



⇒ First steps with Ubuntu

Get to know your new Linux desktop.

Now that the installation is out of the way, you can start to actually use your new Linux system. After your system has started and you've entered your username and password, Ubuntu will load your desktop. With Linux, there is a selection of desktops to choose from, and Ubuntu uses one called Gnome by default. Gnome's approach is to favour simplicity over complexity, and to rely on a well-designed user interface to guide the user through each function.

This is perfect for the beginner, but its simplicity belies an incredibly powerful desktop that many Linux developers prefer to any other approach. Here are the main aspects to the Gnome desktop:

1 APPLICATIONS MENU

The Ubuntu Applications menu is very similar to Windows' Program menu, and it's from this menu that you launch your programs. Unlike Windows, Ubuntu groups applications according to their function. For example, if you wanted to launch the *Photoshop*-like photo editor *Gimp*, it can be found under the Graphics menu. Similarly, the *Firefox* web browser can be found under the heading Internet.

2 PLACES MENU

This menu provides quick links to various important locations on your machine, as well as other servers on your network. For example, there's an entry for your home directory, the desktop and your computer. The Connect To Server link is where you can set up FTP connections or network shares.

However, along with the links there is also some important functionality here – selecting Search will open a window where you can search for almost anything hidden in your home directory. And we mean *anything*. It will search the contents of your office documents and saved web pages, as well as all your files. It will even search through all your instant messenger conversations.

The magic behind all this power is called *Beagle*, which is one of the new generation of tools that make Linux so powerful. Once you get used to searching for documents in this way, it's difficult going back.

3 SYSTEM MENU

The System menu contains options to configure your local system settings, both for yourself (under the Preferences submenu) and for everyone (under the Administration submenu). It's also the location of the Ubuntu documentation, and the place to go if you want to shut down your machine.

4 LAUNCHERS

These application shortcuts are set to launch the *Firefox* web browser and *Evolution* email client by default. You can add your own shortcut icons here by right-clicking on the panel and selecting Add To Panel. From the screen that appears, select the



button near the top that says Application Launcher, and you'll be able to select one of the options from the Applications menu. Once you've found the program you want, click on the Add button.

5 FILE EXPLORER

The filesystem explorer tool used in Gnome is called *Nautilus*. It's really *Nautilus* that pops up when you click on any of your desktop links, such as your home directory.

The *Nautilus* screen is split up into seven parts. Along the top is the menu bar, then the toolbar, and along the bottom is the status bar – these are pretty standard, and shouldn't cause a problem. Beneath the toolbar are two things: on the left are some 'breadcrumb' buttons, and on the right are the view settings. You can change the view by zooming in or

out, or changing View As Icons to View As List if you want. The breadcrumb buttons are there to show you where you came from, so if you go to the Places menu and select Computer, then double-click on Filesystem, then the **usr** directory, then the **share** directory and finally the **backgrounds** directory, you'll see the breadcrumb buttons list each of those places. You can click on them to navigate back through the directories.

Along the left of the *Nautilus* window is the Places pane, which provides some of the same locations as the Places menu. If there are favourite locations you find yourself visiting frequently, just drag and drop them into this pane.

The last part to *Nautilus* is of course the main file view itself, which you can find your way around by double-clicking with your mouse.

DO MORE WITH THE NAUTILUS FILE EXPLORER

The default view of *Nautilus* is hardly innovative – you'd be forgiven for thinking that Linux isn't very powerful after all! But though *Nautilus* has been designed to look simple to use, it has many options to make you work faster and easier.

For example, *Nautilus* lets you attach emblems to file folders, which are special icons that mark them as being special in some way. To attach an emblem to a folder, go to the Edit menu, select Backgrounds And Emblems, then

choose the Emblems option from the left. You can now drag the emblem(s) you want on to your files and folders.

