

Migrating From Windows 7 To Ubuntu: The Ultimate Guide

By Kihara Kimachia

Despite what all the [Linux haters say](#), choosing Ubuntu is logical and migrating from Windows 7 to Ubuntu is a breeze. This article summarizes the process and provides solutions to some of the most common beginner hiccups.

The Windows Vs Mac Vs Linux debate has been going on for years and doesn't look to be settled anytime soon. If you are a Windows 7 user and still haven't made the switch to Windows 8, you may want to consider migrating to Ubuntu 14.04, the latest Linux distro from Ubuntu. In addition to strong support from developers and a massive software repository, it's free, faster and safer than Windows.

A Bit Of Housekeeping

Before you migrate from Windows 7 to Ubuntu, there are a few issues you need to take care of first to ensure seamless transition. If you follow this advice, you should be able to pick up your work right where you left off.

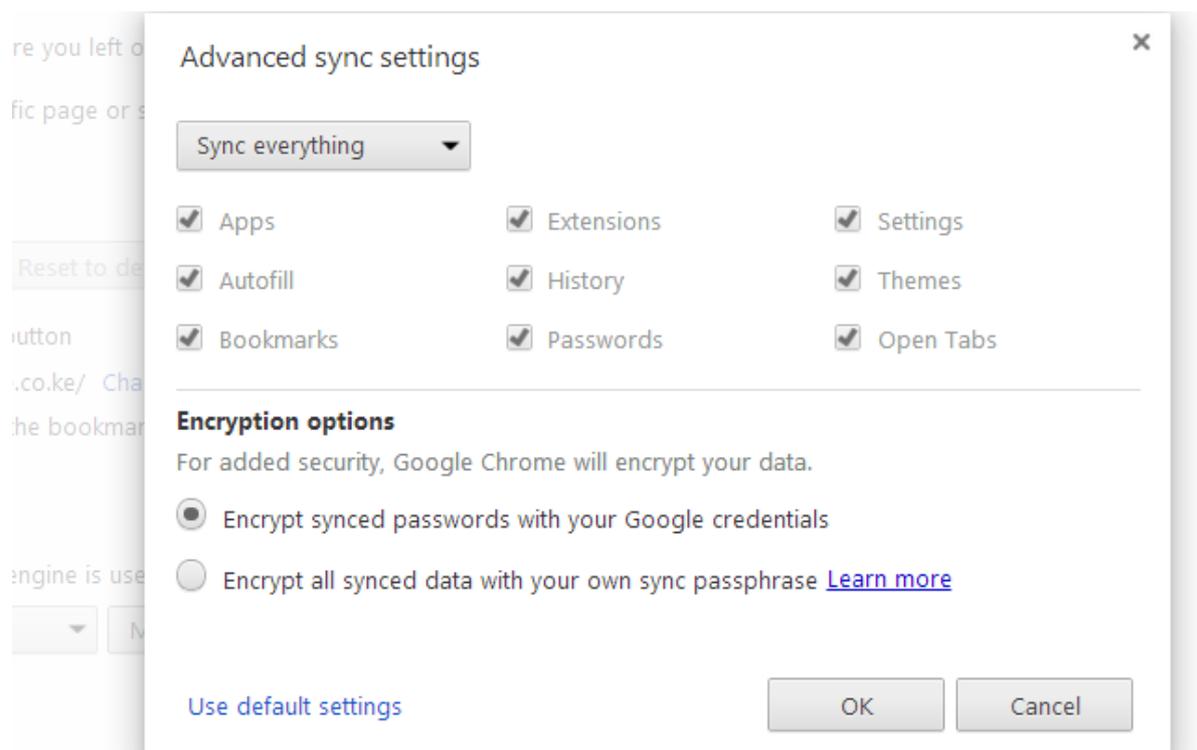
Backing Up Files

The first thing you want to do before you change your operating system is to backup any files you will want to use in Ubuntu. There are two ways to do this: you can use a cloud storage service such as Google Drive, Dropbox and OneDrive, or go with good old fashioned external media such as a flash drive or portable/external hard drive.

If you decide to use a cloud storage service, make sure you move all the files and folders you want to back up to the cloud storage folder. Ensure your Internet connection is on and wait until your cloud service confirms that all files are uploaded before you continue.

Browser Sync

Migrating to a new operating system can interrupt your browsing experience. To avoid this, you need to set up browser sync. All major browsers can [sync your data](#) and you only need to enable this feature and wait. For example, in Chrome, sign in using your Google account. If you aren't already signed in, go to the Chrome menu and scroll down to "Sign in to Chrome". After signing in, go to the menu once again, scroll down and click "Settings". Next, click on "Advanced settings" and tick all the items you want to move to Ubuntu.



