AFRIDYNE SYSTEMS · HOME IT & LINUX DESKTOP GUIDE

Switching to Linux on a Home Desktop or Laptop

Choosing the right beginner-friendly distribution, testing from a USB drive without touching your files, everyday Windows-to-Linux software replacements, and clean installation steps.

Topic: Linux Desktop Installation and Support | Covers: Distro Choice · Live USB Test · App Equivalents · Install & First-Boot Checklist

1. Why Switch a Home PC to Linux?

Modern desktop Linux is fast, stable, free of forced advertising or telemetry, and gives older Windows 10 laptops and desktops years of secure, responsive life without buying new hardware.

- **Breathes New Life Into Older Hardware:** Uses significantly less RAM and background CPU than modern Windows, keeping 4 GB–8 GB machines snappy.
- **No Forced Restarts or Subscription Nagware:** Updates install quietly when you choose, and built-in app stores provide thousands of free, vetted applications.
- **Strong Built-In Security:** Clean permission separation and curated software repositories dramatically reduce everyday malware and browser-hijacker risk.

2. Choosing the Right Distribution (Home & Everyday Use)

Distribution	Desktop Feel	Best Suited For
Linux Mint (Cinnamon)	Familiar bottom taskbar, start menu, and system tray—immediately intuitive for Windows users.	First-time switchers, family desktops, and Windows 10 PCs that don't meet Windows 11 hardware checks.
Ubuntu Desktop (LTS)	Clean modern dock and top bar with huge hardware/vendor support and 5-year Long-Term Support.	Users wanting broad hardware compatibility, predictable LTS releases, and extensive online tutorials.
Fedora Workstation	Polished, up-to-date GNOME desktop with newer kernels and strong Flatpak integration.	Newer laptops (recent Intel/AMD graphics or Wi-Fi chips) that benefit from fresh kernel drivers.

3. Everyday Software Equivalents

Everyday Task	Windows / Mac App	Linux Desktop Equivalent
Web Browsing & Banking	Chrome / Edge / Safari	Firefox (pre-installed), Brave, or Google Chrome
Word, Excel & PowerPoint	Microsoft Office	LibreOffice (pre-installed) or OnlyOffice (native `.docx` / `.xlsx` fidelity)
Email & Calendar	Outlook / Apple Mail	Mozilla Thunderbird or webmail (Gmail / Microsoft 365 / Roundcube)
PDF Viewing & Scanning	Adobe Reader / Windows Scan	Built-in Document Viewer (Evince/ Xreader) & Document Scanner
Photo & Media Playback	Photos / Windows Media Player	VLC Media Player, GIMP, Shotwell, or Darktable

> **Check Before Switching:** If your household relies on desktop-only Windows software such as *Sage Pastel*, *Adobe Creative Cloud*, or specific Windows-only games with kernel anti-cheat, keep a dual-boot Windows partition or a dedicated Windows PC for that specific task.

4. Safe Step-by-Step Installation Overview

1. **Back Up Everything First:** Copy all personal folders (Documents, Pictures, Desktop, Music, browser bookmarks, and saved passwords) to an external USB drive before booting an installer.
2. **Create a Bootable USB & Test in "Live Mode":** Write the downloaded ISO image to an 8 GB+ USB flash drive using **BalenaEtcher** or **Rufus**, boot from USB, and choose *Try Linux*. Test Wi-Fi, sound, display brightness, webcam, and printing **before** touching your internal drive.
3. **Install Cleanly (or Dual-Boot):** Launch the desktop installer, select your keyboard/timezone (`Africa/Johannesburg`), enable third-party multimedia codecs/Wi-Fi drivers when prompted, and choose either *Erase disk and install* (after verifying your backup) or *Install alongside Windows*.
4. **First-Boot Essentials:** Open the Update Manager to apply initial security patches, enable the built-in firewall (`sudo ufw enable`), and configure automatic snapshots with **Timeshift** so you can roll back system changes in seconds.

- ☐ **Verify external backup:** Open the external drive on another device or inspect folders to confirm photos and documents copied completely.
- ☐ **Confirm hardware in Live USB session:** Test Wi-Fi speed, Bluetooth audio, printer discovery, and sleep/ wake behaviour.
- ☐ **Enable Timeshift snapshots:** Set weekly/boot system snapshots onto local storage or an external backup drive.

Want to switch to Linux without risking your files or wrestling with drivers? Afridyne Systems helps Helderberg home users choose the right distribution, back up and migrate existing Windows data, configure printers/email, and provide friendly ongoing support. Call/WhatsApp **062 509 8065** or visit **afridyne.co.za**.