What is the Best Linux Distro?

Finally, an answer to the age old question: Which Linux distro is the best?

This question gets asked time and time again. This has been debated from the moment more than one distro existed – pretty much since day one. It's also often seen on a larger scale, is Windows better than MacOS or Linux? It has been so hotly debated that it has caused true animosity and rage-quitting entire sites.

I've been using Linux exclusively for more than a decade. In a prior position, I used Unix extensively. I have dozens of virtual machines of myriad distros. My Linux ISO folder is 250 GB in size. If you can name it, I've probably installed it and used it. I think that makes me qualified to finally put this question to bed.

So, what is the best Linux distro?

There isn't one.

The best Linux distro is the best one for you. It's the one that suits your individual needs best. It's the one where you're most able to get your work done. It's the one that's suited to your personal workflow. It's the one that makes you the most happy. It's the one that best lets you use the applications you need to use. It's the one that works for *you*.

You can look up Linux distro benchmarks.
You can check their popularity.
You can test them out virtually online.

But, at the end of the day, nothing beats experience. You can download the images and use VirtualBox to test them for longer

periods (and more fully, with internet access) than you'll get online. You can download the various .iso images and test them on bare metal – without harming your currently installed operating system.

The reality is, it may take you some time to find the right distro for you. Maybe you'll start with something easy to install and maintain, and maybe your final destination ends with Linux From Scratch. Maybe you'll start off with LFS, learn as much as you can, and end up using a more mainstream distro. Who knows? Only you. Only you know.

When someone attempts to tell you the best Linux distro, what they really mean is what is best for them. That may not be the best for you – or it could be the best for you. You won't know until you try. You still won't know, until you've tried many.

There are many things to consider. Do you want a stable release? Do you want a rolling release with the most up-to-date software? Do you want to use Aptitude or Zypper, or maybe none at all? Which desktop environment do you want? What default software do you want? Which window manager is right for you? Do you want a fancy desktop or just the bare minimum? How about something in between?

TIP: You can do some *really* refined searches at DistroWatch.

Do you want a distro that comes with just the basics so that you can add your own software? Do you want a distro that comes with the software you're most likely to use? Do you want a specialist distro that comes with the tools you need, like Springdale Linux? Do you want to work with multimedia as a creator with Ubuntu Studio?

Then, what computer architecture are you using? Are you trying to keep your old 32 bit computer running? You can do that. Do you want to use your SBC (Single-Board Computer) as your HTPC (Home Theater PC)? You can do that. Do you want to set up your own router and firewall? You can do that. Do you want to set

up your own NAS (Network-Attached Storage)? You can do that! In fact, there are unique Linux distros to do all of those things!

There are many, many choices. Odds are great that there's a distro that's right for you. And, if you can't find one that's just right, you can make your own. On top of that, you can make pretty much any distro do the same thing that another distro does. So, you can start with one distro and turn it into whatever you want.

The choices are so many and so broad that you have practically limitless choices. That's one of the things that makes Linux so great. You have a say in what your operating system does (and what it doesn't) do. It's your computer, you get to decide.

And, that's the answer to this age-old question. There is no right distro, there's only the right distro for you. Me? I'm old. I want stability and an environment that gets out of my way to let me get my work done with the smoothest possible workflow. The distro that does that is the distro that's right for me.

Enjoy the wondrous journey of discovery, as you find the right Linux distro for you.

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