When you are done installing Ubuntu, all you need to do is install Chrome from the Linux Software Repository, sign in and in a few seconds all the synced items will be replicated in your new browser session.

Installed Programs

You may also have software that you use on a regular basis and which you would like to move to Ubuntu. Go to the product's website and find out if they have a Linux version. Also, read any available documentation on migrating that piece of software. The process is different with each software vendor and there really isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. Ubuntu also has one of the largest [support forums](#), which makes it likely that any software issues you encounter have already been solved by another user.

But, in some cases (rarely) you may find that your vendor doesn't support Linux, which then leaves you with three options. One, you can run the program in [Wine](#), a free open source Windows emulator that allows applications designed for Windows to run in Linux. Check the forums and ask questions to see it is possible to do this with your program. If it isn't possible, and the application is vital for your work, then the next best thing is to have a [dual installation of Ubuntu and Windows](#). This way, you can use Ubuntu most of the time but switch to Windows when it suits you. However, I must warn you that this could slow down your computer. You can also install Ubuntu from within Windows using [Wubi](#). Finally, you could always purchase a different program that works in Linux, especially if the application only costs a few pennies and moving to Ubuntu is a stronger motivator.

Installation

Now that all the housekeeping is in order, let's get right into the installation process.

Download Ubuntu

Start by downloading the disc image from the [Ubuntu download page](#). You will need a blank DVD or USB stick with at least 3 gigs of free space. If you prefer, you could also download the [Ubuntu](#)

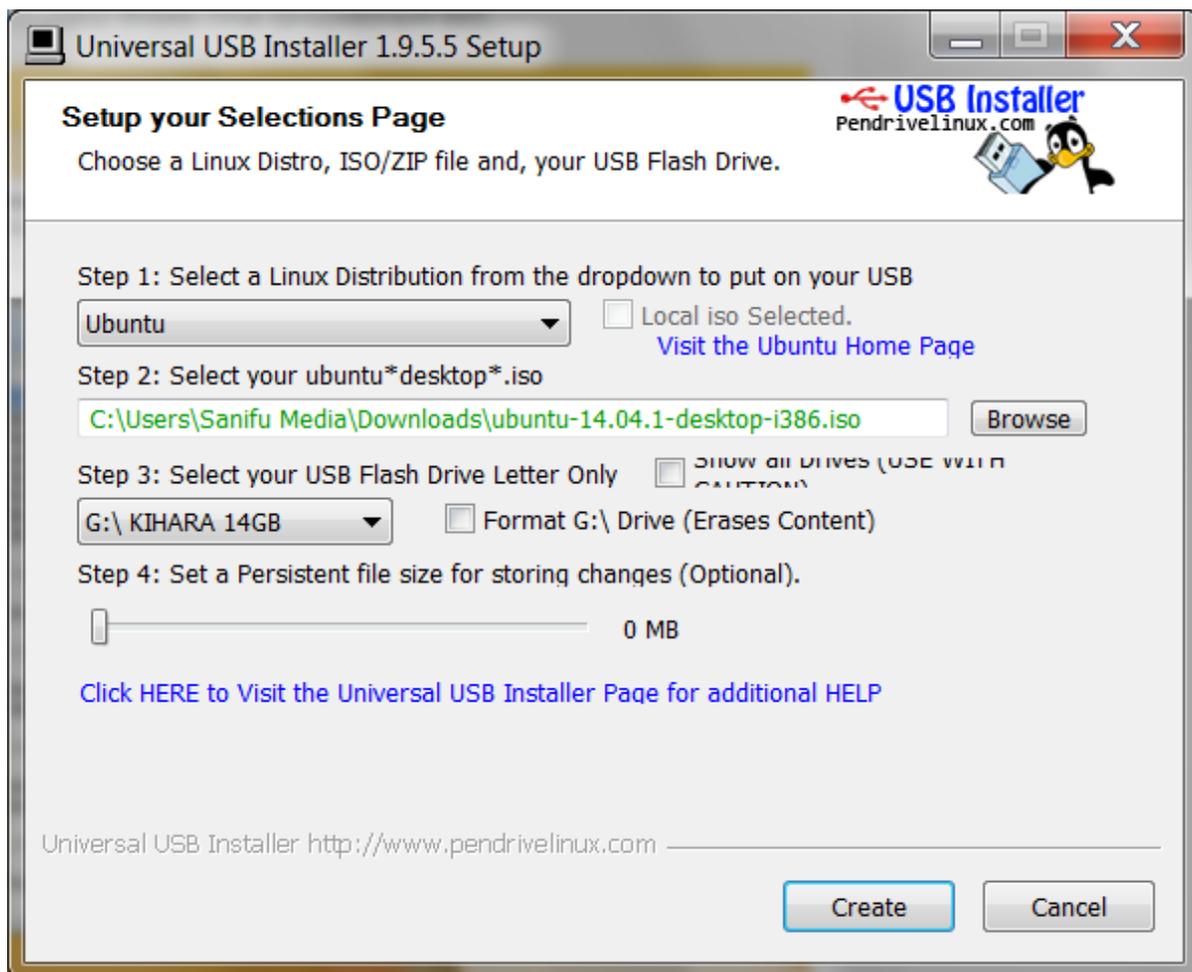
[torrent version](#) which downloads faster.



