How new Linux users can increase their odds of success

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The Linus Tech Tips YouTube channel has been putting out a series of videos called the Switching to Linux Challenge that has been causing a bit of a stir in the Linux community. I've been keeping an eye on these developments, and thought it was a good time to weigh in with my thoughts. This article focuses on how new Linux users can increase their odds for success? I have also written a companion article, ?What desktop Linux needs to succeed in the mainstream?, which looks at the other side of the problem.

Linux is, strictly speaking, an operating system kernel, which is a small component of a larger system. However, in the common usage, Linux refers to a family of operating systems which are based on this kernel, such as Ubuntu, Fedora, Arch Linux, Alpine Linux, and so on, which are referred to as distributions. Linux is used in other contexts, such as Android, but the common usage is generally limited to this family of Linux ?distros?. Several of these distros have positioned themselves for various types of users, such as office workers or gamers. However, the most common Linux user is much different. What do they look like?

The key distinction which sets Linux apart from more common operating systems like Windows and macOS is that Linux is open source. This means that the general public has access to the source code which makes it tick, and that anyone can modify it or improve it to suit their needs. However, to make meaningful modifications to Linux requires programming skills, so, consequentially, the needs which Linux best suits are the needs of programmers. Linux is the preeminent operating system for programmers and other highly technical computer users, for whom it can be suitably molded to purpose in a manner which is not possible using other operating systems. As such, it has been a resounding success on programmer?s workstations, on servers in the cloud, for data analysis and science, in embedded workloads like internet-of-things, and other highly technical domains where engineering talent is available and a profound level of
customization is required.

The Linux community has also developed Linux as a solution for desktop users, such as the mainstream audience of Windows and macOS. However, this work is mostly done by enthusiasts, rather than commercial entities, so it can vary in quality and generally any support which is available is offered on a community-run, best-effort basis. Even so, there have always been a lot of volunteers interested in this work?programmers want a working desktop, too. Programmers also want to play games, so there has been interest in getting a good gaming setup working on Linux. In the past several years, there has also been a commercial interest with the budget to move things forward: Valve Software. Valve has been instrumental in developing more sophisticated gaming support on Linux, and uses Linux as the basis of a commercial product, the Steam Deck

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