



Configuring your printer

To connect your new system to a printer, check its compatibility then follow this simple walkthrough.



IN CASE you haven't already noticed, there is a thorn in the side of Linux, and that thorn is hardware compatibility. This is because of the open nature of Linux. Open source means just that: the programming code (the source) that makes a device work is open for anyone to read. Quite understandably, certain manufacturers don't want their valuable secrets to be openly available for their competitors. Even though an open source licence restricts their competitors from using anything they learn from the source code, this is still a big change from the closed world many are used to. And nowhere is this division of opinion more apparent than with printer manufacturers.

For this reason, it's vital to know that your printer will work with Linux *before* you buy it, and ideally, this means you should check online for the latest information. There is a website designed specifically for prospective Linux printer users (see *Printing Resources On The Web* box, below), but as a general guide, most of the models from HP and Epson, which both helped to develop Linux drivers for their hardware, are very well supported. Business-class printers that use an industry standard protocol (called PPR) will also work on Ubuntu, as will printers that are designed to use PostScript.

Most modern devices use USB, but older printers that use a cable connected to your computer's parallel port should also work well. It's also possible to access a printer that might be connected to another machine across a local network.

We should point out that most multifunction devices, featuring a printer, scanner and sometimes even a fax machine in a single unit, will rarely work out of the box with Linux. You might be able to configure each function separately by setting up the printer first, followed by the scanner, but it can be tricky to get the whole device to work.

Once you have some idea of whether your printer will work, plug it in and follow our nine-step guide to get it working.

PRINTING RESOURCES ON THE WEB

www.ubuntuforums.org/forumdisplay.php?f=136

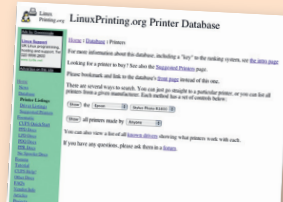
Try this Networking section of the Ubuntu online forum for help with printers.

www.linuxprinting.org

This community site will give you advice and tips on printing.

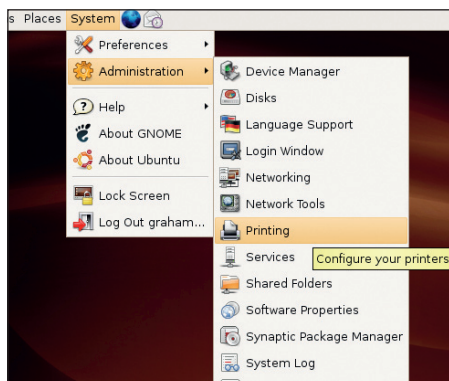
www.easysw.com/printpro

Commercial print drivers.



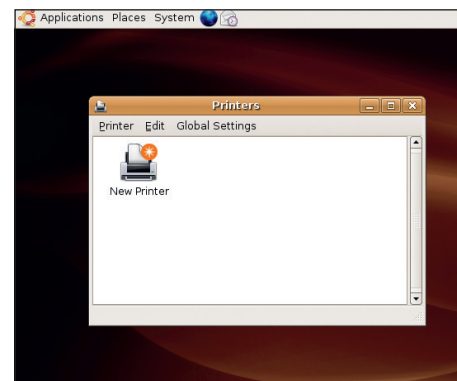
CONNECT YOUR PRINTER IN NINE STEPS

STEP 1 THE PRINTERS WINDOW



Once your printer is connected, the first step is to open Ubuntu's Printer configuration window. Unlike other Linux distributions, Ubuntu doesn't attempt to automatically configure the printer for you, but it isn't difficult. From the menu at the top of the screen, select System > Administration > Printing. This will open a window called Printers.

STEP 2 ADD A PRINTER



If you've used Microsoft's Windows, Ubuntu's Printers window will feel familiar. Initially, there is a single button icon within the window labelled New Printer. This is what you need to click on to add your printer, after which the icon will be joined by another one that represents the new device.

CUPS – AN ALTERNATIVE FOR CONFIGURATION

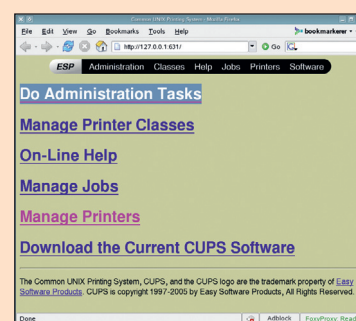
There is another way to add and manage printers within Linux – and that's by using a printing mechanism called CUPS, or the Common Unix Printing System. You will find CUPS with almost every version of Linux.

It is actually CUPS that handles all your printing behind the scenes at the moment. But it also has its own user interface and configuration tool that's accessible from a web browser. This means that no matter which version of Linux you end up using, you can always change the CUPS configuration from a web browser.

