

# Computer Tips

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### Linux—Has It Arrived? - Part 1

Some of our readers will be familiar with an alternative computer operating system to Windows — known as Linux. This alternative is growing in popularity on a number of fronts, the main one being, that it is entirely free.

The name Linux however is only a general term; for within the Linux community are hundreds of different distributions of the operating system, each with different file formats and features. Within even these different distributions are versions specially tailored for desktop systems, Internet servers, processor types, and even netbook users.

A distribution of Linux that is very popular, and boasts probably the largest user-base, is known as Ubuntu. Currently running at version 10.10, this operating system looks and functions very much like Windows. I recently took the opportunity to evaluate Ubuntu 10.10 on my PC here, and this and the following articles is my experiences and observations while using it.

Ubuntu seems to have a lot going for it. Firstly, it is 100% free, and will always be free. Secondly, once installed, you can add 1000's of applications, such as office programs, photo programs, games, Internet programs, and system utilities to your Ubuntu system, simply by downloading them from the free Ubuntu repository. Even commonly recognized software such as Firefox, Open-Office, Gimp, and FileZilla, are all either loaded with Ubuntu, or are available as a free and easy download, right from the Ubuntu desktop.

When looking at Ubuntu for the first time, it is natural to compare it to Windows. However, while Ubuntu does look a lot like Windows, and even has a familiar taskbar and desktop setup, Ubuntu is not Windows. Occasionally, you need to use command-line prompts, and have to do some hunting around when troubleshooting or installing some hardware types.

Ubuntu also does work differently in its basic structure. Ubuntu uses up to 4 separate partitions at once, each to store system files, user data, and memory operations. This different setup takes a little getting used to, and currently does not seem as user-friendly as Windows, which uses just one partition for its operation.

There is however several good reasons for trying Ubuntu. Firstly it is free, and that goes a long, long way. Secondly, there are no licenses, product keys, or subscriptions to deal with. And thirdly, viruses are non-existent in Ubuntu. Ubuntu provides an alternative for the home user. You can browse the internet, check your emails, chat with family and friends, edit your photos, capture video and edit it, and play your favourite music collection.

In our next article, we will look at how to get Ubuntu, the best method of trying Ubuntu, and how to install and set it up on your home PC.

We are available for all your computer needs on 4171 0981, or [info@mcsit.com.au](mailto:info@mcsit.com.au).



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