mimics the physical world usage of a file to store data written on paper. This mimicry is carried further by the organization of these electronic files into electronic folders or directories. Like a physical folder, an electronic folder can contain many files. A folder may also have sub-folders or sub-directories.

Note: We shall be using the terms folder and directory interchangeably, unless stated otherwise.

Files and folders can be created, copied, moved (i.e. transferred) and deleted. The folders themselves are organized in a hierarchical manner starting at the root of the file system. Each user is given a home directory and upon logging in, the user is placed in his home directory.

Ownerships and Permissions

As the system is set up to handle multiple users concurrently, it needs to have in place mechanisms with which it can control the security and privacy of the file system. It needs to be able to control access to the file



The Hierarchical File System

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system resources for each individual user. In addition, it also has to be able to control access at a group level, i.e. users who belong to the same group can be given certain privileges with respect to the file system operations. To be able to perform these features, associated with each file or folder are the categories:

owner
group
others

and the file permissions:

read (r)
write (w)
execute (x)

and the directory permissions:

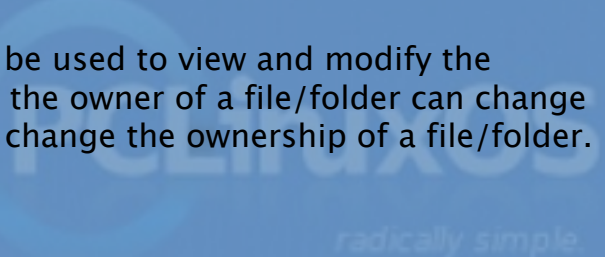
read (r)
write (w)
access (x)

Associated with a file are the categories owner, group and others and the permissions which each one of these have on the file. The user id of the user who creates a file by default becomes the owner of the file. User ids on the system are assigned to one or more groups. When a user id is created on the system, a group which has the same name as the user id is also created and the new user id belongs to this group. By default this group, which has the same name as the file owner, is associated with the file. All of the other user ids on the system which are not the owner of the file or do not belong to the group associated with the file, are placed in the category others.

By default, the owner has read and write permission for a non-executable file and read, write and execute permission for an executable file. The group associated with the file has read permission for a non-executable file and read and execute rights for an executable file. The others group has readonly permission for a non-executable file, and read and execute rights for an executable file.

The rights and ownership concepts described above apply to directories too. However, since a directory cannot be executed, access rights are substituted for execution rights. Access to a directory means that the user id with the appropriate permission can descend into the directory (i.e. change directory to it).

The File Manager application described below may be used to view and modify the ownership and permissions of a file or folder. Only the owner of a file/folder can change its permissions and only the superuser or root can change the ownership of a file/folder.



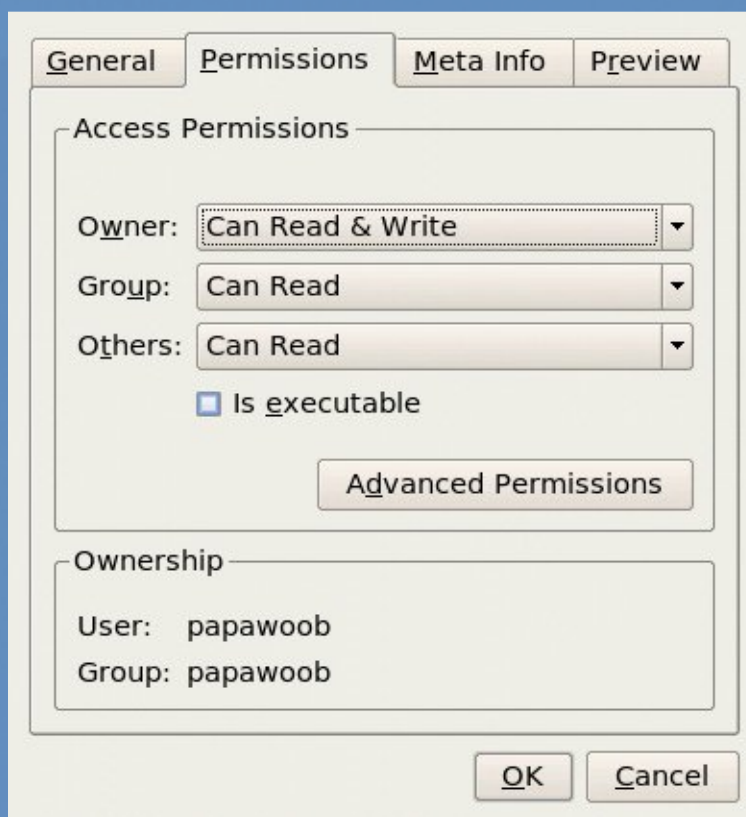
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Viewing and Modifying the Permissions of a File or Folder

To view the owner and group of a file/folder and/or to modify its permission settings, select the file/folder and select from the menu bar at the top:

File --> Properties

Click on the Permissions tab. The owner and group of the file/folder are displayed as well as the associated permissions. The "Others" tab shows the permissions for users who are not the owner of the file or a member of the owners group. A screenshot is provided below:



Ownership and Permission Properties of a File

To change the permissions, click on the arrow next to the boxes and choose the new permissions desired. Click on OK to apply the changes.

Note: It is recommended that you do not modify the default file/folder permission settings unless you know what you are doing. This is to minimize the risk of compromising the security of the files and folders. There will soon be another article that will explain permissions in much greater detail.

Using the File Manager

As it is possible for a user to create and store hundreds and thousands of files and folders, a File Manager is needed to assist the user to manage and manipulate these files

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and the file system on which it resides.

In this section a brief description of the File Manager and how to use it is given. More details can be obtained by clicking on the Main Menu and then on More Applications, Documentation, and then KDE Help Center. After the KDE Help Center opens choose KDE User Manual and scroll down to "II. The File Manager."

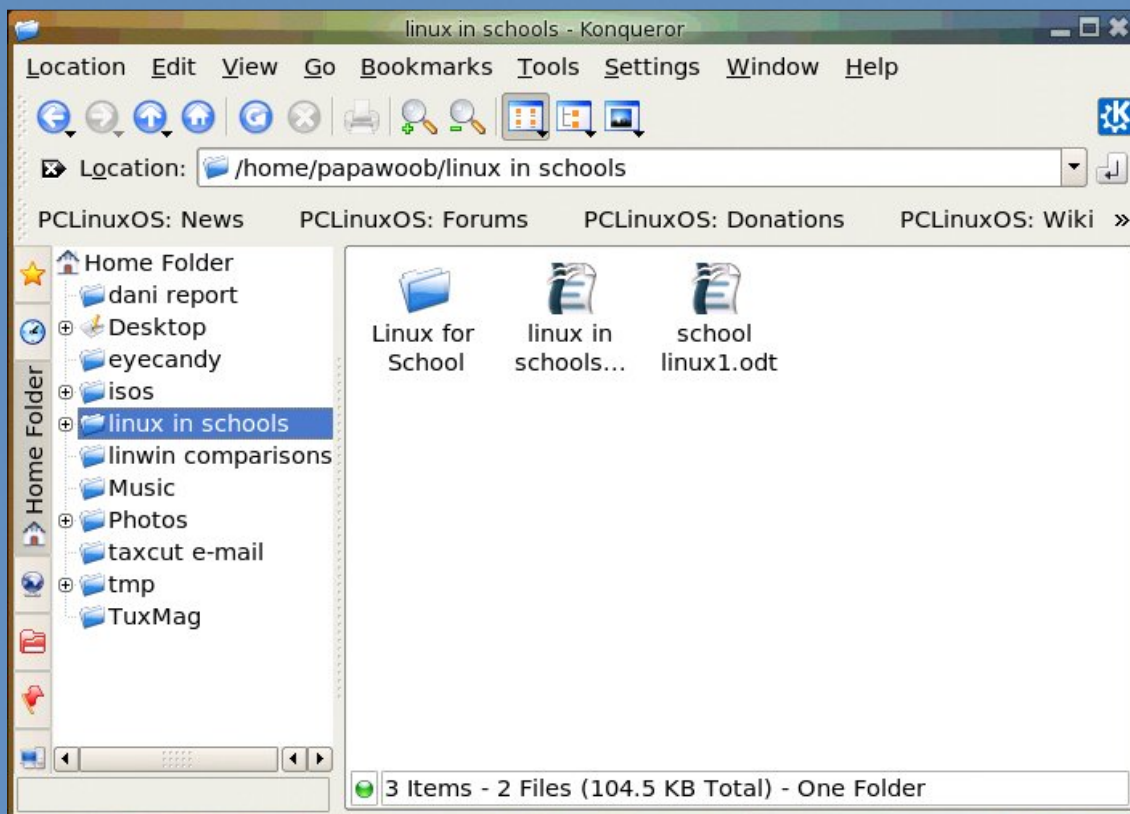
KDE User Manual --> The File Manager

To start using the File Manager, Konqueror, double-click on the home directory icon on the desktop or in the panel. This should be named "Home" and look like this:



Home

When you click on the "Home" icon seen above the File Manager will open a window that looks like this:



The File Manager

By default, the File Manager window consists of a side pane and a main view pane. At the top of the window just under the window titlebar, are the menu bar and the location bar.

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The view pane displays the files and folders contained in the current directory that the user is in. These can be displayed as icons (default) or changed to display them as a listing of filenames.

The side pane contains an icon that represents the current file or current folder. The side pane also contains information about the current file or current folder. A hierarchical (tree) view of the file system on the computer can be obtained from the side pane. By navigating through this, you can access files and folders outside your home directory, provided of course that you have the permission to do so.

Accessing Files and Programs

From the view pane of the File Manager, you can open files as well as run (launch) executable programs by double-clicking on the icon representing them.

Creating New Folders

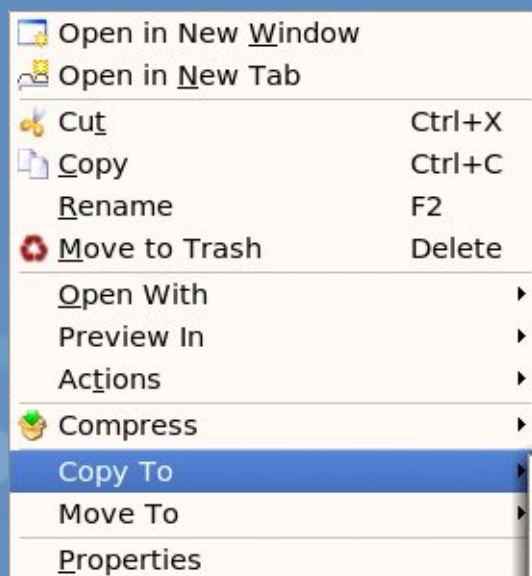
To create a new folder under the folder you are currently in, move the mouse to the menu bar at the top (just beneath the titlebar of the window) and click on Edit and then click on Create New. A submenu will pop out to the right, and then click on Folder. A new folder will appear (as seen below) on the view pane and you will have to type in the name of the new folder.



Copy Files and Folders

If you want to make a copy of a file you will have to place the copy in another folder as you cannot have two files with the same name, in the same folder. To copy a file, right click on the file in the view pane to select it. Then select "Copy To" from the drop menu as seen on the right:

After selecting "Copy To" you will see another drop menu that lists your entire file system. Choose where you want the file to be copied to and select "Copy Here"



Copy To

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File System drop menu

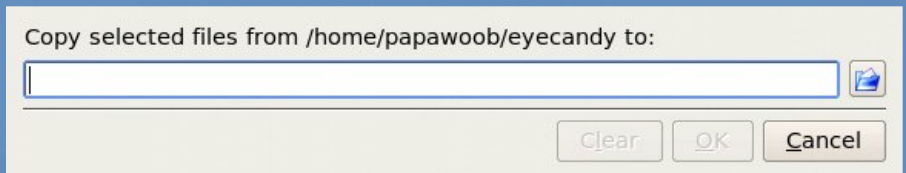
You can also click on the file in the view pane to select it and then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit --> Copy File...

This will open a dialog box where you can type in the path to the folder to where you want to move the file to or click on the browse folder and navigate to it, as seen below:



Copy Here



Copy File

The procedures above can be done with folders too.

To copy more than one file or folder at a time, select multiple files/folders by holding down the CTRL key while clicking on the files or folders. Then repeat the steps shown above.

Moving Files and Folders

Moving a file or folder is different from copying in that a copy of the file/folder is not made, i.e. only one copy of the file/folder exists, and the file/folder is transferred from one folder to another.

To move a file, right click on the file in the view pane to select it. Then select "Move To" from the drop menu as seen on the right:

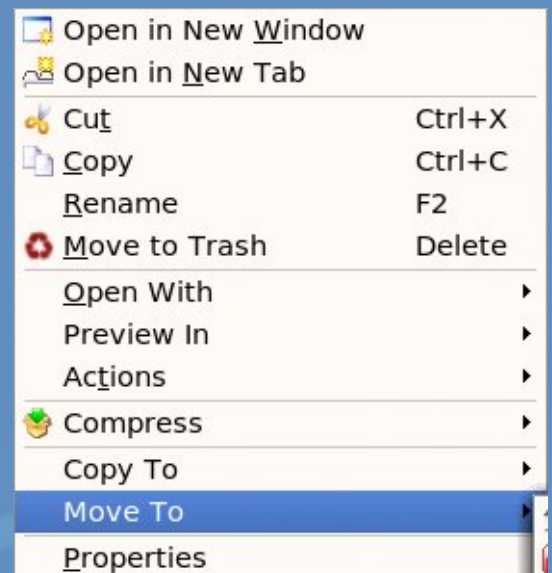
After selecting "Move To" you will see another drop menu that lists your entire file system. Choose where you want the file to be copied to and select "Move Here."

Another way of moving a file is to drag and drop the file into the destination folder.