The screenshot shows the Ubuntu Desktop download page. At the top, it says "Download Ubuntu Desktop". Below that, it features the title "Ubuntu 14.04.1 LTS" and a description: "The latest version of the Ubuntu operating system for desktop PCs and laptops, Ubuntu 14.04.1 LTS comes with five years of security and maintenance updates, guaranteed." There is a link to "Ubuntu 14.04.1 LTS release notes". On the right side, there is a dropdown menu labeled "Choose your flavour" with "64-bit" selected, and a prominent orange "Download" button.

Burn To DVD/ Bootable USB Stick

Once the file is done downloading, burn the ISO file to DVD or create a bootable USB Stick on Windows. The best way to create a bootable USB stick is to Download Pen Drive Linux's USB Installer.



Make sure your USB drive is Fat16/Fat32/NTFS formatted, otherwise it will not boot. If unsure, transfer any contents in the drive to another stick. Go to My Computer, right click on the drive and click "Format". Leave the file system field at "FAT 32(Default)" and click "Start."

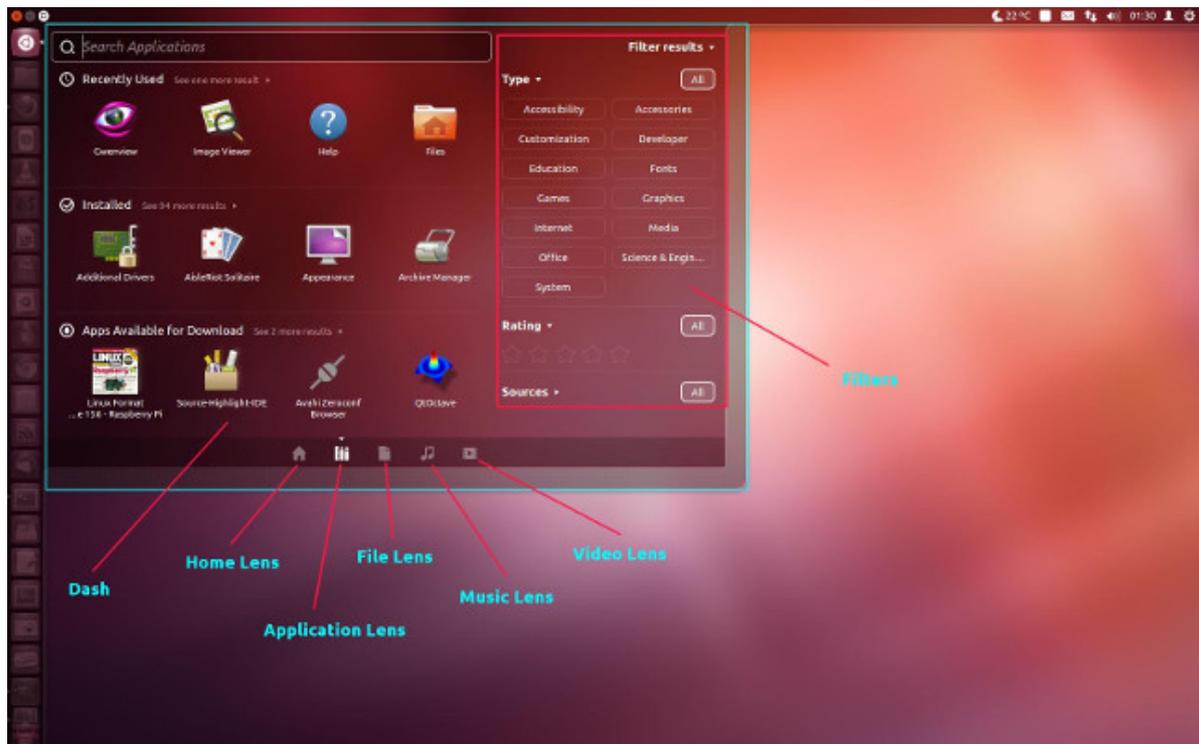
The process should take a few minutes and you can then create the bootable USB stick and proceed to the next stage.