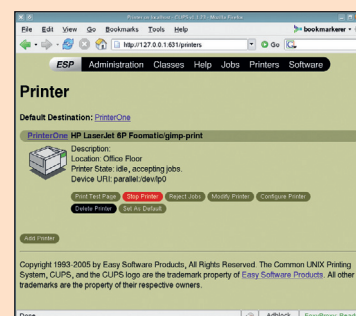
To open the CUPS configuration page in your browser just type <http://127.0.0.1:631> into the location bar. This will load the CUPS overview page into your browser just as if it were a web page from the internet. Depending on the version of CUPS you have installed, there will be six options from this page listed as blue links, and these links will be duplicated in a toolbar at the top of the page. The options are Do Administration Tasks, Manage Printer Classes, On-Line Help, Manage Jobs and Manage Printers.

It's only really the last two options that are useful for day-to-day running of your printer. Clicking on Manage Printers will open a page that lists any printers that have been installed by your Linux distribution. From here you can print a test page, stop all printer jobs or reject specific jobs as well as delete or reconfigure your printer. These options are also available for each job from the Jobs page. You can add new printers from here by clicking on the Add Printer button. This will take you through a further three steps that will ask for the printer name and type, followed by the kind of connection you're using. You can even attempt to add printers connected across a network by selecting the *Samba* protocol.

For more CUPS information, articles, FAQs and user forums, visit the homepage of the system at www.cups.org.



CUPS is always available from a web browser on your Linux machine.



You should print a test page to make sure your printer is working.



PHOTO COURTESY EPSON



STEP 3 SELECT CONNECTION



After you've double-clicked on New Printer, Ubuntu will scan its printer database then open a two-step Add A Printer dialog window. You will probably want to leave the type set to Local. If your printer is a USB device, it will be listed in the centre window, and you must make sure Use A Detected Printer Is Selected.

STEP 4 MANUFACTURER CHECK



For other devices, there is a small drop-down list. Certain manufacturers use their own port protocols, which Linux can't detect automatically. HP, compatible Epson and Canon devices connected to the parallel port can be selected, as can printers that use a generic protocol (select LPT #1).

STEP 5 CHOOSE THE MODEL



After selecting your printer connection and clicking on Forward, you'll need to select your specific printer. If you used a generic connection in the previous step, change the manufacturer by clicking on the drop-down list and making a selection.

STEP 6 APPLY SETTINGS



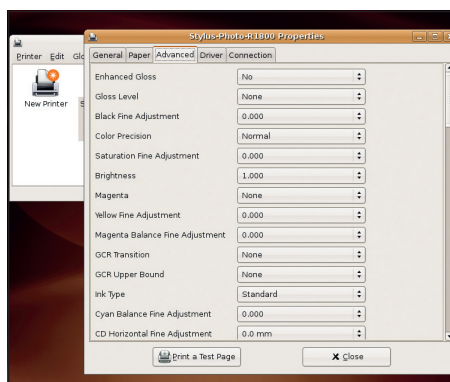
Once the manufacturer is selected, you can select your printer's model from the list in the window. Ubuntu will automatically select the necessary driver. If you downloaded one you know to work, you add it to the list by clicking on the Install Driver button. Clicking on Apply will add your selected printer.

STEP 7 PRINTER STATUS



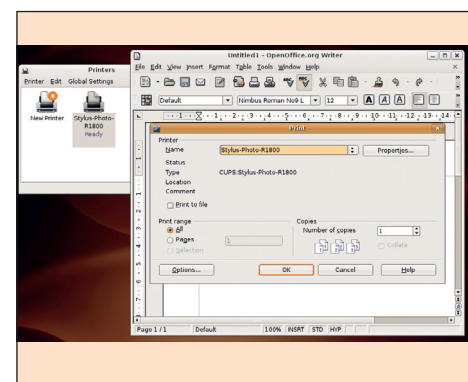
After the Add A Printer dialog has closed, you will be able to find your new printer in the window opened in Step 1. Under your printer's icon is its status in blue, which changes when you send pages to be printed. To configure the printer for quality and page size, right-click on the icon and select Properties.

STEP 8 ADVANCED SETTINGS



First check your printer by clicking on the Print A Test Page button. Next, you can fine-tune any of your printer's settings such as paper size and type, modify colour and precision, as well as move any printing borders. When you're happy with the output, it's time to print a page from your favourite application.

STEP 9 PRINTING A PAGE



In *OpenOffice.org's Writer*, we did File > Print. A small window will open, asking you to select your printer (no need to change it). Clicking on OK will send the page to your printer. Its status will change to Printing, and clicking on your printer's icon in the Printers window will let you examine the job queue. ●