If you actually find the default *Nautilus* window too daunting, you can make it switch to an easier-looking view by going to Edit > Preferences, selecting the Behaviour tab, then deselecting the checkbox that says Always Open In Browser Windows. When you go to a *Nautilus* window now, the places bar is hidden, as are the toolbar

and breadcrumb buttons. Instead, the view looks a lot easier to get to grips with, and you still have the breadcrumb system available to you by clicking in the bottom-left corner of each *Nautilus* window.

With that option disabled, *Nautilus* operates in so-called spatial mode, which means it opens a new window for each folder. If you open a directory and set the window size and position to something particular, *Nautilus* will remember them next time.



6 SYSTEM TRAY

The area in the top right of your screen contains the time and the volume control applet by default. If you're using a laptop, the power applet will also be running so you can see how much power you have left. If the laptop is plugged into the mains a plug symbol will display. Just hover your mouse over the icon to get further information on your power status.

7 QUICK SHUTDOWN

You can shut down Ubuntu by clicking the System menu and choosing Quit, or you can just click on this little red icon in the top-right corner of the screen to get the same effect. From the screen that appears you can choose to log out (leave the computer running and let someone else use it), lock screen (stay logged in, but require your password to use the computer), switch user (stay logged in, but let someone else log in simultaneously), hibernate (save your current system state to disk, and power down), restart or shut down.

8 DESKTOP

Like many other operating systems, Ubuntu lets you place icons on your desktop for easy access. However, it keeps this entire space clear by default, which can make it look quite empty. Go on, you know you want to fill it up with some lovely filesystem clutter!

9 TASK BAR

At the bottom of your screen is the Gnome task bar. This contains four things (from left to right): a Show Desktop button, a window list, your virtual desktops and the Trash icon (where you delete files). The Show Desktop button is the one in the bottom left of the screen. Clicking on it will hide all the windows, so you can get to icons underneath, on the desktop. Clicking on it again will restore the screen to its previous state.

The window list shows the names and the icons of any programs you have running right now. As you open and close programs, they will be added to and

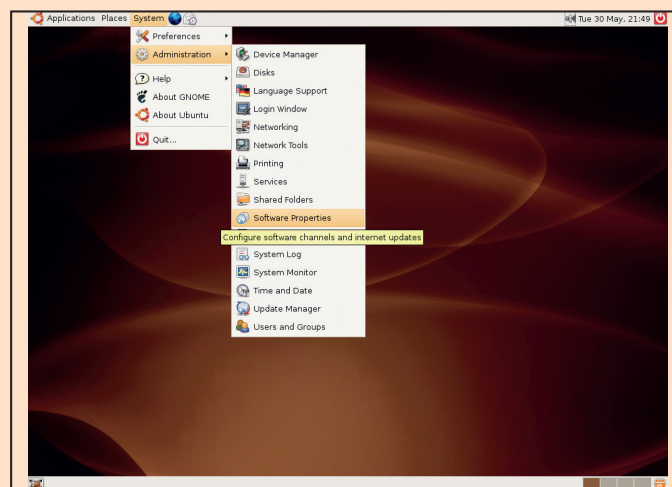
removed from the list. As with Windows, you can select any window from the list and Gnome will bring it to the front of your workspace.

10 VIRTUAL DESKTOPS

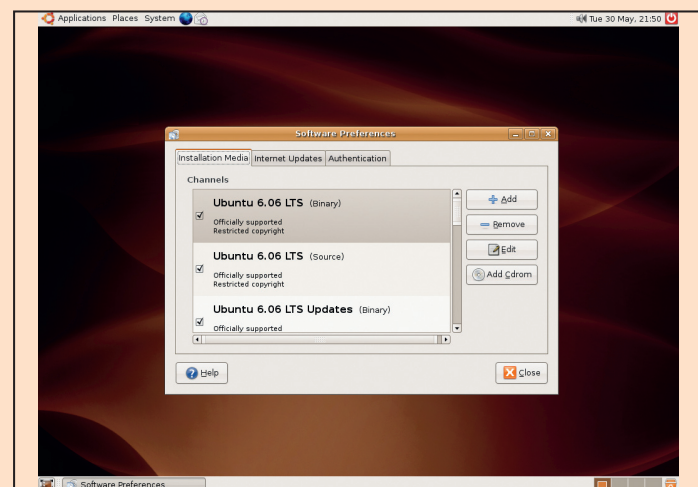
At the bottom right of the taskbar, just to the left of the small Trash icon, you can see four boxes: one coloured brown and the other three grey. The first is the selected desktop. Try opening a program and you will see its window shape appear in the tiny box that's highlighted. Using your mouse, drag this shape to the small box next to it. You should see the application disappear: you've moved it from desktop 1 to desktop 2. To follow this window, just click on the second small grey box. Everything will look the same. But the application you opened will be back.