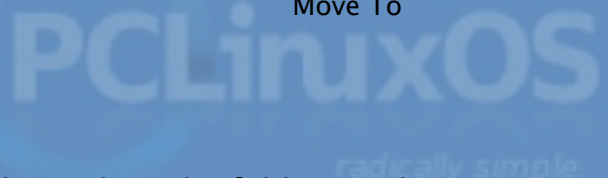
You can also click on the file in the view pane to select it and then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit --> Move Files...

This will open a dialog box where you can type in the path to the folder to where you

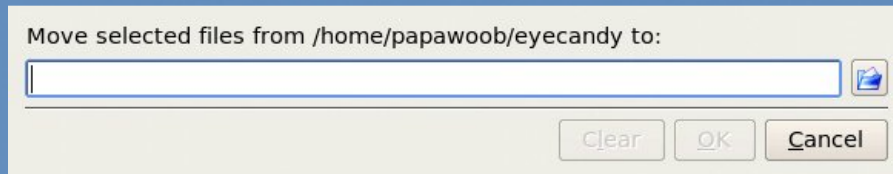


Move To



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want to move the file to or click on the browse folder and navigate to it, as seen below:



The procedures above can be done with folders too.

To move more than one file or folder at a time, select multiple files/folders by holding down the CTRL key while clicking on the files or folders.

Renaming Files and Folders

To rename a file, right click on the file in the view pane to select it. Then select "Rename" from the drop menu as seen on the right:

Then type in the new name. You can also click on the file in the view pane to select it and then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit --> Rename

The procedures above can be done with folders too.

Deleting Files and Folders

To delete a file, click on the file in the view pane to select it. Then select from the menu bar at the top,

Edit --> Move to Trash

You can also right click on the file and select "Move to Trash" from the drop menu.

Alternatively, you can select the file and then use the DELETE key on the keyboard to delete the file. This has the same effect as above of moving the file to the Trash folder. Note that menus may indicate a keyboard alternative, e.g. F2 to rename a file or folder, CTRL-C to copy, and so on. To use these alternatives, highlight the file or folder, and apply the shortcut.

It is still possible to salvage a deleted file from the Trash. To do this double-click on the Trash icon on the desktop to open up the Trash folder. Then you can move the file you want to salvage to the desired folder. **Note:** if you delete the file from the Trash then it cannot be recovered any more.



Rename

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The procedures above can be done with folders too.

To delete more than one file or folder at a time, select multiple files/folders by holding down the CTRL key while clicking on the files or folders.

The Trash Can

The trash can icon on the desktop contains files and folders which you have deleted using the File Manager or an application run from the desktop. As noted above, it is a special folder in which it is still possible to recover the deleted items to another folder so as to “undelete” them. However, over time, the trash folder will be filled up as many files and folders get deleted through usage. So it is a good idea to periodically empty or delete the items found in the trash.



Empty Trash Can



Full Trash Can

To empty the trash, right-click on the trash icon and select “Empty Trash Bin.” Otherwise, you can open the trash by double-clicking on it and then select:

Edit -> Selection -> Select All

and then:

Edit -> Delete

Using A Text Editor

Very often it is necessary to use the computer to input some text or to modify the data in a text file. While a full-fledged word processor like OpenOffice.org's Writer may be used, it can be an overkill since the sophisticated features and formatting available with a word processor are not needed in many cases. A text editor can be used instead. The Linux system comes installed with many text editors. In this section we shall be looking at how to use a text editor which comes with the KDE Desktop – KWrite.

Note:

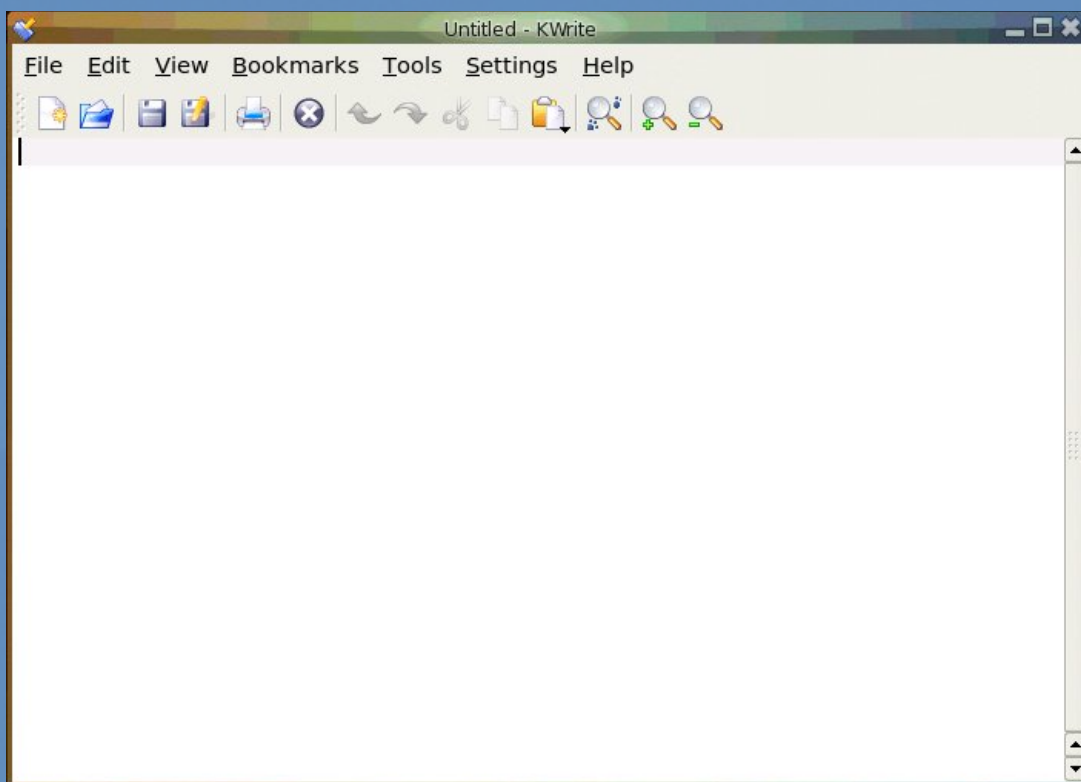
A text file here refers to a file which contains pure text printing characters only. Some types of files e.g. those created by a word processor, while appearing to be text-only actually contain other non-printing characters and hence are not pure-text files.

Starting KWrite

kwrite may be started from the Main Menu,

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Main Menu --> More Applications --> Editors --> KWrite



The KWrite Text Editor

After kwrite has started, you can immediately type in text into the main edit window. The mouse is also used extensively in kwrite, to move around the document as well as to perform editing functions.

Inputing Text

Text can be entered by simply typing into the main kwrite window. By default the text will wrap to the next line when it reaches the border of the editing window.

Marking Text

The mouse may be used to mark (highlight) a block of text by clicking on the beginning of the block and dragging the mouse to the end of the block before releasing it.

Deleting Text

Text can be deleted one character at a time by moving the mouse to the character in question and using the DELETE and BACKSPACE keys in the normal fashion.

If there is a lot of text to be deleted, a more efficient way to delete text is to mark it first and then press the DELETE key on the keyboard.

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Copy, Cut and Paste

Text can be edited by marking it first and then selecting Cut or Copy from the buttons at the top. "Cutting" will result in the marked text being copied into a storage buffer and then deleted from the editing window, while "Copying" will result in just a copy of the text being copied into the storage buffer without the deletion of the original text. The text cut/copied in this way can then be pasted into another part of the document by moving the mouse to the desired location and selecting the Paste button at the top.

Another way of invoking these functions is to click on the Edit option on the top menu bar and selecting the desired function, e.g.

Edit --> Cut
Edit --> Copy
Edit --> Paste

Undo

After performing an editing function, e.g. deleting a block of text, you can undo the action by clicking on the Undo button at the top. The Undo function can also be invoked using the Edit menu selection at the top.

Saving Text

The text typed in can be saved by clicking on the File option on the main menu bar at the top and selecting,

File --> Save As...

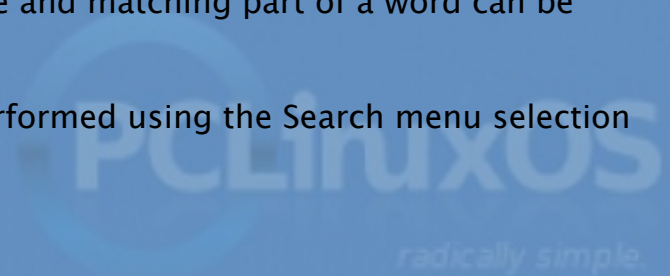
Move to the folder you want to save the file in and enter the name of the file to save.

Find and Replace

The Find button can be used to locate a text string. By default this search is not case sensitive and will also locate the text if it is part of a word. These default options can be changed from the Find dialog.

The Replace button can be used to locate a text string and replacing it with another. Again the default options of non-case sensitive and matching part of a word can be changed.

The Find and Replace functions can also be performed using the Search menu selection at the top.



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Opening A File

You can edit a text document already saved on the system by opening it. From the main menu at the top choose,

File --> Open

and select the file to open.

Preferences

Preferences can be set from the Preferences menu selection,

Edit --> Preferences

The Preferences you can set include the font, color and point size to be used, tab spacing, auto-wrapping, and auto-indenting.

Help

More information on how to use kwrite can be obtained by selecting Help from the menu at the top.

In Chapter 4 we will tell you about Floppies, CDROMs, CD-RWs, USB Mass storage, and a few other need-to-know things.

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The Newbie's Linux Adventure

by iSE

Originally this started as a welcoming post in a forum, but I have been asked to expand on it and share with others my adventure into Linux.

This is applicable to everyone, from people new to Linux, right through to those who've grown old with PCLOS and see it as a family member. It is indeed my hope that this may help developers to understand how a "newbie" feels, and to help new users to avoid some of the issues I had. We'll delve into how I became interested in computers and see how that progressed into falling in love with the brainchild of a man who likes to wear a Mandrake hat.

At the age of around 7 (July 1993), I attended a new primary school in Manchester (UK equivalent of Elementary School) which had 1 computer. It was an Acorn Archimedes A5000 and I became very familiar with this machine to become the only one (including the staff) who could fix and work it properly. So when we got the new Acorn RISC PC 600 (in 1994), it was up to me to learn how it worked. This meant being taught everything about it by an old gentleman from Acorn. From then on, every teacher and every pupil knew that I was the one to ask anything about it. So naturally I got a lot of experience – at least with the RISC OS which was quoted to be "tested to destruction every day by primary school children."

My love for computers began and it wasn't anything to do with Windows, Microsoft, or Apple, it was a small UK company called Acorn, who are probably now long forgotten.

So, its 1997 and after 4 years of being constantly meithered (bothered – ed.) by people to stop whatever I was doing because someone desperately needed one thing or another with that flaming computer! ... I passed my 11+, and the entrance exam to be enrolled at Altrincham Grammar School for Boys (for those not in the UK, all children of age 10/11 back then were made to sit an exam to determine whether they went to a grammar school or high school (pass/fail)). For my achievements and as a joint Christmas present for me and my brother, my parents bought us our first home PC. The OS was Windows 95 and was powered by an Intel Pentium with speeds up to 90MHz, having storage of 512Mb (which then got upgraded to 1, then 2GB). This allowed me to go a lot more in-depth with my interest in this new technology and once my father obtained a copy of Windows 98, whose job do you think it was to get it working?

The years went by and at around the age of 14 (then 2000) I started to stay behind after school and lend a hand to the IT Technician, a young man called James. Sometimes he or I would be busy and so I couldn't stay, but more often than not I was able to actually take apart the computers and replace motherboards, hard drives, anything, and everything. Privileged as I was at such a young age to be able to change a BNC connector, or even repair a broken server, I was only using Windows since I didn't know there was anything different. All the networking was based on Novell but a lot of the older computers used Windows 3.1.1 and the newer ones had 98SE, if they were lucky.

Myself, and several friends who were all very good at using computers (and certainly

The Newbie's Linux Adventure

knew their way around Linux), started our own little hacking club called The Reckless Thieves (from which I keep my alias Internal System Error) and it was through this that I was first introduced to the existence of Linux.

After trying to play with Red Hat (downloaded on a 56K modem) and getting extremely frustrated trying to get it work (when I didn't really need a new OS anyway), I decided to give it a rest. By that point Windows XP had come along and I was fairly satisfied with how that worked. To this day I still stand by that XP (with Service Pack 1) was/is actually a good OS, which isn't surprising when you learn that it wasn't coded by Microsoft. Yes it has security issues, but so would Linux or Macs if as many people used those. It did what I needed and after years of the blue screen I was happy.

Service Pack 2 was awful, that was when the telltale signs of shaft the customer really started to show with me. Everything from the new security control panel, through the forced Windows Genuine Advantage scheme, to the way it limited Half-Open connections causing problems with many P2P programs. Having had a hobby in creating music on my PC for a very long time now, it became immensely difficult to get the mp3's of my own music, which I created, to friends and family over the Internet. When people asked me to send them my latest tune over MSN, for instance, I used to have to tell them not to click on 'open' because it would be instantly deleted. Instead, they'd have to go into My Received Files, copy it to another location, and then open it.

So, it's now coming to the end of 2006, I've tried the Vista Beta's and RC's, and now I decide maybe I should give Linux another go. Microsoft had the potential to make a truly amazing OS with Vista. If they'd actually done what they said they were going to and not done a trumped up XP SP2 with a facelift, they would have given Linux and Macintosh true competition. Instead, the only reason people will buy Vista is because they feel they have to, not because they want to. If they only want something that looks pretty they will go for Mac OSX. For most people, they don't have the choice, they want to play games and work programs which only run on Windows.

