For years, the lightweight Xfce has been a popular desktop environment for Linux distributions running on older hardware, thanks to its lower demand on resources as compared to KDE and GNOME; it's an ideal desktop for machines with less than 256MB of memory. Until recently, however, using Xfce was a little laborious, but with its latest release last month, Xfce is a much more usable desktop environment.

Xfce is a mature application, with its first release in 1997. Over the years and through several versions, Xfce has added features and components such as drag and drop, a window manager, and multilingual support. It has several distributions built around it, including Zenwalk, based on Slackware, and Xubuntu, based on Ubuntu.

Xfce 4.4 is the first Xfce version with enough features to be comparable to GNOME and KDE. It has a real file manager called Thunar, nice SVG icons, and even some eye candy.

The easiest way to install Xfce is by using your distribution's package manager to get the appropriate binaries. The Xfce project also releases four easy-to-use graphical installers.