First Boot

Once you have created your Ubuntu Disc or USB drive, insert into the PC and restart. The PC will boot into the live Ubuntu Environment. You will notice that you can play around with Ubuntu before committing to the full install.

Get a feel of it and once satisfied, select English, install Ubuntu and click "Continue". After that, it's really just a matter of following the installation prompts and making selections based on your preferences. Some highlights include a prompt to replace your Windows 7 installation and encrypt your disc for added security. Once you have entered a computer name, username and password, click "Continue" and the installation begins. I must say I found this really fast when compared to my past experience with Windows installations. It took exactly five minutes to completely install Ubuntu and get a prompt to restart the computer. Make sure you eject the DVD or USB before restarting. In the login screen, enter the credentials you set during installation.

Getting A Feel For The Unity Desktop



Ubuntu's default desktop is known as Unity. There are several other [Linux desktop environments](#) which you can experiment with once you get the hang of things. It actually looks a bit like the Windows 7 desktop when you see it for the first time. The main difference is of course the color and the location of the Windows Taskbar equivalent, which is aptly named the "Launcher", located on the left side of your screen. This is where you "dock" your application shortcuts in much the same way as you would pin and unpin Windows programs to the Taskbar. Unlike Windows 7, you cannot change the location of the Launcher.

Instead of a System Tray, you have Status Menus (Indicators) at the top right of your screen. Here you will find several menus including; Network , Sound, Messaging, Clock, Session and others.

To view other installed applications, click the Dash icon in the upper left corner of your screen to open the Dash. The dash is similar to the Windows 7 start menu. To find an application, type its name in the search field or search the categories. You can also navigate the Dash using Lens (Home, Applications, File, Music and Video), plug-gable elements to the Dash, as shown in the screen capture above. An application appears in the launcher for as long as it's running.

Inside the File Manager (Files), you will see your Home folder which contains several folders; Documents, Downloads, Videos, Pictures and a few more. This is where you store your files.

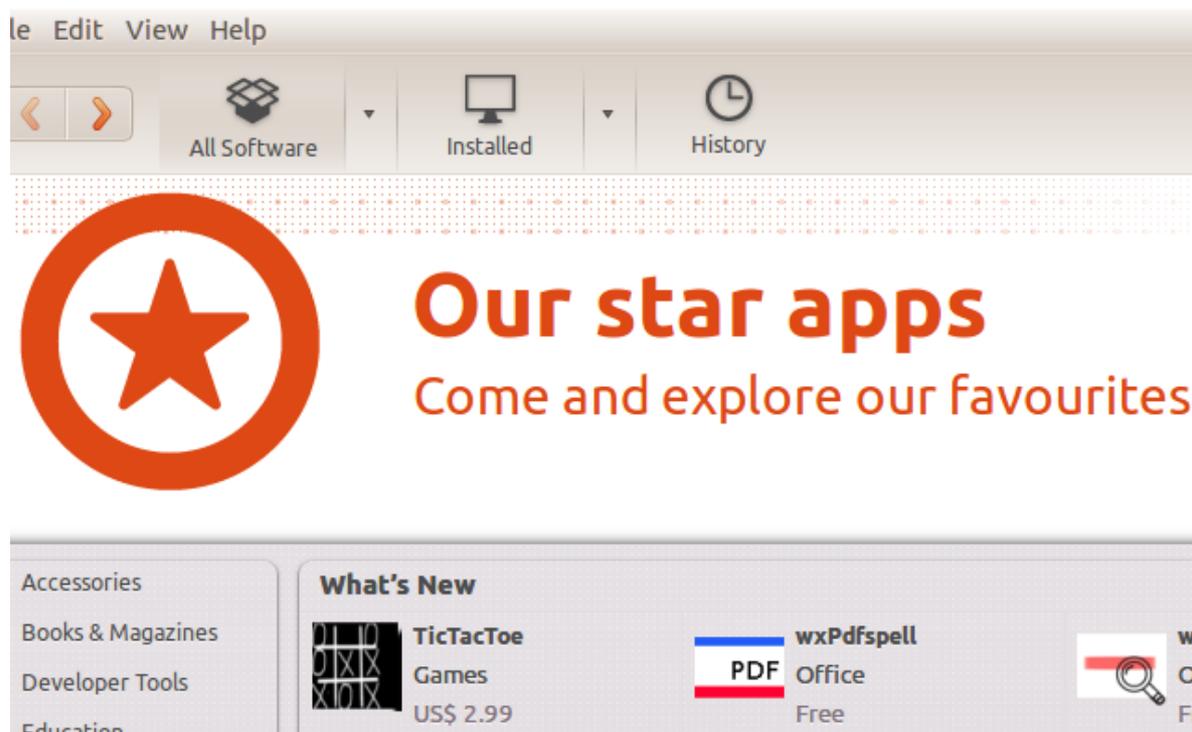
One of the features that Windows 7 users will find useful is the Workspace Switcher. Do you sometimes feel that the Windows desktop is too small especially when you are running several applications? If so, this feature should interest you. With the Workspace Switcher, you can have several instances of self-contained virtual desktops running. Switch between the workspaces using *Ctrl+Alt+arrow* keys.