Ubuntu, Kubuntu, Debian, Mandriva, Fedora Core, Gentoo, Sabayan, Slackware, MEPIS, and others totalling around 20 I've now tried. Having a wireless network, I managed to get on the internet with very few of those, which made me reboot into windows and try for another. I was determined not to use Vista because I was sick of the ever increasing amount of DRM built into the OS. I did seem to have a good result with Ubuntu and wanted to try out Beryl as soon as I heard of it. My old nVidia card had trouble with Ubuntu and the proprietary drivers so I carried on my search. Vista was released, I gave in and bought a copy of Ultimate. Anybody considering paying that ridiculous amount for something so you can play games every now and then, or use a Windows program – don't. It really is not worth it. Microsoft actually had the cheek to put my OS in limited mode, accusing me of using a pirated copy. After long deliberation with the online store I purchased it from and a rather nice man at MS whom I was a bit harsh on at first, the matter was settled after about a week.

During that week (in March 2007), I read on DistroWatch about an OS which was still in the making (TR1) but was soon to release a final edition which sported the slogan

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"radically simple". The screenshots looked very attractive indeed and I couldn't wait for the final to come out so I could try it. More frustration went by and I finally decided to install TR2 when it was released.

They said it was a Test Release so I expected bugs, problems, etc. This OS worked better than any of the other "stable" releases of other OS's I had experienced and I decided I'd found my match. PCLinuxOS, you are the OS I always dreamed of because you work so well! I know you're having problems with the site and such at the moment, but that will all pass and when you have TR4, no doubt still calling such a stable piece of software a test release, I will be waiting to see what the final will be like if TR2 was considered unstable. I don't mind having to tinker under the bonnet (hood for the North-Americans) every now and then; in fact, I rather enjoy it. But what you give me is the choice as to whether I want to, or not.

Thank you so much to Texstar for starting PCLOS in the first place, and to the other developers who all do such a good job of getting all the right components in the state they should be. When the forum is back up, let us all hope that it will be as well organised and open as the OS is.



Linux and the Masses

Commentary by Heather/Squishy

Spring is in the air and life is starting to be apparent again in my backyard. The bush is sprouting new buds, the birds are resettling, and my neighbors dog is back to barking at every little thing. It seems fitting then that this be my first article for this budding magazine! In the future I hope to write somewhat shorter columns. And before I get lost, I want to thank Tim and Neptune for encouraging me to try this column out and I wish to thank any who read these blurbs on a page; yes, you the readership, for even attempting to decipher my incoherent babbling.

I think it only correct to introduce myself a little bit before inflicting upon you my special brand of diatribe.

I am a pink haired Canadian gal who has done a fair bit of writing in the past and has dabbled in various Open Source projects (as a user) over the years. I am not a fangirl of any particular Linux distribution; they all have their merits and demerits, so I will not use this column to espouse any one distro over another. I'd feel it would be vastly unfair to our readers if I took sides in the so-called "Distro Wars". That said, I do have opinions on things and though I will try to be unbiased, I can't promise some bias won't slip through here and there. I'm human after all, am I not? (Well, unless you believe a friend of mine who thinks I'm from a different planet...)

This column, I hope, will not be about any one thing, but hopefully will come to encompass a variety of topics ranging from how Linux is changing the way people do business, to ways that technology has changed because of the development of open source models in the private & public sectors. I'm hopeful that I will be able to fit some how-to information into some future columns and anything else that seems relevant. One aspect I will try to avoid is the inter-relational politics that seem to crop up whenever discussing most things in the Open Source sphere. I'll also try to avoid the flame wars on mailing lists that tend to rage for weeks on end at times.

Now, with that out of the way, I will warn you I am going to show a bias in this next part. This is my take on Linux as it stands today and how the average user will likely see things if presented with our choice of OS. Below I shall try to outline why I think that Linux isn't quite ready for the desktop market, but it is certainly getting there in leaps and bounds.

Too few places will support you if you need help, i.e professional tech support

This is becoming less of an issue for more established distributions like Red Hat & openSUSE/SUSE, but in the main Linux sphere, this is still a thorn in the side of most average users. Most users want tech support to be there, if only as a sort of invisible security blanket in case they "blow it" (bork their OS so badly the family friend who can fix computers will scratch his head when faced with a seg-faulting application being run under any Linux distro).

Installers are easier to use but...

radically simple

Linux and the Masses

Once installed, most people will have very little idea how to add software to their distro of choice, even with Synaptic. You only have to look at any Linux distro's forums for numerous examples of what have become questions so well-known to developers that they put these things in their FAQs. And yet I still see these same questions over and over on the net. Users need to learn to educate themselves in part, and developers need to make it more obvious to users how to install software that they need. This is becoming less of an issue with some distros as they mature, but it isn't quite there yet. I have a lot of hope this one will be solved soon though and expect within the next three years to see a few distros available that will not challenge even an octogenarian who's used windows 95 since the 1990s.

As one poster in a forum I frequented said, "what is root?"

People are still confused about this "root" issue. I know that most people who read this column will shake their heads and just move on. Don't do that. If we want people to see Linux as an OS that is capable of doing what it is they want to do, we as individuals need to be willing to explain some (what are to us obvious, but to the average user are not) very foreign concepts. I have never used a Mac so I can't speak about them, but I have used Windows and I know that part of this problem stems from Windows insistence that the user run as a "root" user. Most people, if you told them that is how Windows operates, would look at you blankly and think you've just beamed here from Pluto. I'm willing to explain to others these concepts, and to put explanations into whatever their native language is, if I can. Are you?

Patents

This is still a big mess and until that is sorted we are going to have to fight to use simple stuff like codecs and document formats. I am thankful for people like Moglen Eben from the FSF, Bruce Perens and Richard Stallman, to name a few. I may not always agree with their stances on the Open Source movement or how things should proceed, but they have stood up for our rights as people to use the software and other things most of us take for granted within the Open Source movement.

Package Formats

Until there is a more unified or transparent installation method for software than the existing and confusing package formats (.debs, .rpms, .srcs, etc) users will, on average, just give up & delete Linux.

GUI

Windows got one thing right: a cohesive and fairly straightforward interface (GUI) that changes little from win95 to Vista. Try using 3 or 4 different distros. Suddenly you might have to re-learn everything because your new distro doesn't use KDE. Choice is great but the average user wants things to bloody well work.

Linux and the Masses

Menus

These still don't auto-update the installed packages to their menu system after installing them, at least a quarter of the time, on most distros I have tried. Debian gets around this with "update-menu" but that is hardly an all inclusive solution for all distros as yet.

Hardware Issues

Microsoft has an advantage here that Linux is only beginning to catch up to and this goes back to patents and vendor support. I won't go into this much, but I will say that we need this sorted out the fastest. Users aren't willing to go search the web for six hours to figure out how to get a wifi card to work or a video card to show them a GUI. Too many hardware issues still exist that require much more knowledge than the average person has to use Linux. This is sad but true. Even though more and more of our lives are becoming automated and we are being required to learn more things to do with computers, many people today still only know how to use the on/off switch. I won't get into the debate of whether this is because of OS's like Windows dumbing down things or if it is because people are inherently lazy or because aliens from Tau Ceti have taken over half the world's brains and are using some form of mind-control to keep us stupid.

Until the tier 1 and 2 vendors start to take Linux seriously we will be playing catch-up

Sadly this particular point has the most crucial relevancy to Linux in general. Until we have the top vendors working with our Open Source community, and until they actually put their money where their mouths are, we all face an uphill battle to get Linux recognized as a desktop-worthy OS. This means vendors need to give the developers the source code to their products so that drivers, software, and hardware can work correctly on any Linux platform regardless of the distribution. This last point may seem obvious to developers and power-users. The average person, however, won't necessarily be aware that this is why his new printer will not function with his chosen distribution. Consider this your wake-up call.

...

I can keep going but I think this is enough food for thought for now. I am not saying Windows is a perfect OS, but for better or worse, Windows is what the average person is accustomed to using. Some Window Managers try to make things look Windowsy, but it doesn't help with the other underlying issues I mention. Unionfs is a great stride towards some of these issues being addressed or fixed. The work to get the kernel to use Udev and auto detect/mount things on boot up (like SD cards or USB keys) is also a significant move towards solving some of these issues. Till 3 years ago, most nubles I knew would say to me or people I knew on a mail-list I was a part of, "Mount!? Mount what!? WTF?!

Why do I have to issue a command telling my hard drive to hump my cpu?" I kid you not. So yes, things are improving, albeit slowly.

So, dear readers, do you want to comment? Roast me over a fire? Buy me a beer? I'd welcome your feedback and/or suggestions for future columns.

The Cat Who Knew Linux

by Big Daddy Bear

On a cold rainy day in March, or was it April,
I sat at my PC, so bored ,that is until
I saw a strange cat walking, walking uphill.

He walked to my door and into my house.
I was taken aback, by this house entering louse.
He sat in front of my PC, grabbed hold of the mouse
and began to do things I'd only heard espoused.

This cat entered commands and clicked on all manner of buttons.
He hadn't said yet a word, not even "hi butthead"
This cat was a loon, a freak and just weird.
Then he turned round and grabbed me, just from my beard.

Turning my heard toward the screen, he did say,
" you'll want to watch me, if you want to do this someday".
The screen was wild, colors so fulla, "this is beryl" he said " I mean it, no bulla".

"You can make windows wobble and desktop cubes spin,
But only if it's in Linux you're in."
"No Windows can match this, not XP or Vista
very easy to do, even by your sista."

He typed a few lines in on the command line,
and turned and scowled when he heard me whine.
"The CL is your friend, It makes a lot easier
If you'd only try a little and try not to be lazier."

Then he entered startx and the screen was aglow,
where only a command line was moments ago.
It's true, it IS beryl, with windows that jiggle.
Look I see raindrops, the snow makes me giggle.

"Thank you" I said, to the cat who must be a dev.
Thanks and please, please call me Kev"

He was up in a flash and back to the door,
that cat who knew Linux hardly touched the floor.

"Remember," he said on his way out,
"the next time you sit at your PC in gloominess and doubt"

"Linux is more than an OS,
It can change your whole world,
only imagination limits it."

I watched that cat go
as my monitor gleamed and it glowed,
my PCLOS with Beryl endowed.

He was gone in a flash and nowhere to be seen,
but he left a wet spot on the floor, in front of my screen.

PCLinuxOS
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Scroogle and Opera Integration

by jaydot

Following cabs61's excellent tip in the last issue, here is how to do the same for Opera. This allows you to use Scroogle as your search engine if you don't want Google to collect information about your Internet activity.

Go to Tools > Preferences > Search

Click on Add and enter the following information into each box:

Scroogle - add the name of the search engine

sg - add your abbreviation

and add the URL

<http://www.scroogle.org/cgi-bin/nbbw-cgi?Gw={@}&ie=UTF-8@oe=UTF-8>

You also have the option to set as default, and in the new version, speed dial.



Linux Mint, A Big Bear Omaha Review

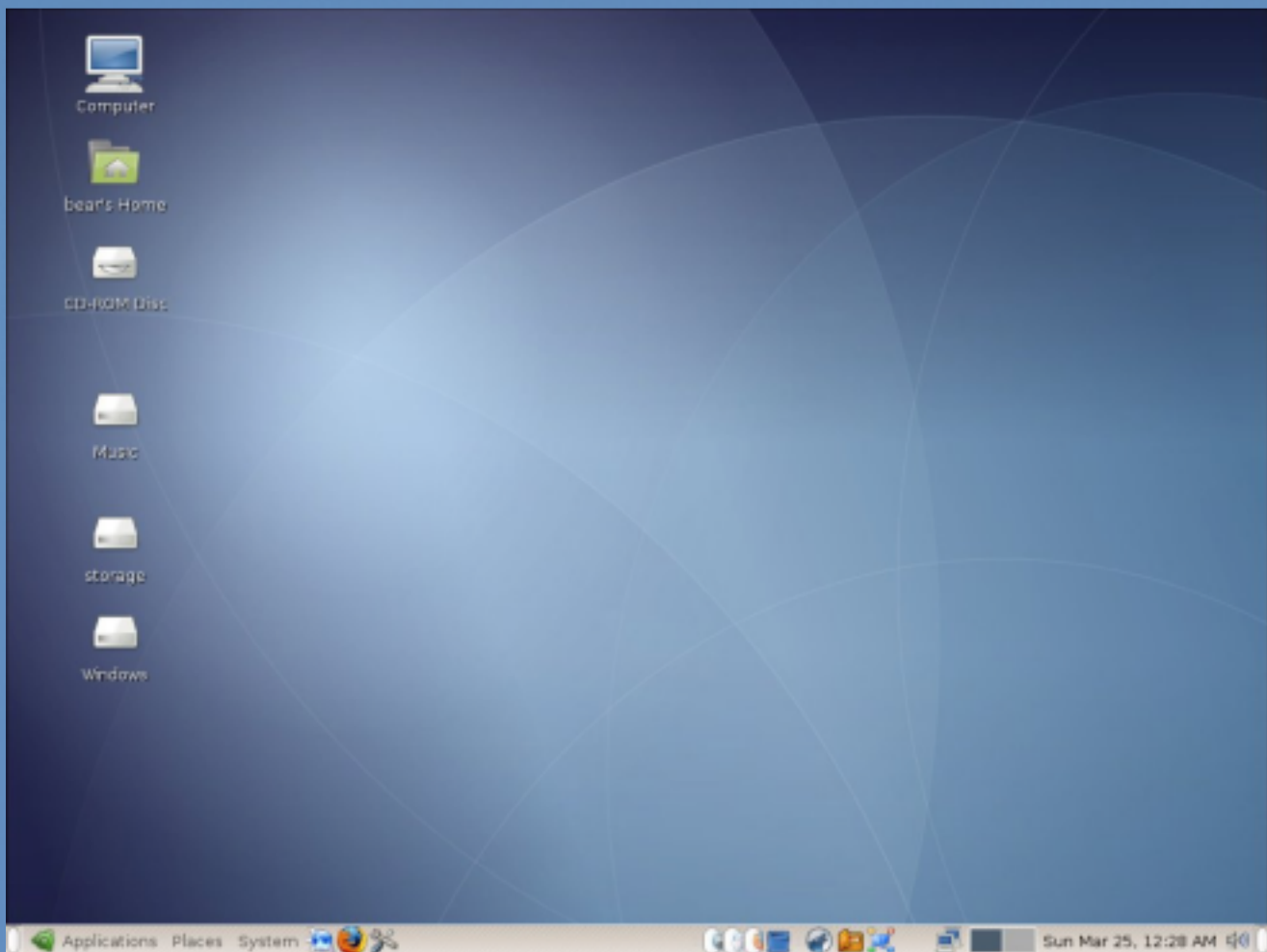
by BigBearOmaha
bigbearomaha@gmail.com

After being involved with Linux in general for a while now, off and on since RedHat 6, more during these last two years, I have come to classify Linux in two general categories: Commercial and Community. The top commercial offerings I would consider are RedHat, Novell Suse and Ubuntu. Yes, I classify Ubuntu as a commercial distribution.

