Gentoo User's Response to Slacker who tried Gentoo

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This is a gentoo user's answer to Mr. Slacker-Tries-His-Hand-at-Gentoo. If you missed the story on OSNews entitled
Slacker Tries His Hand at Gentoo [1], you really must read it. It's hyperlinked back

He begins by describing his ordeal of reaching his first goal of getting to a graphic user interface, KDE to be more
exact. I had to laugh not only at the situation, but also at the manner in which the author describes it. Carefully chosen,
consisely written, witty words grip the reader and don't let go. ...if they've ever set up a Gentoo box. I swear it could
have been me telling the story. I can relate brother, I been there.

Well, except for the USE stuff. I had researched pretty good while setting up my file to see just what I wanted in mine
and then I knew I wasn't gonna find KDE upon first reboot. Heck, I hadn't even put X on mine yet. But he's right, it
takes another day to get X and kde installed. And he's right on the mark almost with the docs. That's exactly how you
feel. After the initial install, which is pretty sequential and complete, the rest becomes kinda confusing. I actually found
the forums [2] to be of more help. However, I did exactly what he did. I figured emerge xfree86 (at the time) and then I
did `emerge kde`. But he's right, that doesn't work anymore. Gentoo has split kde up in all these diffferent packages
for every thing. It's a nightmare. I quit using Gentoo ebuilds for KDE after my first attempt at an upgrade of it. I'd
rather just download the 12 or 15 tarballs from KDE than go thru the pain of messing up that silly kde upgrade. It took
forever to clean most of it up. And portage still thinks I have some of those stupid meta files somewhere. It's a
nightmare. But once upon a time `emerge kde` used to work perfect.

Mr. Slacker is right on the money about that learning Gentoo instead of linux thing too. But aren't all distros like that
really? I had quite a bit of basic commandline experience before beginning to use Gentoo, so I've been in a tug-o'-war
since between whether to learn the gentoo way of doing stuff or just doing something the way I already know how on a
regular linux box. So, my everyday box is a mix actually. It does cause some annoying portage issues. But some things
"the gentoo way" is so fscked up that you just *have* to use the regular linux way to do it. I could write a whole seperate
article on the differences just in their Apache2 package. tsck tsck. It's a nightmare and not only that, the packagers keep
changing their minds about file location and even structure and wording. What a pain! I always wondered why Gentoo
would mess up a perfectly good package like Apache2. However, that's kinda moot as we were talking about a desktop,
not a server. But the KDE and nvidia driver examples will work here. In response to his complaint concerning all the
other hardware that wasn't working, well, yeah, you got to set up your own hardware. But that's usually the fun part.

To me setting up Gentoo was like having a baby. It's a long, uncomfortable, even dangerously gut-wretching
agonizingly painful birth, but you forget that as soon as you gaze into the face of your beloved Gentoo desktop. It's my
baby. This is a part of me. He will carry on the family legacy long after I have passed. Yeah, you have to learn how to
relate to it. You try to let it do it's thing, but if it gets out of line and breaks kde into a hundred little packages or puts all
apache's configuration files in strange locations with different names, you have to guide it to the KDE ftp mirror or
apache's website to download tarballs. Got to keep em in line sometimes, but they are worth all the trouble.

For all the thousands of packages that do install fairly normally with the simple "emerge whatever" command, portage

is wonderful. As with any operating system you choose, you have to take the bad with the good. One has to weigh the sides and make an informed choice. Gentoo isn't for everybody, and Mr. Slacker's article can help one decide.

The best thing of all is Gentoo is source based. One you go source, you never go back. It's built for my machine. There isn't another system just like anywhere. Althought one package that isn't is mplayer. It is an example of some of the packages on the system that don't build according to your USE flags. In addition, it's hard to build with customized config options if you use emerge for them. Alright it's a pain in the *rse. But for the packages that don't take in account the USE flags, the defaults are good enough for me on most of packages and you can sit there and watch portage write to stdout as it downloads each package (most packages) from the source and watch as it builds. Well, okay, granted a lot of packages are patched pretty heavy. But the patch as well as the source is right there, you can read the file and see what's was added... if you wanted to.... not that *I* do... But it's my baby. I made it. I love it. Freedom, choice, control, ownership... whatever you want to call it. That is the greatest advantage to Gentoo.

So, yes, it's like a baby, you forget all the pain setting everything up and learning where Gentoo puts everything once it gets here. After that it's mostly carefree. Instead you rejoice at watching it run and play and grow and enjoy the daily interaction and occasional intervention.

So, in conclusion, the author of [Slacker Tries His Hand at Gentoo](http://www.osnews.com/story.php?news_id=12129) [1] was right on money in his article/review of Gentoo. It was hilarious too. He had me laughing 'til tears. But for all the reasons he states for hating Gentoo are all the reasons I love it. I guess I'm a tinkerer. If I didn't have something to fix, I'd be bored. That's what I like to do. I'm one of those people who spent hours reading about every enhancement, studying the performance vs. quality screenshots, and carefully setting up their Doom3 DoomConfig.cfg file. Heck, if something ain't broke, you ain't tweaked enough.

I loved the process of setting up Gentoo. It was fun and educational. The early stages aren't Gentoo specific and as stated, once up and running, you don't *have* to do much more tinkering. It's another choice.

Anyway, it's a great read. Go [read it at OSNews](http://www.osnews.com/story.php?news_id=12129) [1] if you haven't already. Ha ha, you were expecting me to give him 'what-for' wudn't ya?

Source URL: http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/2929

Links:
[1] http://www.osnews.com/story.php?news_id=12129
[2] http://forums.gentoo.org