A Few Beginner Hiccups

Being new to Linux, there are invariably some beginner issues you will encounter. The following

are a few speed bumps that you may encounter coming from a Windows background.

The Linux Software Repository



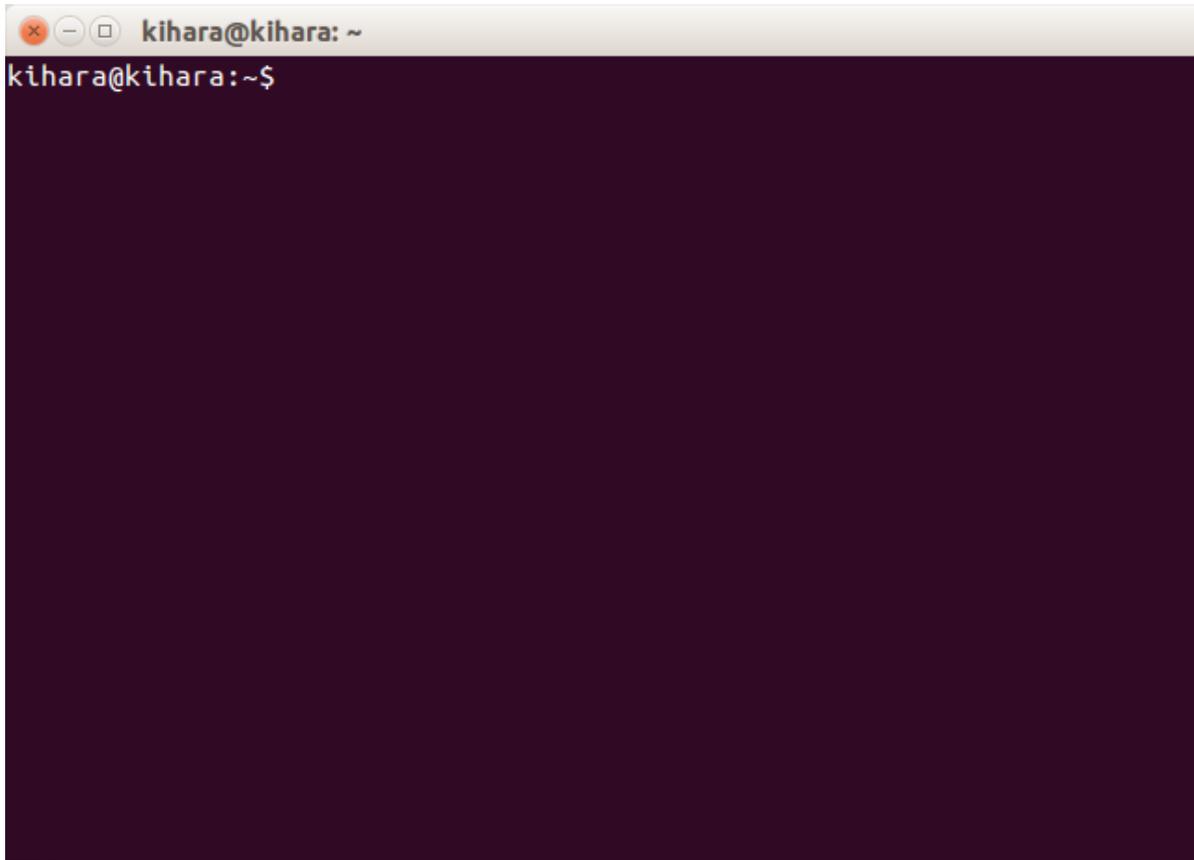
Smartphones introduced application stores to many people. But, the Linux community already had an “app store” long before Apple and Google came up with the now popular iTunes and Play store respectively. Linux software repositories have been around for decades. They contain hundreds of free open source applications to do just about anything.