There are two top Community distros I keep on my short list, PCLinuxOS and Linux Mint.

Each of these represents to me the best of the .deb and .rpm offerings, with PCLinuxOS being the top .rpm distro.

Linux Mint is what I consider the top .deb distro, and it's its top rate community distro I would like to discuss today.



Where does it come from?

Linux Mint is based on the Ubuntu distro and has begun to “evolve” its own personality since its first release. Much the same as PCLinuxOS is based on Mandrake/iva and has evolved on its own also.

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Linux Mint, A Big Bear Omaha Review

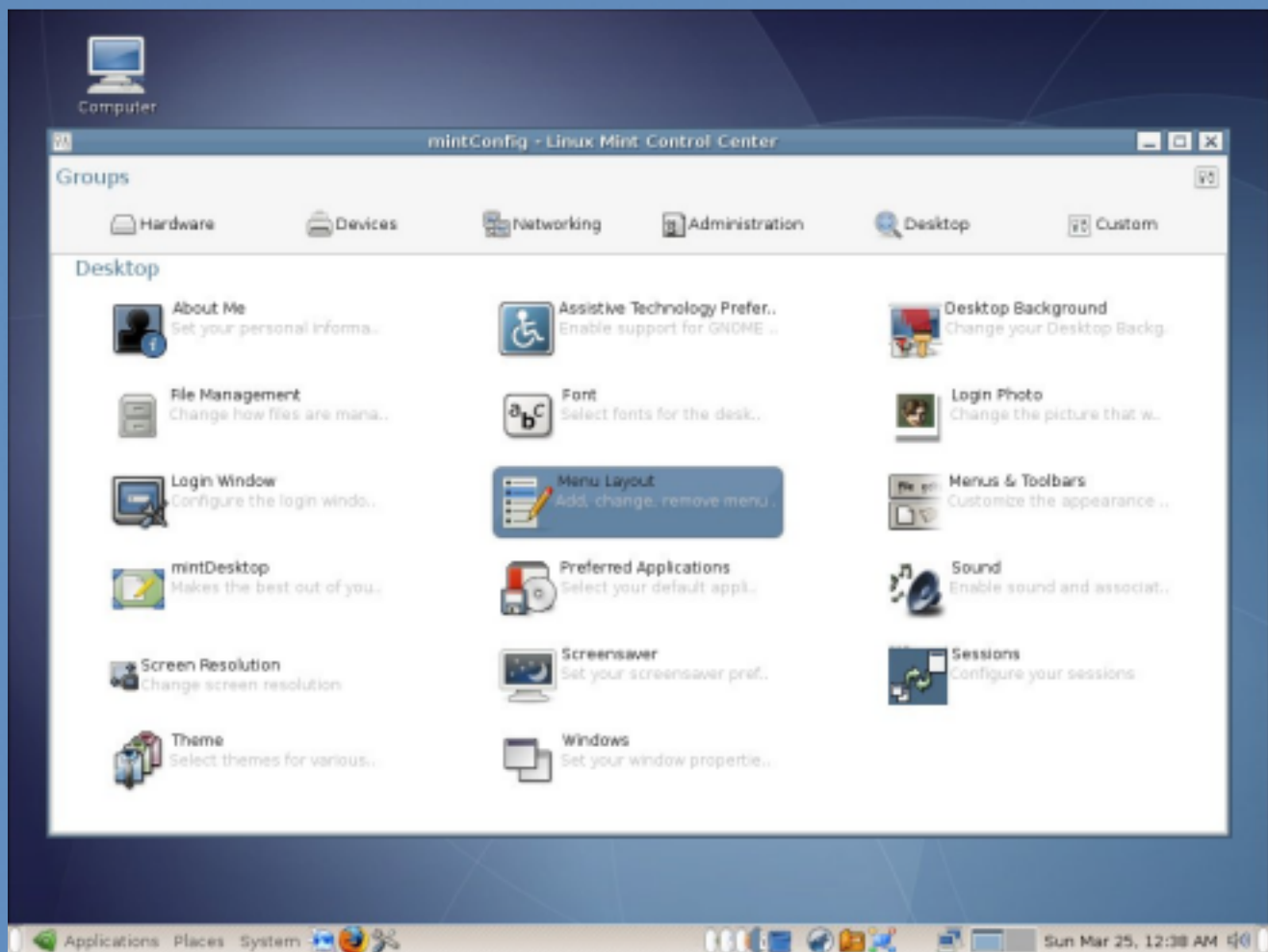
Now, I have read many reviews of Linux Mint, trying to compare it to Ubuntu and that's really not fair. Especially if one does not make use of the customized tools that the Linux Mint team has developed.

What makes it stand out?

In it's third release now, called Bianca or Linux Mint 2.2 The team has developed tools like Mint Config, Mint Menu and Mint desktop, to name a few.

Mint Config is what it sounds like, it is a very easy to navigate sytem/computer configuration menu that presents the user with a very “clean” menu of apps and tools to customize and modify key administrative systems of their Linux Mint OS.

Mint Desktop provides a modification of the default “Gnome” desktop, into what is a nicely laid out and neatly ordered desktop, with all “place” pertinent icons lined up on



the left side and the menu bars and panels in a more recognizable location that recent immigrants from another OS will appreciate.

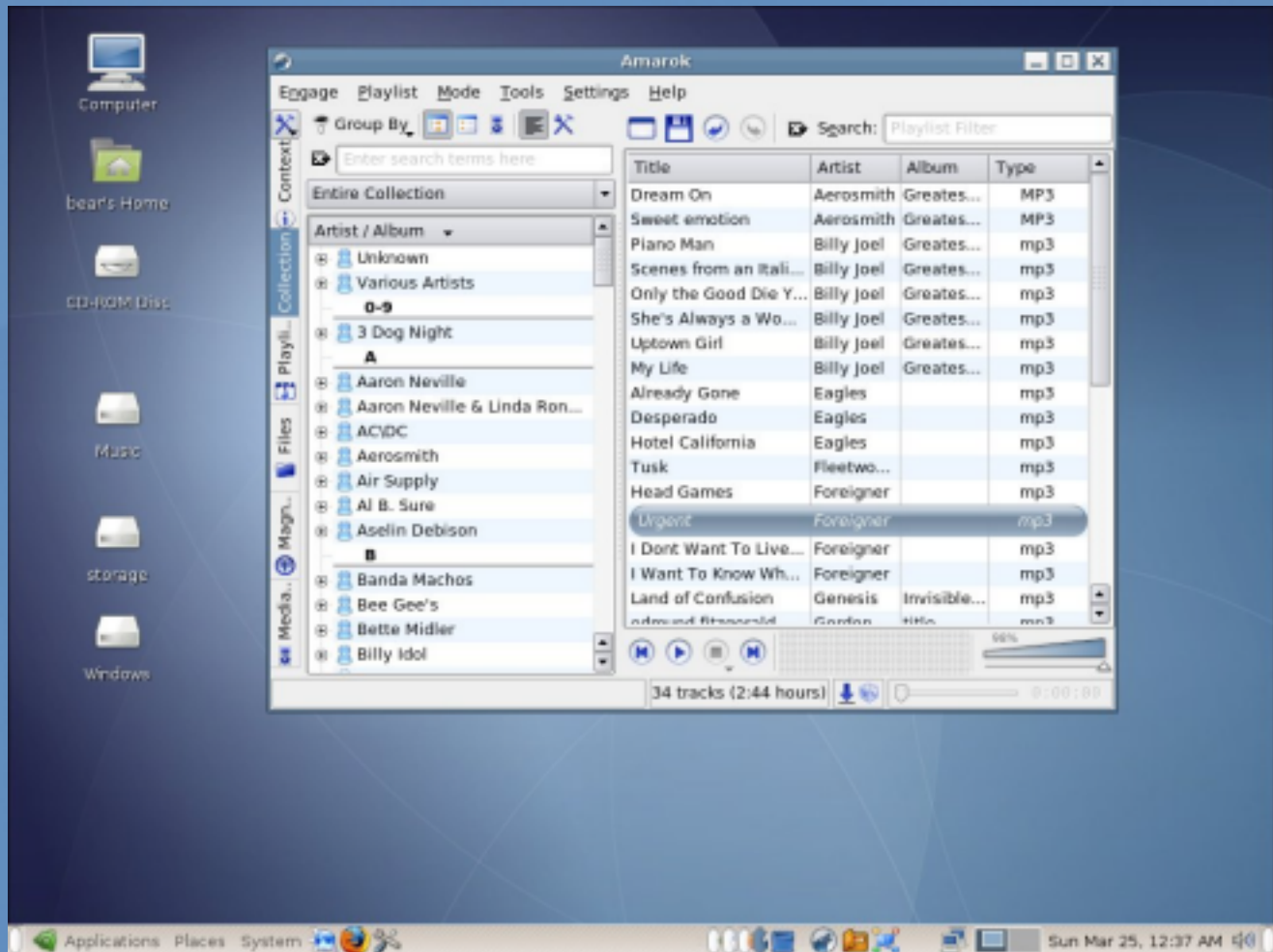
Mint Menu is a “slab” type menu that is very user friendly and actually helps the user find the applications they want to use and choose from.

radically simple.

Linux Mint, A Big Bear Omaha Review

Combine all these unique tools with custom wallpapers and graphics and you have the dawning of a “New Buntu” or what I like to refer to as Ubuntu done right.

As they approach the next release, code named “Cassandra”, They will be adding even



more “Mint” custom applications and tools that will set it apart from the original base.

For example, while they will use Ubuntu's “Feisty Fawn” as a base, they will add their very own “Mint Install”. This is not a hardware installer but rather intended to be a “better” Click n Run applications installer the likes of Linspires offering, only “Minty-er”.

Linux Mint draws upon the vast Ubuntu software archives and add their own Mint archives as well. Using the APT installer, (PCLinuxOS users can relate to APT for RPM) installing applications and tools is a snap.

As I mentioned above, Linux Mint is Gnome based, but have recently added a KDE version.

How well does it run?

I personally have been able to install Linux Mint on just about any machine I have tried.

Linux Mint, A Big Bear Omaha Review

It is very similar to PCLOS in that arena, as it can install and function on hardware that is not perhaps the newest yet able to make it run as though it were new.

For the older hardware, They are planning an XFCE version beginning with “Cassandra”.

No review of a “Community” distro is complete though, without discussing the community and forums that support it.

What about the Community?

I am pleased to say that many a PCLinuxOS user would feel right at home in the Mint forums. They are friendly, welcoming, and very helpful. While still a “smaller” community, they do a pretty good job at trying to keep up with new users (and all users for that matter) requests for assistance.

You will almost never see the dreaded “RTFM” in one of Mints threads, even when it is a question that has been asked and answered a few times already, I notice the mods are ready with the answer, and only after do they prompt the questioner to try using the handy helper PCLOSer's know and love, the search tool.

The leadership of Linux Mint is strikingly similar to PCLinuxOS also. The lead dev, Clement Lefebvre or Clem, like PCLOS's own Tex, is a very involved in the forums kind of guy. He is known not only for providing outstanding assistance on the forums but is “notorious” for his nonchalant wit and personable candor there.

In Linux Mint, as with our own PCLinuxOS, there will always be things to be tweaked, modified and improved upon, that's part of the creative and open minded perspective of these types of leaders like Clem and Tex, they're never content with what's in front of them, there is always something they find they think can be better.

And this all means what?

Linux Mint is a very solid distro with a great bunch of people in the community, and while PCLinuxOS is known as the distro hopper –stopper, if you ever want to see another shining example of the true spirit of Linux in action and want to broaden your experiences with a dependable, solid Linux distro, I wholeheartedly recommend you give Linux Mint a fair chance. It will certainly be worth your time.



PCLOS
radically simple.

Speed Tweaking PCLinuxOS 2007 TR3

by Devnet

While using PCLinuxOS 2007 TR3 for the last few weeks, I've noticed VAST improvements over the .93a release. The most noticeable of these is boot times. My boot time is absolutely amazing on this Dell E521n...it averages 30-40 seconds. That's right, 30-40 SECONDS. I was floored the first time I booted after install. I thought I had done something wrong. I quickly rebooted, got out the stopwatch and recorded 32 seconds as my official time. I rebooted another 5-6 times and averaged in between 30-40 seconds each time and was closer to 30 on 8 out of 10 boots. Absolutely amazing.

Linux, with projects like upstart which is being considered for the next release of Ubuntu, is getting to the point now where boot times will drop considerably. This is welcome as far as I'm concerned...it allows you to get going right away with your business be it personal or other.