Having multiple desktops avoids the clutter that bedevils many busy users. You can have your web browsers on desktop 1, your office work on desktop 2, your command-line terminals on desktop 3 and the games that you're trying to keep hidden on desktop 4 – your boss need never know! ●

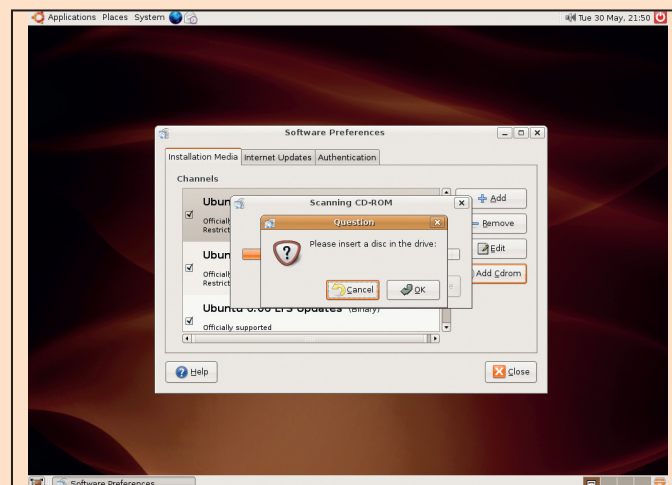
HOWTO... INSTALL MORE SOFTWARE



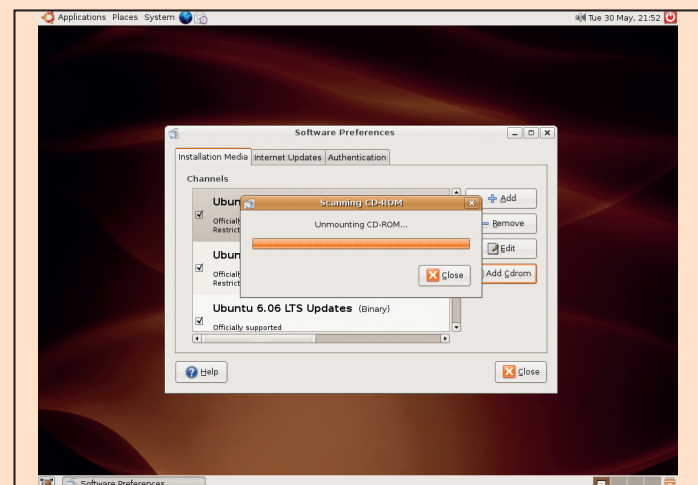
1 We've provided you with two extra CDs packed with software to install, and it takes just four steps to add them to Ubuntu. From the System menu, choose Software Properties.



2 The window that appears lists all the repositories (internet servers from which Ubuntu will download software). Click the Add Cdrom button on the right. If you're not online, uncheck the internet servers.



3 Ubuntu will now prompt you to insert a disc, so go ahead and insert either disc 2 or disc 3 into your computer's CD/DVD ROM drive, and click on OK to continue.



4 It takes only a few seconds for Ubuntu to read the CD, so click Close to return to the Software Preferences window, where your new CD will appear. You can now add new software from the Applications menu.