To install a program in Ubuntu, you don’t need to search Google and run the risk of installing a malware-laden product. Simply visit the Ubuntu Software Center on the launcher and look for the shopping bag icon with the letter “A” .

Ubuntu also comes pre-installed with a bunch of software out of the box. This includes: LibreOffice, Firefox browser, Thunderbird mail, Transmission Bit Torrent client, Shotwell photo viewer and a host of other useful applications. Click the “Installed” tab in the Software Center to see what’s already included.

For more applications, search and when you find something that meets your needs, click install. Every application in the software center comes with brief notes explaining what the application does. A good way to find popular software is to look at the “Top Rated Recommendations” under “All Software”.

The Terminal/Command Line Interface (CLI)



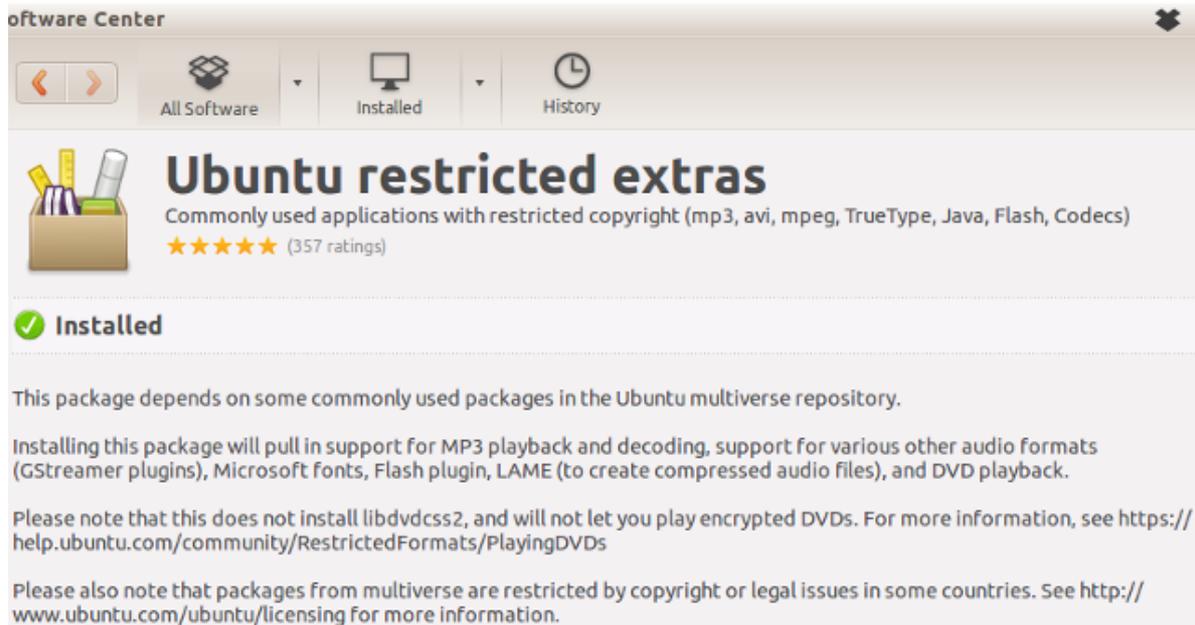
If you have never seen a command line, then you may have a bit of a learning curve in Ubuntu. The Windows command line is rarely used by the average user, at least not since the mid-1990s in MSDOS. In pop culture, the command line is associated with geeks and hackers. When most people think of a command line, the picture that comes to mind is that of a geek wearing thick glasses and typing away furiously at a black screen.

But, this morbid fear of the command line is misplaced. It's actually easy to learn and helps with complex tasks including installing packages. To launch the Terminal press and hold *Ctrl+alt+T*. Learn and practice a few commands daily and within a few days, typing commands into the command line will become second nature. Read our quick Guide to [getting started with the Linux command line](#). After that, read our list of [40 essential Linux commands](#) with detailed explanation of what each command does.