Once they're logged in though, many people don't touch the OS itself and instead leave it at the default settings. For most people this is ok...as not having something set to be optimized is fine, and most distribution rollers setup their distros so that they cause the least amount of problems for the greatest variety of hardware. For me, I like to mess around. I like to play. "I like the night life...I like to boogie"

So without further silliness and introductory nonsense, I proudly present this data that I gathered from various sources (cited where possible) and a few tricks of my own that will allow most rpm-based distros to tweak their way into improved performance. Since I did this specifically for the PCLinuxOS community though, I've titled the article accordingly. As it is, the article should work for most Fedoras and Mandrivas and possibly even OpenSuse.

Disable IPV6

Many distros are configured with this feature disabled by default (see note below). PCLinuxOS is no different in this respect...but it's always good to double check things. Since most of us don't use IPV6 networks, this setting can slow down communication throughout our network. Turning this networking feature off is both desirable and easy for those of us who do not use IPV6 enabled networks. To do this in PCLinuxOS:

Open your Kmenu and choose "Run Command". When the dialog opens, type "kdesu kate /etc/sysconfig/network" and hit enter. If it asks you for a session, choose open session. Now the file is open...you can edit it. Add the following line:

CODE:
NETWORKING_IPV6=no

Now save and exit out of the Kate program. That's it! Next time you boot you'll have IPV6 disabled. This tip was taken from the "Feisty performance...Fly like a butterfly" blog post at Another techgeek on the net. I also used the Mandriva Linux 2007 Errata on this tip.

Speed Tweaking PCLinuxOS 2007 TR3

NOTE: Some people point to settings like the one discussed in this post that can be done to disable IPV6. This is done by default in PCLinuxOS 2007 so no change is required.

Force use of your RAM vs. Swap

Linux uses hard disk space called swap to write information it needs for accessing various temporary programs when system RAM is busy. This is because many years ago, RAM sizes were relatively small. To combat this, swap space was born. Now the OS could write to the disk when RAM wasn't available. Times have changed though and many systems have much more RAM than they did in the past. With this tip you can change the tendency of the distro when it writes to Swap so that it uses Swap less and RAM more. This setting is called "swappiness." PCLinuxOS comes with a default of 60 (seen by parsing the command "cat /proc/sys/vm/swappiness" in a console as root). To change it, use the following command:

CODE:

```
sysctl -w vm.swappiness=10
```

This will change the tendency of the OS to write to RAM which is faster than hard disk writes. Now go to Kpanel, Run Command and paste the following:

CODE:

```
kdesu kate /etc/sysctl.conf
```

add the following line at the very bottom:

CODE:

```
vm.swappiness=10
```

You're all done! That should make the change permanent and allow you to have more writes to RAM and less to Swap to speed things up. Note that you should only do this if you have a larger amount of RAM (I have 2GB...I'd say 1GB and up). This tip was taken from the same Feisty article linked above and also from the Linux Journal.

Please note that the removal of virtual terminals discussed by many of the articles I've linked to above will get you NO noticeable speed increases. Quite honestly, it isn't needed.

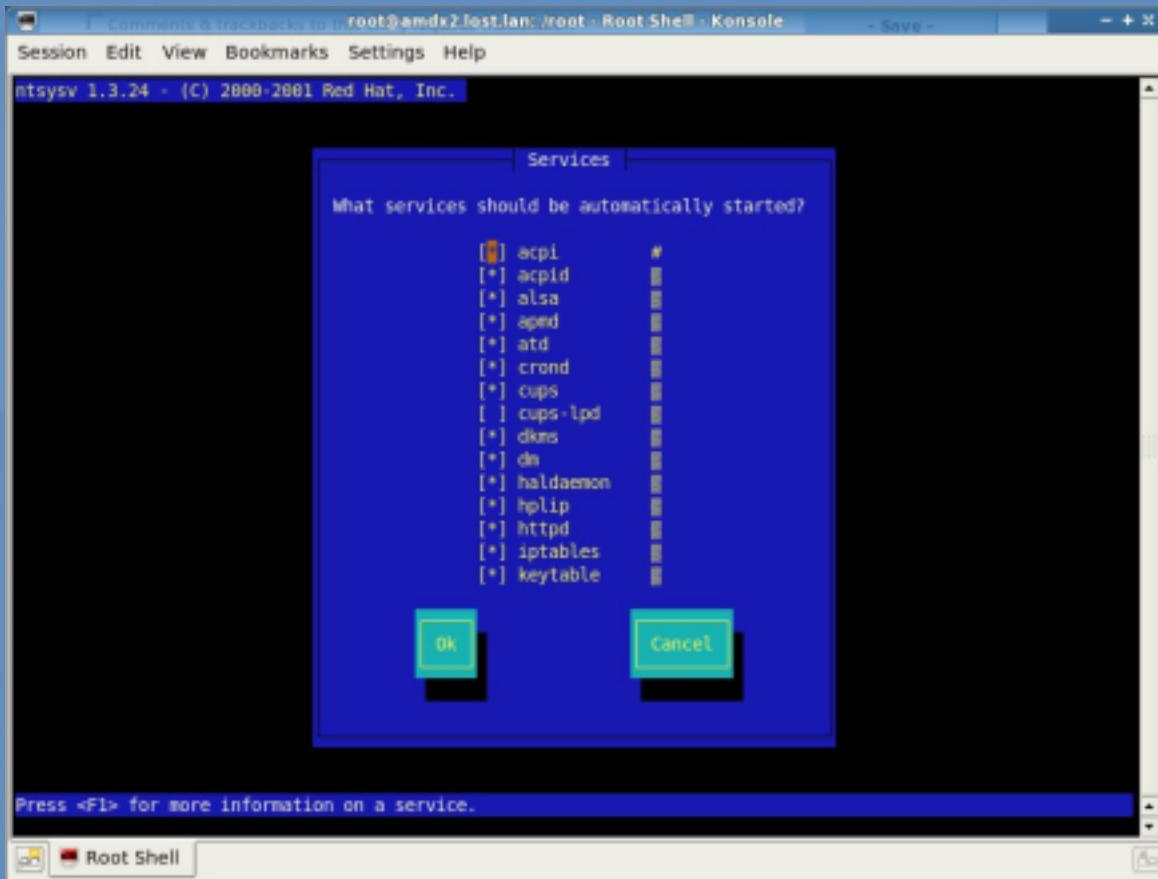
Speed Up Boot

In PCLinuxOS, you can use the PCLinuxOS Control Center (PCC) to disable different running services.

Now the PCC is a fine option for the most common items starting up...but what about uncommon ones that aren't listed? In this instance, your best bet is the ntsysv tool. It's not installed by default in PCLinuxOS so fire up Synaptic and install ntsysv. Now open up

Speed Tweaking PCLinuxOS 2007 TR3

a terminal/konsole and as root type "ntsysv" and you should see something similar to the screenshot.



The Linux Journal article posted about this tool says to turn off "apmd, autofs, identd, ip6tables, iptables, isdn, lpd, nfs, portmap, talkd and sendmail" but to remember that this is disabling services in run level 5 and that disabling them in runlevel 3 is also advised (see the article for greater details).

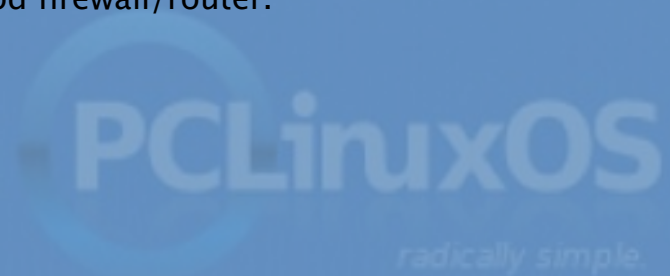
These services didn't match those present in PCLinuxOS, so I disabled httpd, iptables (my firewall is in front of my pclos box), laptop-mode, postfix, wltool, and apmd. You may select those also...it's up to you. These services might not also be running...as some tools require that you configure them and run them a single time before they're initiated to startup as a service.

Also, please be advised that you should only disable iptables (your iptables firewall like shorewall or firestarter) if you are behind a good firewall/router.

Add your hostname to Hosts

Most host files look like this:

CODE:



Speed Tweaking PCLinuxOS 2007 TR3

```
127.0.0.1    localhost
```

Another techgeek suggests you make it look like this:

CODE:

```
127.0.0.1    localhost
```

and add the line:

CODE:

```
127.0.0.1    hostname
```

where hostname is the hostname of your computer. This might speed things up a bit for application launch and it may speed some network functions up as well. Then again, it just might not do anything at all. Many people do report success with this though so we'll include it in this article.

Do you have any tips or tricks that aren't listed here that give PCLinuxOS a performance gain? If so, we'd love to hear of them. Please PM them to PCLOSMAG on the main PCLinuxOS help forum or email them to me at devn3t @ gmail.com. I hope this helps some of you squeeze more performance out of the already fantastic performance PCLinuxOS has!

Our grateful appreciation to MyPCLinuxOS.com
and Devnet for making this project possible.



The PCLinuxOS Hardware Database

radically simple.

KDE User Guide, Chapter 4

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This guide has been modified by Papawoob to reflect the Linux distribution of PCLinuxOS 2007.

CHAPTER 4: USING COMMON MASS STORAGE PERIPHERALS

Besides the main components which make up the modern PC, there are many optional peripherals which can be attached to it. When these are properly utilized, they can contribute to making the computing environment and experience more convenient, productive and pleasant. The more common peripherals include:

- printer
- scanner
- mass storage devices

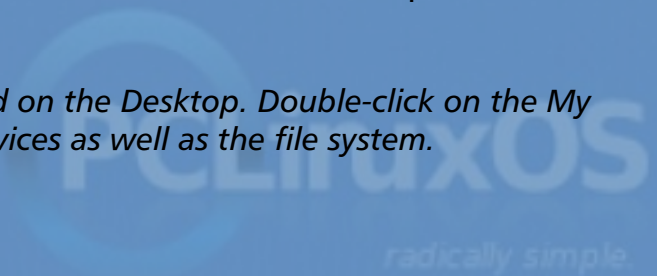
In this chapter, we shall be looking at how to access and use the common peripheral mass storage devices:

- floppy disk drive
- CD-ROM drive
- USB mass storage device
- CD-RW drive

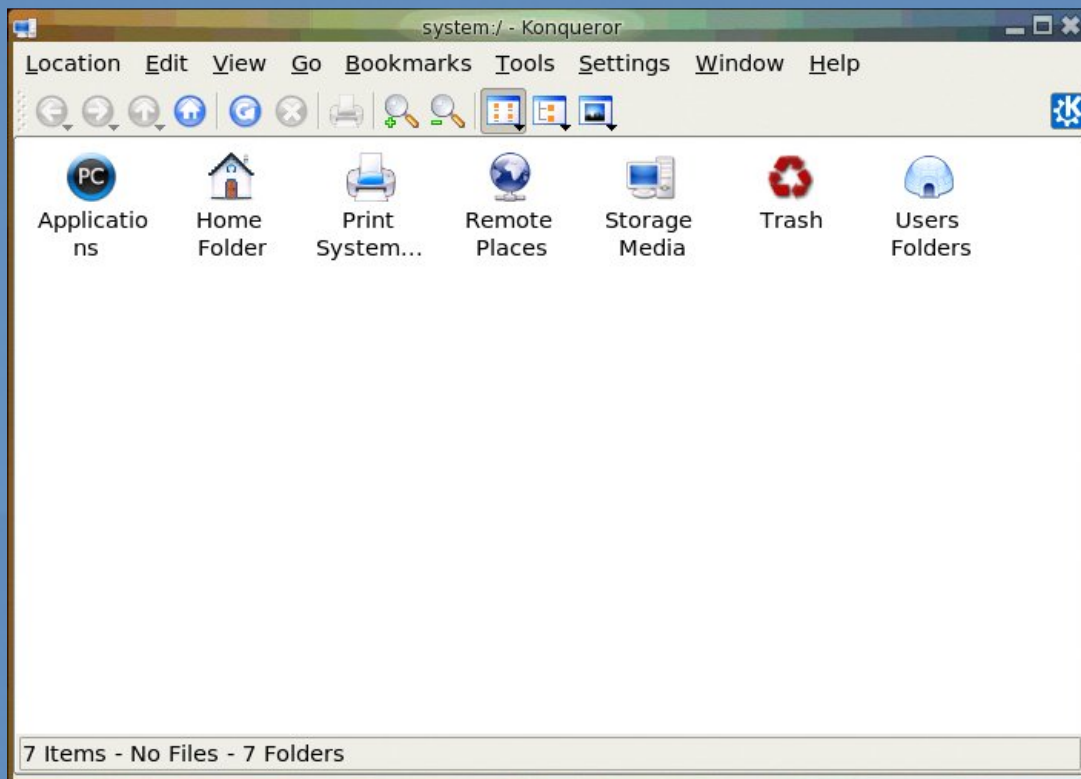
Setting up and using a printer and scanner will be covered in the next chapter.

Note:

The method is to use the My Computer icon located on the Desktop. Double-click on the My Computer icon, and it will display all the system devices as well as the file system.



