

Re: Total Newbie

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- *From:* "james <at> hal-pc.org"
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guerrilla.press@xxxxxxxxx wrote:

I currently have Ubuntu Linux installed on the computer, which I

My 3 and 2 yo sons and 6 and 5 yo nephews love it ;) (edubuntu that is)

On that note, does anyone have any suggestions for me, a potential user of FreeBSD? It would be logical, I guess, to read the handbook, and primarily to try out FreeBSD. Is there a LiveCD of any sort for FreeBSD, or will I need to perform a full install of FreeBSD to see what it's all about? I'm also fairly new to the command line as a primary tool for using a computer, so will it be next-to-impossible for me to figure FreeBSD out? I'm certainly up to trying things out and learning how to do it, but would that be such a time-suck that I should just stick to Linux? Thanks a lot for your help!

Its certainly a steep learning curve coming from Windows and even most Linux distros, but if you're determined to learn then you won't want to go back.

I'll start with the cons (for me at least) first:

- Less hardware support than GNU/Linux. The important things of course work and they work better IMHO than Linux. No stupid issues with Logitech mice and their scroll wheels, smarter MSDOS filesystem support, and better BrookTree capture card support for example. Don't expect every new "latest and greatest" do-dad to work though.
- Obviously less new games although some work under Linux compatibility.
- No SSI support. Maybe Dragonfly will implement it in the future... so they say.
- Less software in general. The primary reason being that most Linux apps I've come across aren't developed with portability in mind making porting to BSD a bit of a pain. Freevo for example doesn't support CD and DVD drives in FreeBSD, but after all the other issues I had with screwed up xv in mplayer on Linux I manage to live with custom shortcut keys to access them instead. If you like WindowMaker, then don't expect wmhdlop to work either... GoogleEarth may/may not work. mileage may vary.
- no journaling filesystem (yet)

Pros:

- More stable. <-- note the period
- Better documentation. Many of the Linux man pages I've seen are simply slightly edited versions from *BSD.

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- Less restrictive, non-parasitic license.
- Ports system. Maybe I want win32codecs and DVD support with my mplayer. More time consuming, but much more customizable than apt for example. There's also pre-built packages for those that want them. OpenOffice for example ;)
- Linux binary support. I use a Linux compiled Seamonkey with Adobe Flash, SVG, Acrobat, Sun Java, and Realplayer plugins all compiled for Linux but running under FreeBSD. You can even use the Linux mplayer plug-in to call a native FreeBSD mplayer for embedded videos. No problems with Google Video, AtomFilms, or YouTube.
- I've never had a problem building a working kernel in FreeBSD. Failing time and time again compiling kernels in Slackware, Gentoo, Fedora, Ubuntu, and Debian until the options were /just/ right pissed me off to no end.
- Better NFS support
- Cleaner and faster boot process than most "distros" I've used.
- Better wireless support (for those cards that are supported). All integrated into ifconfig. no need for a separate "iwconfig" program.

If you're wondering if your hardware will work you can probably find it in the handbook, or see <http://www.bsdstats.org> for the number of people that are actually using the same things you have.

You can get a CD from the FreeSBIE folks. I'm not sure how current the latest is, but it's kinda like a typical Knoppix disc. FreeSBIE is really for making your own CD, but i think they still have some pre-made ISOs available.

It is almost ALL command line to configure and maintain. There's work on getting KDE and Gnome sys-admin tools working right, but I'm not sure of the progress. If you truly want to learn then command line is the way to start. The computer club I work at has a Linux group that meets every week. I find that more often than not I end up fixing people's problems via command line because the gewy tools don't work as advertised, or you just simply can't do it any other way (Gnome wireless configuration tool in some update of 6.0.6 of Ubuntu for example was broken). The same even goes for Windows and Mac. Many times would I have been screwed if I didn't know command line when dealing with my Mac...

Some good books to read:

UNIX in a Nutshell – O'Reilly

UNIX System Administration Guide – don't recall the publisher

UNIX Hints & Hacks – QUE

and of course the FreeBSD handbook.

Good luck!

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