Installing Applications

One of the major differences between Ubuntu and Windows is that applications come as packages containing all the files that the application needs in order to run. Programs also have what are known as package dependencies; which simply means that the program cannot run before the dependencies are first installed. Dependencies are commonly shared with other applications so in most cases, once the initial files are installed, you won't need to install them again for a different program. You will occasionally be prompted to install the dependencies before installing a program.

Ubuntu Restricted Extras



software Center

All Software | Installed | History

Ubuntu restricted extras

Commonly used applications with restricted copyright (mp3, avi, mpeg, TrueType, Java, Flash, Codecs)
★★★★★ (357 ratings)

✓ Installed

This package depends on some commonly used packages in the Ubuntu multiverse repository.

Installing this package will pull in support for MP3 playback and decoding, support for various other audio formats (GStreamer plugins), Microsoft fonts, Flash plugin, LAME (to create compressed audio files), and DVD playback.

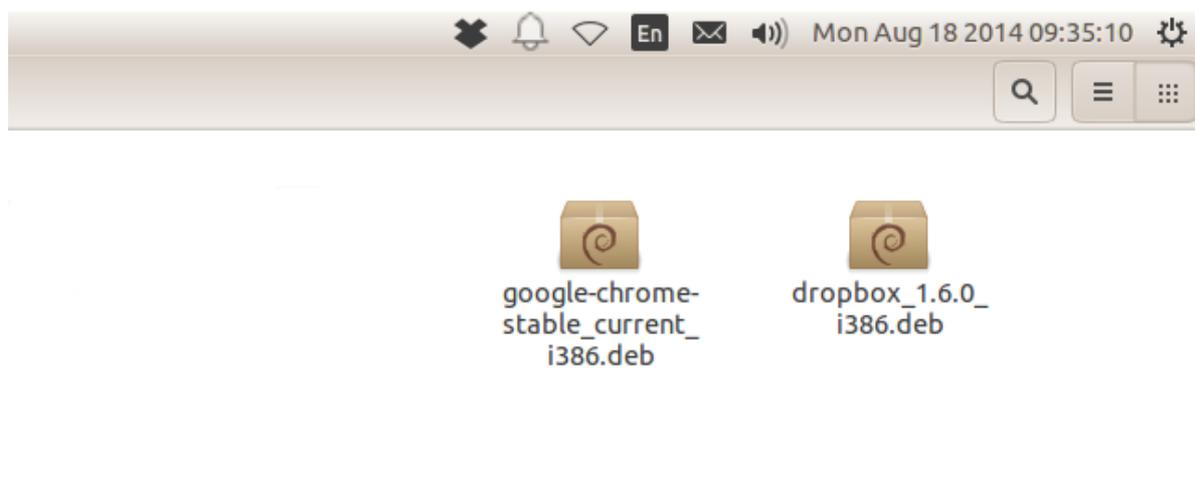
Please note that this does not install libdvdcss2, and will not let you play encrypted DVDs. For more information, see <https://help.ubuntu.com/community/RestrictedFormats/PlayingDVDs>

Please also note that packages from multiverse are restricted by copyright or legal issues in some countries. See <http://www.ubuntu.com/ubuntu/licensing> for more information.

This is possibly the first package you should install once you fire up Ubuntu. This is because, out of the box, you won't be able to do a couple of things such listen to MP3s and watch DVDs. You also won't be able to browse sites that require Flash and Java. This isn't enabled by default because Ubuntu doesn't have the legal right to distribute codecs and other copyrighted technology on the installation disc.

Ubuntu Restricted Extras is a collection of software that pulls in support for MP3, several other audio formats, Microsoft fonts, Flash, LAME and DVD playback. To install, simply visit the Software Center, type in "Ubuntu Unrestricted Extras" in the search bar and click "Install". You can also find it under "Top Rated Software."

.Deb Files



System tray: [Network] [Sound] [En] [Mail] [Speaker] Mon Aug 18 2014 09:35:10 [Settings]

Search: [Search] [Menu] [Grid]

Files:

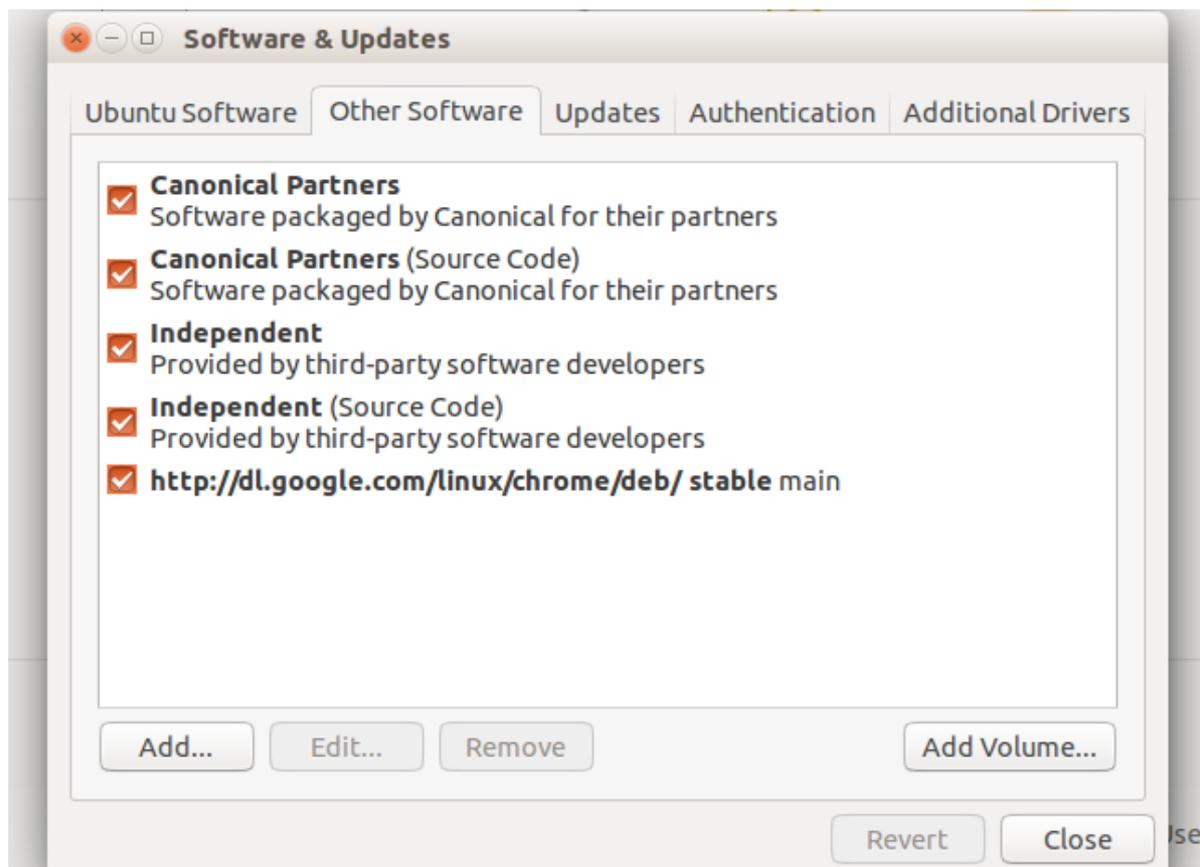
- google-chrome-stable_current_i386.deb
- dropbox_1.6.0_i386.deb

In some cases, you may not find the application you want in the Software Center and as mentioned earlier, you have to search the developer's download page for a Linux version. Linux applications from most websites are often packaged as .deb files. Google Chrome is one such

example. A .deb file is created for each different Linux distribution. To install .deb files, you will need a simple tool known as Gdebi. Open a Terminal window using *Ctrl+Alt+T* and type `sudo apt-get install gdebi`. Once you have installed GDebi, use the File Manager to find the Google Chrome package. Its files will look similar to the screen capture above.

Double click the package. This will install the program and add it will be added to your application lens. You can lock it to your Launcher for quick access. The process to install all .deb files is the same, provided all dependencies have been met.

Canonical Partner Repositories



There are also other popular applications which are not in the Ubuntu Software Center but are available in the Canonical Partner Repository. One such example is Skype. Canonical is the company that leads the Ubuntu Project. To install Skype, you have to add the Canonical Partner Repository. There are two ways to do this, go to the command line and type:

```
sudo add-apt-repository "deb http://archive.canonical.com/ $(lsb_release -sc) partner"
```

Alternatively, navigate to System Settings (the gear and wrench icon) on your Launcher, click on "Software & Updates" and under "Other Software", tick both Canonical Partner repositories. Click close and reload to update the database.

This gives you access to proprietary and closed-source software such as Skype that are not enabled by default. You can then install the program(s) via the Software Center or using the Terminal command `sudo apt-get install skype`.

Are You Ready?

Remember, if you run into problems with anything, Ubuntu has one of the largest [online user communities](#). Whatever issue you face, there is a great likelihood that someone else has experienced it before and a solution is available. MakeUseOf also has a large database of [Linux articles](#) which provide solutions to some of the most common issues, useful hacks and tips.

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