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Accessing System Devices and File system in KDE

The Floppy Disk Drive

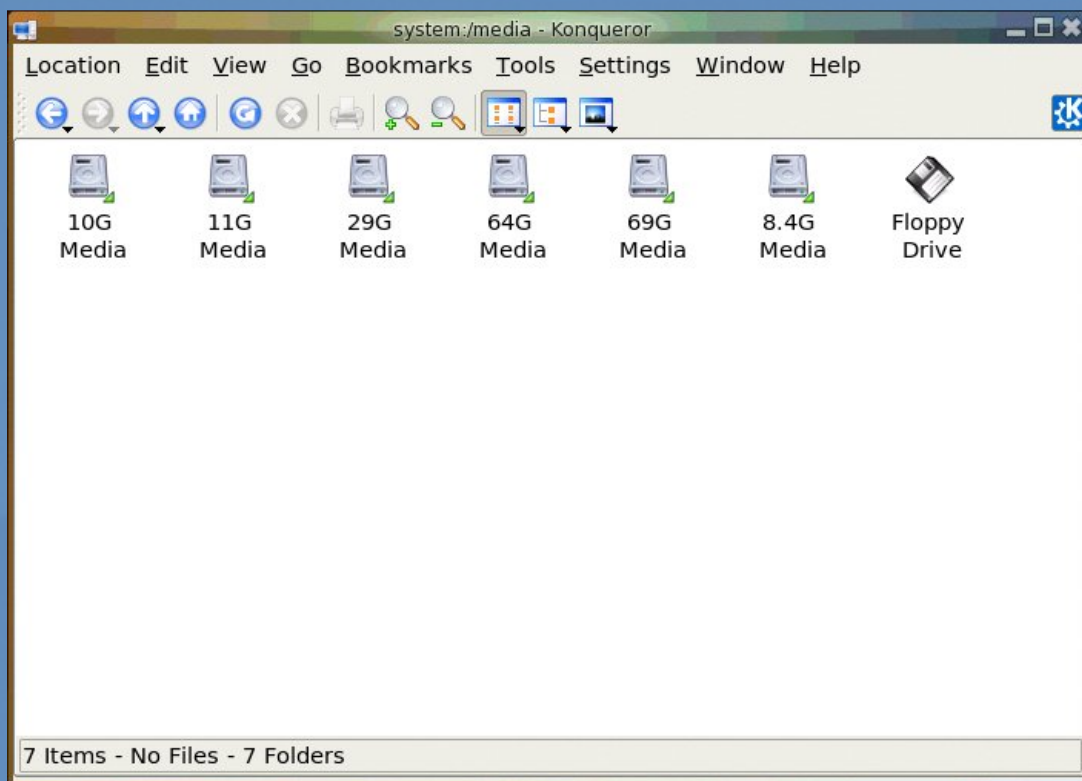
While most of the work is done using the hard drive (system and user data are stored on the hard drive), sometimes you may want to transfer or copy files to another PC. One convenient way to perform this (provided that the file sizes are not too large) is to use a floppy disk or diskette. Diskettes are very useful as a portable storage medium for small files (1.44Mb or less).

Mounting and Using the Diskette

Before a diskette can be used, you have to perform an operation called "mounting" the diskette. This is to let the system know that you are going to access and use the diskette in the floppy drive.

The KDE desktop environment uses a series of background processes to accomplish various tasks. Mounting drives is handled by the "Media" process. Simply click on the Storage Media icon in the System (My Computer) folder, and the Media task will be shown.

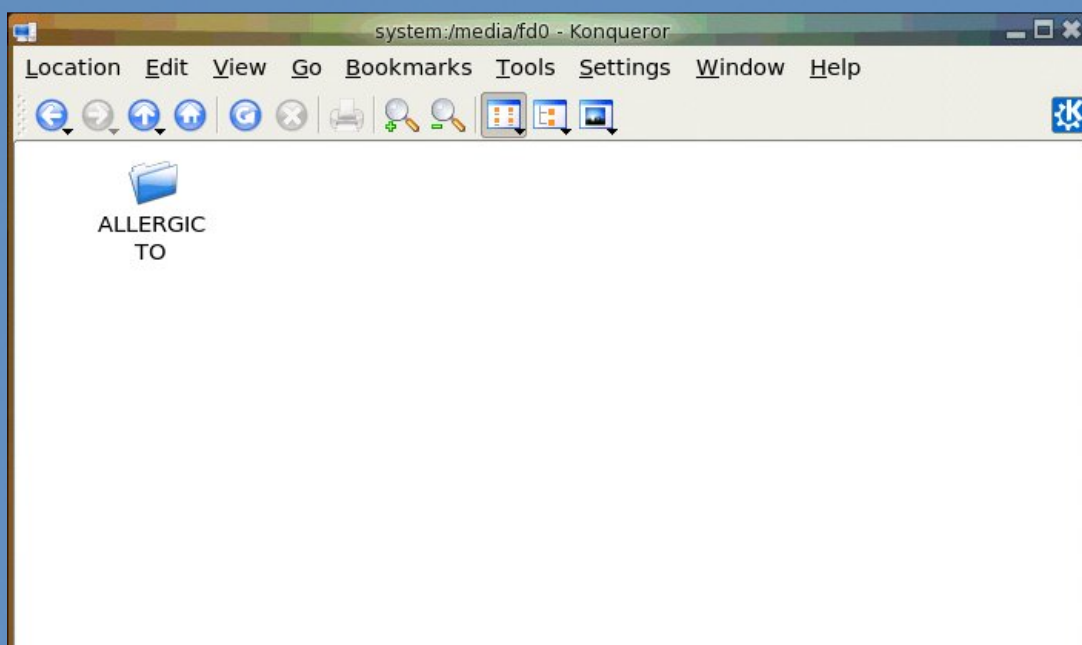
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Storage Devices

Disk access is done by double clicking on the My Computer icon on the desktop. Double clicking on the "Storage Devices" icon will open the window seen above. Next, double click the "Floppy Drive" icon.

This will mount the floppy and add a floppy icon on the desktop. Double-clicking on this icon will list out the files and folders in the floppy under the File Manager as seen below:



Mounted Floppy

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Once you have successfully mounted the diskette and listed out its directory contents under the File Manager, you can treat it like another folder to read and write files and folders to. However, you have to bear in mind some differences between the floppy diskette folder and the normal folder you have been working with.

The diskette has a very low storage capacity compared with the hard disk; a floppy diskette typically will have about 1.44 MB of storage capacity only. In contrast, a hard disk will have at least a few hundred MB of storage capacity at the minimum!

If the write-protect tab on the diskette is enabled, then the diskette can be used for reading only, i.e. you can read the contents of the files on it only. You cannot write to the files, and so you cannot modify and/or create new files or folders.

After using the diskette, you will need to unmount it before you take the diskette from the floppy drive. To unmount the diskette, right-click on the floppy icon on the desktop and select "Unmount". This will unmount the diskette and the floppy icon will disappear from the Desktop. Once this has happened, you can safely remove the diskette from the floppy drive.

Note:

It is important that you unmount the diskette before removing it from the floppy drive, especially if it has been mounted for writing. Failure to do so may result in incomplete data being written to the diskette and corruption of the file system on the diskette.

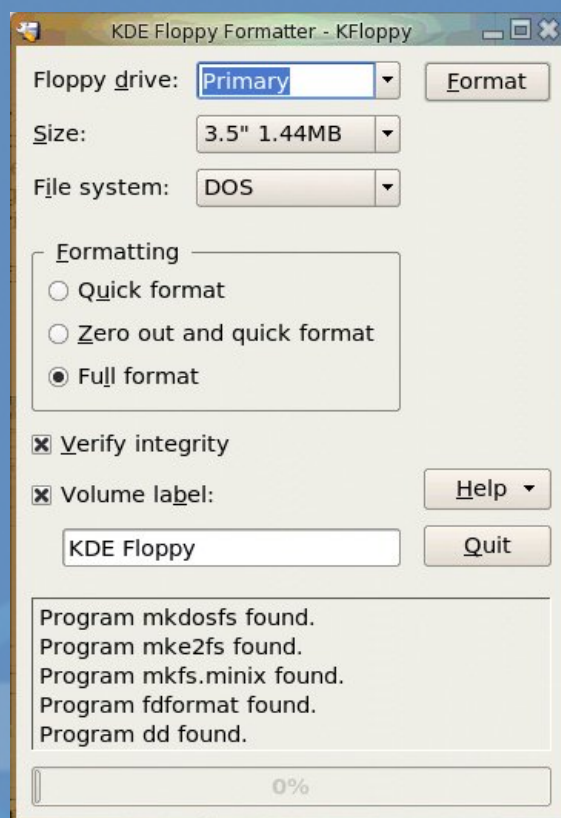
Formatting the Diskette

Before a new diskette can be used it has to be "formatted" first. This will create the directory structures and other information needed for the system to keep track of where the data is stored on the diskette. You need to format a diskette once only. You can subsequently format it again after using it for some time, but re-formatting will result in the loss of the original contents of the diskette.

Kfloppy does not come with the default install. You can install it and several other useful utilities by opening the Synaptic Package Manager and installing kdeutils.

To format a diskette, you can use the KFloppy formatter selection from the Main Menu.

Main Menu --> System --> Configuration -->
Hardware --> Utilities --> KFloppy



KFloppy Formatter Dialog

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Choose the default floppy density of 3.5", 1.44 MB and the DOS (FAT) file system type. This will enable the diskette to be read on almost all commonly used operating systems including Microsoft Windows. You also have two other options for the filesystem, ext2 or Minix. Next you can choose the type of formatting; Quick format, Zero out and quick format, or the default, Full format. After you have made your choices click the Format button located at the top right of the window.

Exercises

- Format a floppy diskette, mount it for read-write and copy the following files/folders found in the /etc directory to it: hosts, termcap, motd and rc.d.
- Unmount the diskette, mount it again and copy its entire contents to the folder tmp in your home directory. Create this folder if it is not there. Unmount the diskette after the copying.

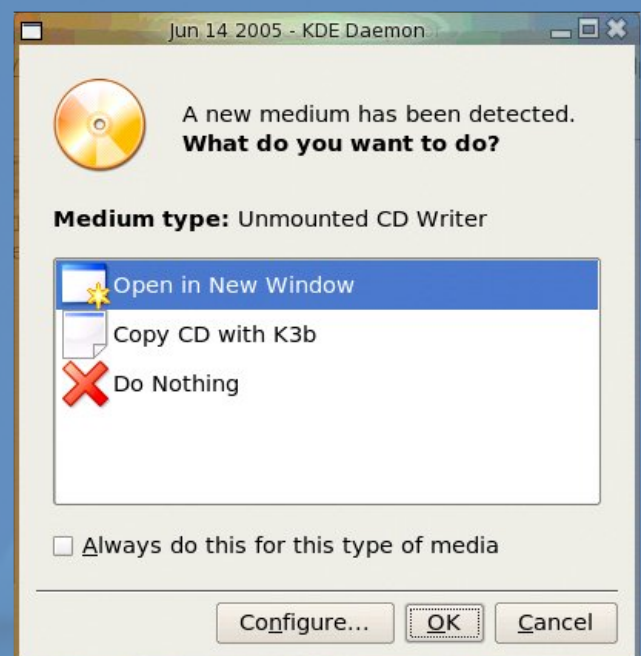
The CD-ROM Drive

Nowadays the CD-ROM is widely used as a means to store and distribute data and information. A typical 5.25" CD-ROM can store up to 700 MB of data. It is thus ideal as a medium for distributing large files, multimedia games and software packages.

By default, when a CD-ROM is placed in the drive, a new window will open that says "A new medium has been found. What do you want to do?" Below this you will see a list of options. Choose "Open in New Window" and whatever data is on the CD will be displayed in a new window. If it is an audio (music) CD it will be auto-mounted, and then the default KDE CD player, KsCD, will open on your desktop and begin playing the music on the CD.

The File Manager can then be used to access the files and folders on the CD. If the CD-ROM is a read-only medium, you can only read the contents of the CD and not write to it.

After using the CD, you will need to unmount it before you take it out of the CD-ROM drive. To unmount the CD, right-click on the CD icon on the desktop and select "Unmount." This will unmount the CD and the CD icon will disappear from the desktop. It is now safe to remove the CD.



New Medium Detected

radically simple

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The USB Mass Storage Device

Another popular portable storage medium is the USB mass storage device (sometimes also known as a thumb drive). Like the floppy diskette, you can read and write to a thumb drive but it has the advantage of storing much more data than a diskette. Thumb drive devices of capacities 128MB up to 8GB are common.

To access the thumb drive, place it in the USB slot (port) provided and a window will open on the desktop. Choose "Open in New Window."

This will mount the USB thumb drive and add a thumb drive icon on the desktop. Double-clicking on this will mount the USB thumb drive, change the thumb drive icon on the desktop so it shows "mounted," and list out the files and folders in the thumb drive under the File Manager. Then you can treat it like another folder to read and write files and folders.

After you've finished with the thumb drive, you will need to unmount it by right-clicking on the thumb drive icon on the desktop and selecting "Safely Remove", before removing it from the USB port.

The CD-RW Drive

While the CD-ROM drive is very useful as a portable storage medium due to its high capacity and low cost, it suffers from the disadvantage that it is a read-only medium.

To overcome this, many PCs are sold nowadays with drives which enable you to record data onto CD-R (CD recordable) and CD-RW (CD rewritable) disks. The former refers to a CD medium which allows you to record to it only once, while with a CD-RW disk it is possible to rewrite data to it multiple times.

Note:

While a CD-RW drive supports both CR-R and CD-RW functionalities, the CD medium that you utilize determines whether you can write data to it only once (CR-R) or multiple times (CD-RW). So it is important that you buy the correct medium type for the function that you want.

