

Re: Learning debian Linux

Source: <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/Debian/2003-11/3740.html>

From: Karsten M. Self (*kmsself_at_ix.netcom.com*)

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To: debian-user@lists.debian.org

Knut:

on Thu, Nov 20, 2003 at 10:42:31AM +0100, Knut Willy (*willy35@c2i.net*) wrote:

> *I am a novice at Linux. Never used it, but want to teach myself.*

>

> *1. Have a Windows-98 PC, which has internet connection.*

> *Do not intend to use Linux on this one.*

> *Afraid of having two operating systems on same machine.*

It's possible to do this, though somewhat impractical as you will have to boot one or the other OS. Most GNU/Linux users I know leave their systems on for months at a time -- the system doesn't crash (barring power outages), and there's little or no reason to log out. You simply set your screensaver to lock the terminal after a few minutes of idle time.

Rather than risking your existing HD by repartitioning, I'd recommend buying a new disk and installing GNU/Linux onto it. Of the various options open to you, this is likely your easiest, least expensive, and most feasible option. Note that you'll probably want to keep the HD < 40 GiB (small by current standards) due to BIOS restrictions on older hardware. I think GNU/Linux can bypass these with ease, but you should research the issue first.

> *2. Have a portable Compaq PC, (Windows-95) on which I intend to*

> *install Linux. This Compaq has no internet connection, no CD*

> *station. Only a A: station for 1,44 mb diskettes.*

Define "no internet connection". Do you mean no network interface? If the system supports PCMCIA, which it probably does, you can buy a PCMCIA NIC for ~\$30-\$50 US. Note that for a system of this age, you'll likely need a 16 bit, rather than the newer 32 bit PCMCIA cards. Avoid Belkin (flakey cards, poor support). This will make a number of things much more practical.

Your local internet connectivity is likely either:

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- Dialup through the Win98 box directly.
- Broadband via a DSL or cable "router" with multiple ports.

In the first case, you'll need to get an additional network card for the legacy MS Windows box (\$9 US and up), in the second, you'd be able to plug the GNU/Linux box directly into the DSL or cable router.

I go through this because you're **not** going to be happy doing floppy–based file transfers to the GNU/Linux box.

There are other possibilities, including setting up PLIP or SLIP connections -- networking over serial or parallel ports. This will work in a pinch, but it's pretty infeasible for serious use.

Note too that it makes a heck of a lot more sense to describe a system in terms of its hardware capabilities than its installed OS. Though I can ballpark the age of this system by Win95 -- it's probably a pretty clunky 486 or very early Pentium laptop, with 200 MiB to 1 GiB of disk, and 16 – 64 MiB RAM. No onboard modem. No onboard NIC. Very likely PCMCIA support. No USB. One or two serial ports, parallel port, video, PS/2 keyboard and mouse ports. Confirmation/specification on your part would be helpful.

- > *3. My intention is to do all downloading on the Win–98 PC, and then*
- > *copy everything over to the Compaq, using diskettes.*

A current full Debian install spans about 7 CDROMs. At 650 MiB per cdrom, this is 3,159.7222 floppy disks worth of data.

Even using a one–disk installation is going to require 451.3888 floppy transfers. I doubt very much you'll find this reasonable.

For an absolutely minimal base system install of a prior Debian release I sometimes use to "bootstrap" an installation, I still need to floppy over about 15 disks worth of material...then add additional packages over time.

- > *4. I read somewhere that Debian Linux is the best choice for a novice*
- > *learner.*

Really? We could use the cite.

More often you'll hear that Debian's not the easiest GNU/Linux to get started on, but it **is** the easiest to use and maintain over time. Ease–of–installation is improving over time, I've used it and loved it since 1999, having used most other mainstream Linuxes both before and since.

- > *And also that one does not need to install EVERYTHING from*
- > *Linux. Just a small starter package will do. A minimum package.*

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Debian supports this principle very well. I've got systems ranging from 150 MiB to 80 GiB+ at the moment, on hardware ranging from 486 to P-4.

> 5. *Is it possible to go ahead as I have mentioned above?*

Yes.

GNU/Linux and Debian in particular make pretty damned near anything possible. Given sufficient pain. And for what you're describing, that's lots.

Is it practical? No. Buy, at the very least, sufficient networking hardware to allow you to link the intended GNU/Linux system to your existing legacy MS Windows box. Working out how to use your 'Doze box as an Internet gateway would also be useful.

Alternatively, hunt around for a deal on a PC with 2-4 years on it, but still serviceable. Say, a PIII-500 MHz or better system. You'll get far, far faster hardware, much more space, will pay ~\$50-\$100 US for the privilege (about the same as a PCMCIA NIC), and will be able to install directly via CDROM rather than hassling with network connections (though you'll almost certainly want these as well).

Peace.

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What Part of "Gestalt" don't you understand?
True love is the greatest thing in the world. Except for a nice
MLT... mutton, lettuce and tomato sandwich
- Princess Bride

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To UNSUBSCRIBE, email to debian-user-request@lists.debian.org
with a subject of "unsubscribe". Trouble? Contact listmaster@lists.debian.org

- application/pgp-signature attachment: stored