

## Linux Distributions & What They Can Do For You

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I use Linux everyday and like the way it is customizable to anything I want to do with it, in doing so I forget not everyone knows Linux and what it can do for you. You do not have to know a lot about Linux to use some of the great tools out there. The days of using the command line for everything in Linux is gone. Almost all applications have a GUI front end to help you out. All the ones I talk about are free of charge to download and use.

This article is about different Linux distributions and how they can help you in your daily and work life. This article will not cover the aspect of the Linux desktop for everyday use. There is no way I can cover all the different Linux distributions so if I left one of your favorites out I am sorry.

Please ask if you have any questions about these or others.

If you are real new to Linux a distribution is: (definition from [www.techweb.com](http://www.techweb.com))  
The Linux operating system packaged for customers for a fee. It includes the Linux kernel, essential operating system components from the GNU Project, an installation program, various open source utilities and applications, documentation and technical support. Some distributions contain a thousand or more programs delivered by download, CD-ROM or DVD.

Linux distributors sometimes offer a version free of charge, which may comprise an older kernel, fewer utilities and no support, other than written help on their Web site. The paid version includes the latest modifications, a multitude of related software and a support program. For example, Red Hat's Fedora is totally free of charge, but offered without support (see Fedora).

Why a Distribution?

Linux packages are called distributions because the Linux vendor is distributing an open source operating system that it did not develop from scratch, although it may have enhanced it with its own modifications

Ubuntu Live CD version 7.10 (named Gutsy Gibbon) - [www.ubuntu.com](http://www.ubuntu.com)

Although this is a full desktop version the live CD can do a lot for you

Here are just a few:

- \* Memory Check (it uses Memtest86) right at the boot you will get a menu just choose memory test and follow the instructions.
- \* Data Recovery – with the new version of Ubuntu it will auto mount all NTFS partitions & USB drives. So if an OS fails to load boot with this to copy the data to your USB drive. All drives can be found under the menu Places/Computer.
- \* Hardware Test – use the live CD to test & see if it is hardware or OS issue (like Sound, NIC, HDD, & Misc.)

SystemRescueCd - [www.sysresccd.org](http://www.sysresccd.org)

SystemRescueCd is a Linux system on a bootable CD-ROM for repairing your system and recovering your data after a crash. It aims to provide an easy way to carry out admin tasks on your computer, such as creating and editing the partitions of the hard disk. It contains a lot of system utilities (parted, partimage, fstools, ...) and basic tools (editors, midnight commander, network tools).

FreeNAS – [www.freenas.org](http://www.freenas.org)

This one I love, it turns an old PC (I mean OLD) into an top notch NAS device the kind you pay \$400.00+ for. Minimum hardware requirements are (plus the hard drive size you want on the NAS): Pentium class processor (100 Mhz and up), 64 MB of memory, bootable CDROM, Network Card. After the installation this can be run headless (without a monitor)

Note – this is a BSD based distribution not Linux

Parted Magic – [www.partedmagic.com](http://www.partedmagic.com)

Optimized at approximately 30MB, the Parted Magic OS employs core programs of GParted and Parted to handle partitioning tasks with ease, while featuring other useful programs (e.g. Partition Image, TestDisk, fdisk, sfdisk, dd, ddrescue, etc.) and an excellent set of documentation to benefit the user. An extensive collection of filesystem tools are also included, as Parted Magic supports the following: ext2, ext3, ext4, fat16, fat32, hfs, hfs+, jfs, linux-swap, ntfs, reiserfs, reiser4, and xfs.

IPCop – [www.ipcop.org](http://www.ipcop.org)

A firewall distribution with the following features: Firewall Intrusion Detection System, IPSEC VPN, Caching DNS, Web Proxy, DHCP Server, Time Server, Traffic Shaping, NAT. After installation this can be run headless.

Smoothwall – [www.smoothwall.org](http://www.smoothwall.org)

This one is similar to IPCop but it has a pay version that has more features. After installation this can be run headless.

Vyatta – [www.vyatta.com](http://www.vyatta.com)

Vyatta software is a complete, ready-to-use, distribution that is designed to transform standard x86 hardware into an enterprise-class router / firewall. Vyatta software includes support for commonly used network interfaces, and industry-standard routing protocols and management protocols. Unlike previous open-source routing projects, all these features are configurable via a single command-line interface (CLI) or web-based graphical user interface (GUI). Vyatta software is available as a free Community Edition as well as tiered Software Subscriptions that include maintenance, upgrades and support.

OPHCrack – <http://ophcrack.sourceforge.net/>

OPHCrack is a Windows password cracker based on rainbow tables. It is a very efficient implementation of rainbow tables done by the inventors of the method. It comes with a GTK+ Graphical User Interface and runs on Windows, Mac OS X (Intel CPU) as well as on Linux.

Webconverger – [www.webconverger.com](http://www.webconverger.com)

Webconverger is a live, Debian-based web kiosk. It is designed for deployments in places like offices or Internet cafés where only web applications are used. This boots to a web browser only, nothing else no desktop, folders, or anything.

ZoneCD – [www.publicip.net](http://www.publicip.net)

ZoneCD provides hotspot operators with an extremely simple, highly versatile, FREE, openhotspot solution. Public IP's ZoneCD is freely distributed software that has been created to help implement safe, free, WiFi hotspots. The ZoneCD can be used by all levels source, of free WiFi providers, from experienced programmers to coffee house cashiers.