CD-Burner

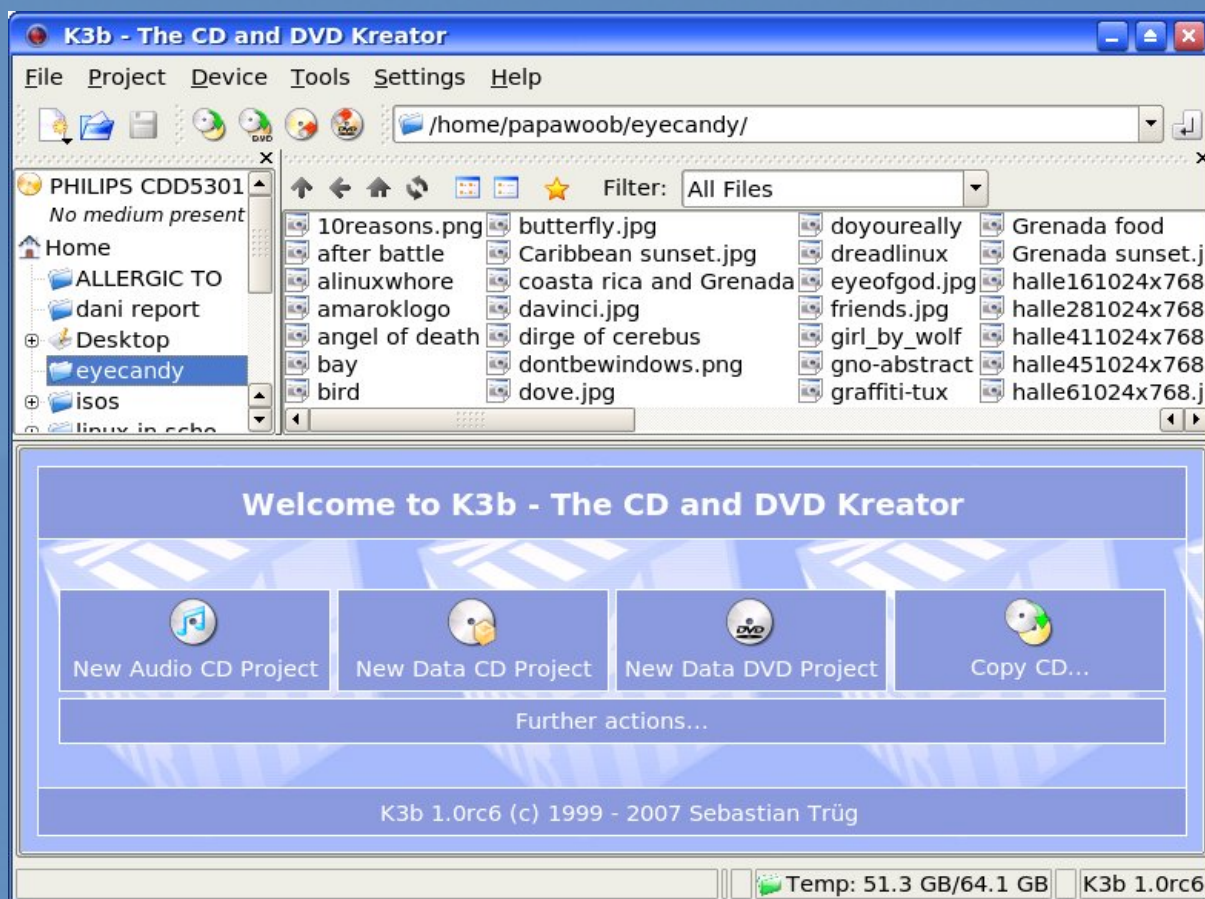
Your system has a program which enables a user to copy files and folders very easily to a CD-RW drive. To use this feature, start the K3b program from the Main Menu.



Removable Media Dialog

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Main Menu --> System --> Archiving -->CD Burning -->K3b



K3b CD Burning Program

Top Window - Data Sources

The K3b window has 2 main window sections, top and bottom. The top window is divided into 2 windows, left and right. The left window shows a list of data sources; Unix Tree, Internal Structure and CDROM drives. The data sources are the sources for the data to be copied and burned into the CD-R(W).

The Unix Tree represents the file system on the computer. Clicking on the + icon of the tree will expand it to display the file system, i.e. the hierarchical tree structure comprising files and directories (folders). Clicking on a directory will cause the files in the directory to be displayed on the right panel of the top window.

Clicking on CDROM drives will expand into a listing of the CD-ROM drives present in the system and clicking on one of the drives will display the tracks in it on the right panel.

Bottom Window

The bottom window gives you 4 choices as to what you would like to do with your CD/DVD; Audio CD, data CD, or data DVD. The fourth choice is to make a copy of a CD. If these are not what you are looking for then you need to click on the "Further actions"

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tab to see a complete list of options available as seen below:

Writing data to the CD-RW involves selecting which type of project you would like to create. After choosing which project, you can add the data from the data sources window described above by dragging and dropping them into the bottom window panel. The bottom window has three possible selections; the virtual file system, the track editor, and the recorder settings. Each of these can be selected by clicking on the icons in the left panel of the bottom window.

The virtual file system represents a view of the file system setup in a track of the CD-RW to be written to later. Note that this is not part of the actual file system on your computer and so manipulating the files here will not affect the ones in the computer file system. The virtual file system can be managed and edited by right-clicking the mouse.

The track editor shows you the tracks that you have selected to be burned to the CD-RW. You can edit them using the track editor by right-clicking the mouse before committing them to be burned.

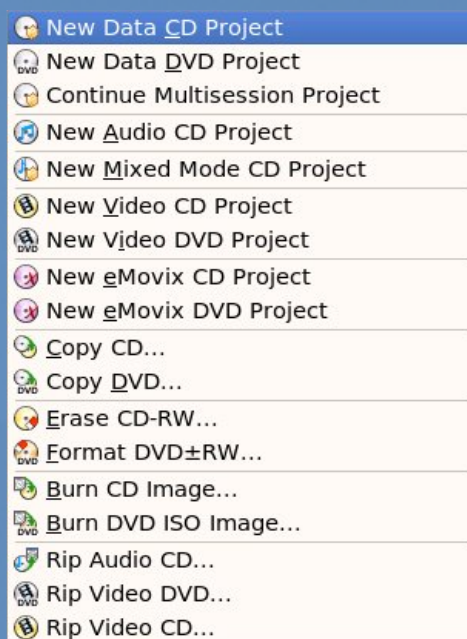
When you have added all the data or music that you would like to burn to the CD, you need to click on the "Burn" button. This will open the burn window which enables you to change from the default the various parameters for recording, e.g. recording speed, writing mode, etc.

FillstateStatus

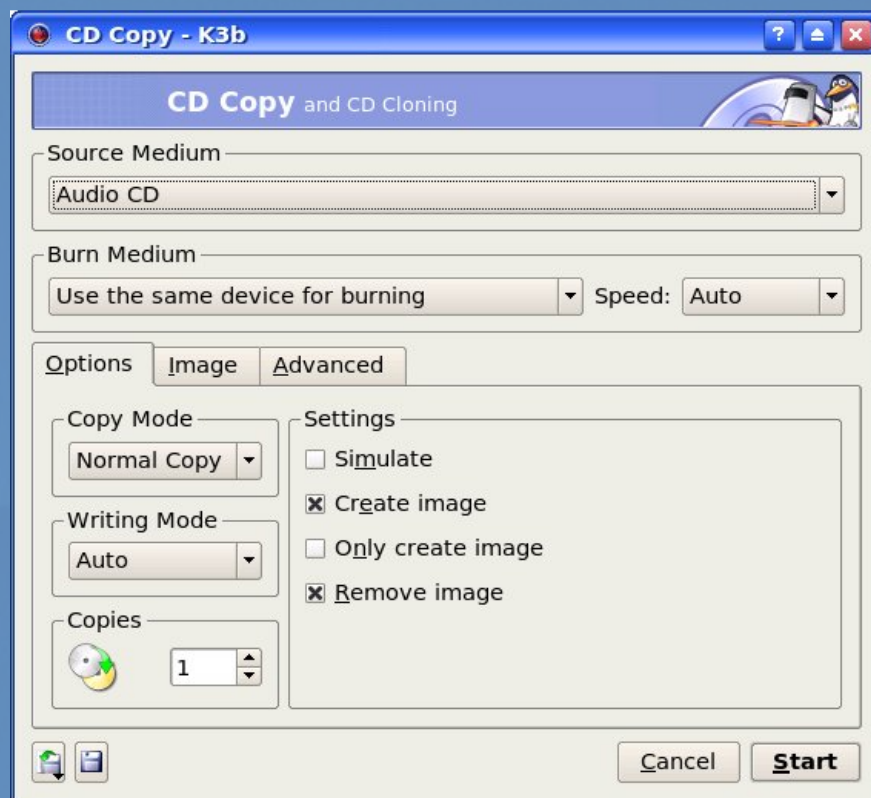
At the bottom of the K3b window is the Fillstate status panel. This shows you the current space that will be taken up by the selected tracks as a percentage of the space available on the CD-RW. This space utilization is also displayed in megabyte (MB) units as well as the audio playing time.

Duplicating CDs

It is easy to make a duplicate of a CD using K3b. To do this you will need one CDROM drive and one CD/RW drive. With K3b opened on your desktop, choose "Copy CD" and then insert the source CD into the CDROM drive. Next, insert the CD-R or CD/RW into the CD/RW drive. The drives will automatically be selected in the Source Medium and Burn Medium windows. You will see a window to one on the next page:



Further actions



CD Copy Window

The only setting that you may want to change is the burn speed. Auto will select the speed for you but a tip to remember is that the lower the burn speed, the better the burn. To start the actual recording (burning) of the CD, click on the Start button at the bottom right corner of the K3b window.

CREATING A DATA CD

This section will discuss how you can copy files and folders from the mounted file system and record them into a CD-RW. You can select the files and folders you want to copy from the Unix Tree in the Data Source window at the top left or from the top right window and drag them into the virtual file system right panel in the bottom window. The files and folders in the virtual file system can be edited by right-clicking on the mouse. You can create, delete and rename files and directories (folders).

After you have selected all the files you want, you should select the Burn button as above and then choose Start to start the recording.

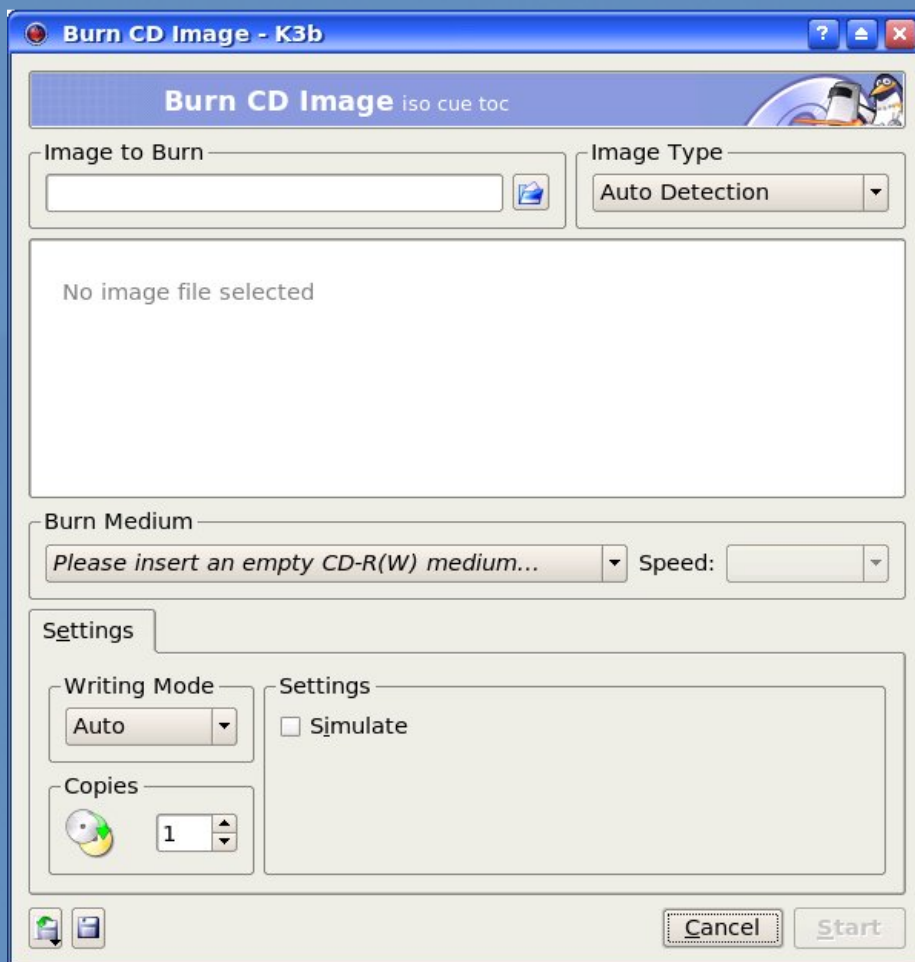
Writing ISO Images

It is possible to copy and store all of the data on a CD in the form of what is known as an ISO image file format. If this ISO image file is then written to a CD, the new CD will be a duplicate of the original one from which the ISO image was created. This provides a convenient way of duplicating a data CD if you can copy or download the ISO image file

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from another source to the file system on your computer.

To write ISO images to a CD-RW, select "Further actions" or "Tools" (at the top of the window) and select "Burn CD Image." This will open a window like the one seen below:



Burn ISO Image Window

Next, select the ISO image by clicking on the file folder icon on the right side of the "Image to Burn" tab at the top left of the window and navigating to the ISO image file that you want to burn. Select the image by left clicking on it. Next, insert a blank CD-RW into your CD-RW drive. After that, ensure that the record settings are correct and click on the Start button at the bottom right of the window to start the burning.

Help

There are many more options and features which K3b has, e.g. multisession burning, mixing audio and digital data, working with CD-RW media etc. The K3b documentation should be consulted for these more advanced features. The K3b User's Guide may be obtained from:

<http://www.k3b.org>

Top 10 Firefox Extensions

by Iain Jackson (iainrj on PCLinuxOS and MyPCLinuxOS Forums)

Mozilla Firefox (version 2.0.0.3) is the default web browser in PCLinuxOS 2007. Firefox has come on in leaps and bounds since it was first introduced to the public. It now takes up about 15% of the web browser market (second only to Microsoft's Internet Explorer) and is widely regarded in the computing industry as more secure than IE.

One of the unique attributes of Firefox is that it is open source. Anybody can look at the source code and develop small programs that extend the functionality of the browser. These are called Add-ons.

You can access Firefox's Add-ons by clicking on Tools>Add-ons from within Firefox. Add-ons fall into two categories: themes and extensions. Themes just change the look and feel of Firefox and are a largely subjective thing, so I won't bother discussing them here. Extensions are the real driving force behind Firefox, turning a good browser into a great Internet experience! Click on Get extensions from the Add-ons dialogue box and you'll be taken to the Firefox extension page (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/browse/type:1>)

Installing an extension is easy. Once found, check if it is compatible with your version of Firefox and click on the Install Now icon. You will usually have to restart Firefox before the extension can be used.



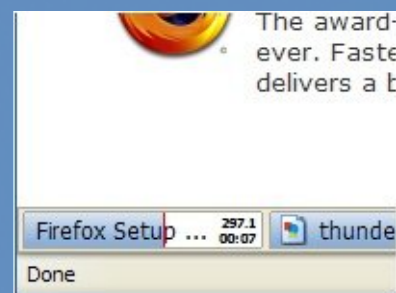
Luckily, Firefox will remember which tabs you had open when it restarts. Extensions can easily be uninstalled if you don't like them!

There are 227 pages of extensions. This list represents the most useful 10 to get you started (in no particular order).

1. Download Statusbar

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/26>

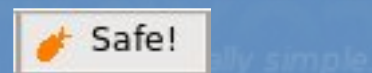
The only thing I find really annoying about Firefox is the Download window. Everytime you download a file, the download window pops up. This extension replaces the download window by displaying the download in the status bar:



2. Phishtank Sitechecker

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/3840>

A very simple extension that checks the site you are viewing against a constantly updated blacklist of phishing sites and reports whether the site is safe or not. Phishtank Sitechecker sits out of the way on the status bar:

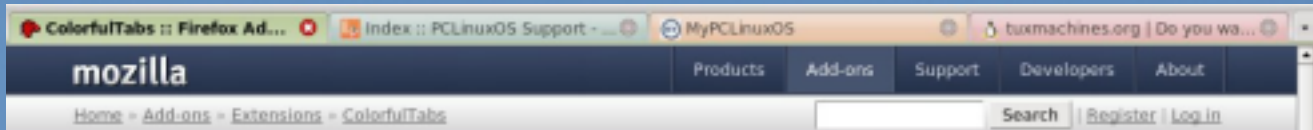


Top 10 Firefox Extensions

3. Colorful Tabs

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1368>

You may think this is a useless add-on. That is, unless you regularly browse in multiple tabs at once. This extension simply displays each tab in a different colour. It is eye-catching, yes, but also functional as it makes tabbed browsing easier on the eyes:



4. Adblock Plus

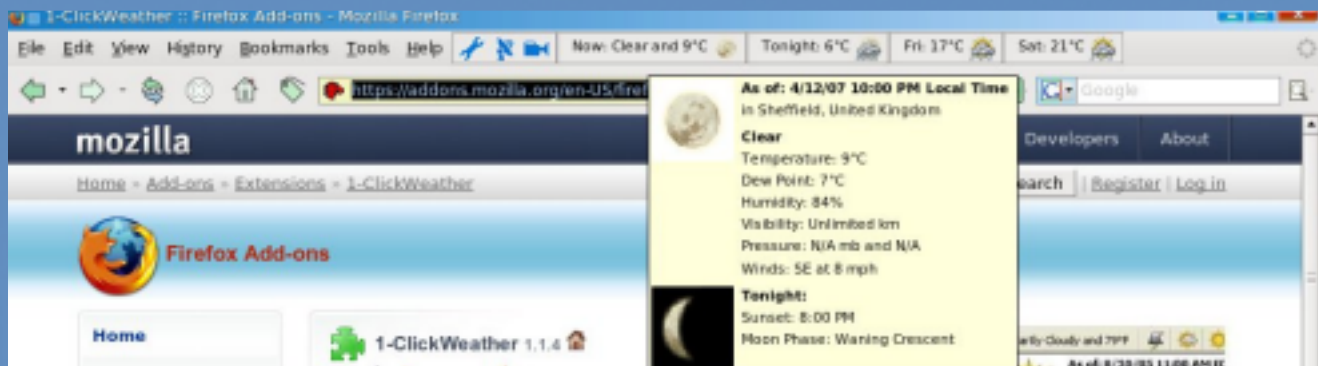
<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1865>

Probably the most useful extension you could install. Simply, it blocks all ads from displaying on a web page. This not only cuts down your bandwidth usage, but prevents those annoying, animated adverts congratulating you on becoming the millionth visitor. It even works on free PHPbb forums that place ads and hotlinks within and between posts. You can disable at any time as it adds an entry in the Tools menu. A must have!

5. 1-Clickweather

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/1035>

It's not just us Brits that are pre-occupied by the weather. This handy extension installs a weather bar either in the status bar or menu bar in Firefox. Once configured for your city, you need never watch the weather forecast again! If you live in the US, you can even get video and rush hour weather reports. Just rest your mouse on the report you want to see:



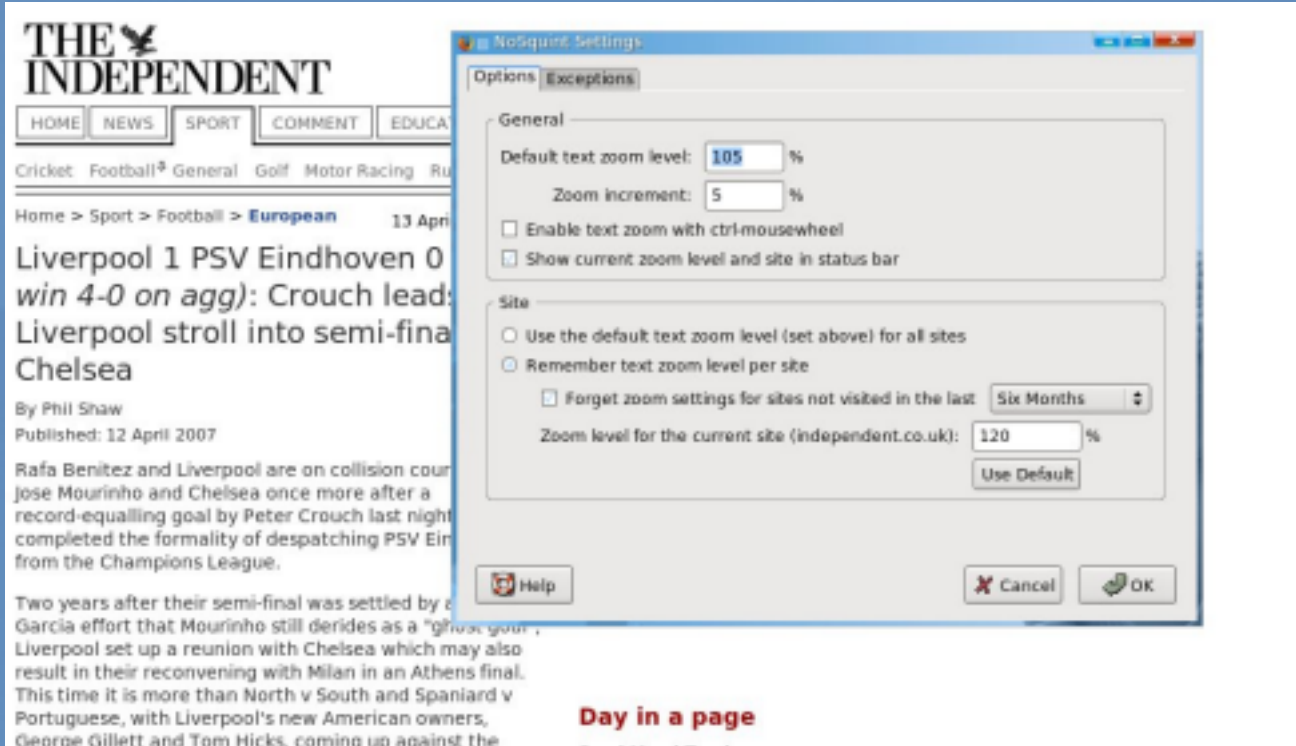
6. No Squint

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/2592>

Whether you have visual problems or not, this extension could make your browsing a lot

Top 10 Firefox Extensions

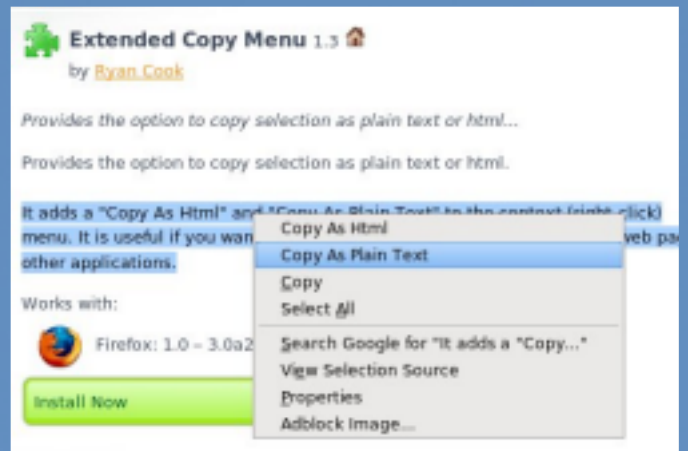
easier on the eye. We've all seen websites where the font size is miniscule or perhaps you need to work in a high screen resolution and so website text appears small. Unlike the default font settings in Firefox itself, No Squint lets you alter the zoom level by percentages. A zoom of 105% may be all that's needed to stop you straining your eyes. You can set different zoom levels for different domains:



7. Extended Copy Menu

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/4554>

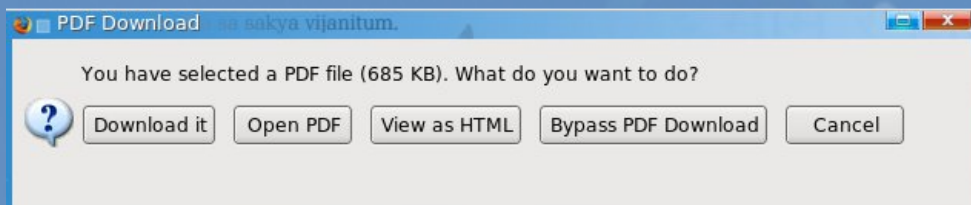
This is perhaps the simplest, but one of the most effective add-ons of all. It lets you select text on a webpage and then copy it with or without formatting. Ideal if you want to copy to a forum or blog:



8. PDF Download

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/636>

Click on a link to a PDF file and get options whether to view in the browser, view as HTML or download. Simple, but effective:

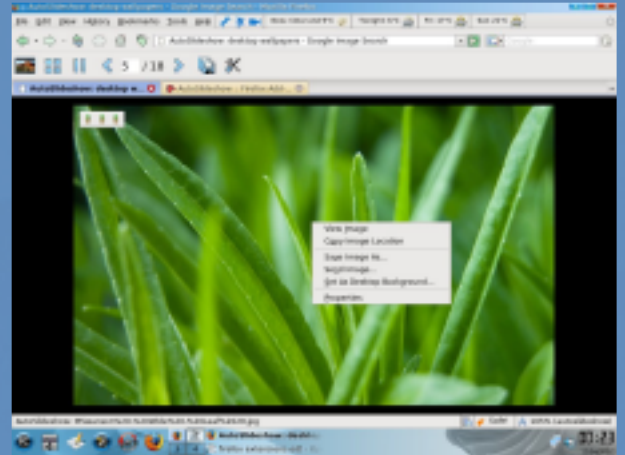


Top 10 Firefox Extensions

9. AutoSlideshow

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/3177>

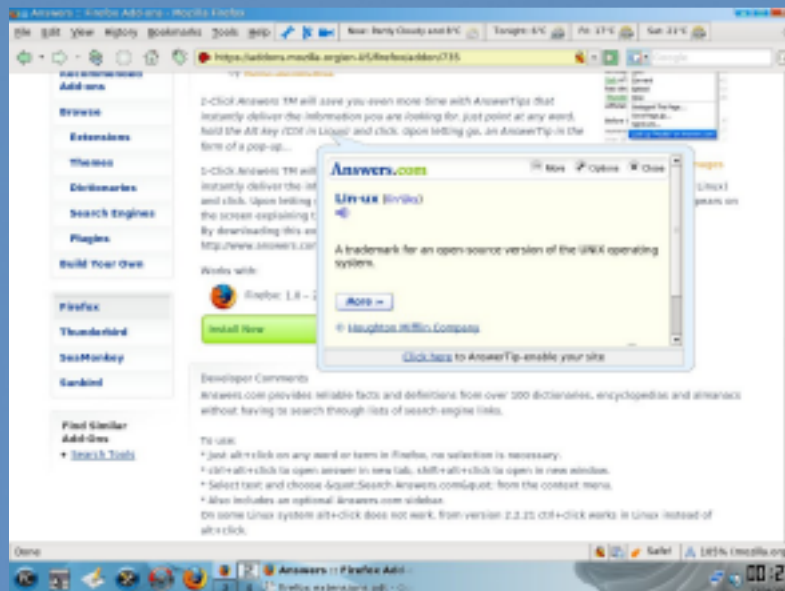
This amazing utility creates a slideshow of all the images, including linked images, on a webpage. You can set it to ignore images below a certain size. The only drawback is the rather large, clunky toolbar, but just try it on a Google Image Search. You can pause the slideshow at any point and save the image on the screen by right-clicking!



10. Answers

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/735>

Once installed, Ctrl-Click on any word and a definition from answers.com appears in a small window. Say no more!



Extensions can slow down performance in Firefox if you have too many installed, but they are ever so useful. Make it your task to install at least one extension today!

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