



Booting Ubuntu for the First Time

Now that Ubuntu is installed, you'll no doubt want to get started immediately, and that's what Part 3 of this book is all about. In later chapters, we'll examine specific details of using Ubuntu and getting essential hardware up and running. We'll also look at personalizing Ubuntu so that it works in a way that's best for you on a day-to-day basis. But right now, the goal of this chapter is to get you doing the same things you did under Windows as quickly as possible.

This chapter explains how to start up Ubuntu for the first time and work with the desktop. It also looks at how some familiar aspects of your computer, such as using the mouse, are slightly enhanced under Ubuntu.

Starting Up

If you've chosen to dual-boot with Windows, the first Ubuntu screen you'll see is the boot loader menu, which appears shortly after you switch on your PC. If Ubuntu is the only operating system on your hard disk, you'll see a brief one-line message pointing out that if you press a key, you can access this boot menu. You won't need to do so unless you want to access the recovery mode boot settings. In fact, if Ubuntu is the only operating system on your computer, you can skip to the next section of this chapter.

Note The boot loader is actually a separate program called GRUB. This program kicks off everything and starts Ubuntu.

The boot loader menu you see when your PC is set to dual-boot has three or four choices, as shown in Figure 7-1. The top one is what you need to boot Ubuntu. The Ubuntu option will be selected automatically within 10 seconds, but you can press Enter to start immediately.

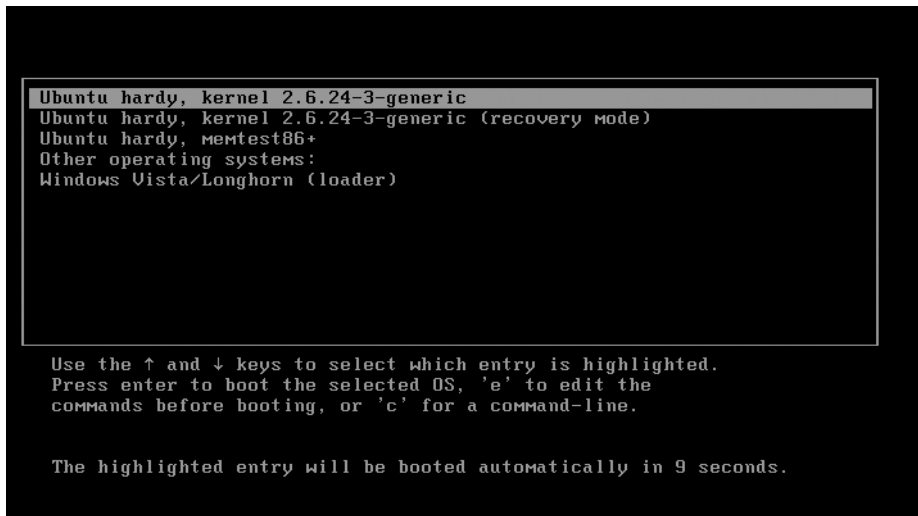


Figure 7-1. *The default choice is fine on the boot menu, so press Enter to start Ubuntu.*

You should find that you also have an entry for Windows, located at the bottom of the list. To boot into Windows, simply use the cursor keys to move the selection to the appropriate option, and then press Enter.

You should also see an entry ending in “(recovery mode).” This is a little like Safe Mode within Windows. If you select recovery mode, Ubuntu will boot to a text mode menu with three options:

Resume – Resume normal boot: This option allows you to boot normally, as if you didn’t need to fix anything at all. However, the big difference with this option compared to a graphical boot is that Ubuntu boots in text mode, which means that you are able to see system messages as Ubuntu is booting up. If you have problems with booting Ubuntu, you can run in recovery mode and choose this option to find error messages in the boot process.

Root – Drop to root shell prompt: This option boots with conservative system settings and then presents you with a command-line prompt in administrator mode (you run as the *root* user—see Chapter 29 for more information on the root user account). The typical usage of the administrator prompt is to change passwords of users if they forgot their passwords, free up disk space to run normally, and uninstall buggy software to bring back system stability. The system commands that can be used for recovery are *passwd*, *mv*, *rm*, *cp*, *mkdir*, and *dpkg*. These are discussed further in Chapters 13 (copying, deleting, and moving files and folders), 28 (uninstalling packages) and 29 (changing passwords). When you’ve finished, type *exit* to return to the recovery menu.

Xfix – Try to fix X server: This option replaces the current keyboard, screen, mouse, and graphics configuration with the information it has gathered through autodetection. Refer to the “Graphical Problems” section in Chapter 6 for information about troubleshooting X server-related issues

When you update your system software, you might find new entries are added to the boot menu list. This is because the kernel has been updated. The kernel is the central system file that Ubuntu relies upon, and essentially, the boot menu exists to let you choose between different kernels.

Without exception, the topmost entry is the one you’ll want each time to boot Ubuntu, because this will always use the most recent version of the kernel, along with the latest versions of other system software. The entries beneath this will start the system with older versions of the kernel and are provided in the unlikely situation that the latest kernel causes problems.

Note All operating systems need a boot loader—even Windows. However, the Windows boot loader is hidden and simply starts the operating system. Under Ubuntu, the boot loader usually has a menu, so you can select Linux or perhaps an option that lets you access your PC for troubleshooting problems. When you gain some experience with Ubuntu, you might choose to install two or more versions of Linux on the same hard disk, and you’ll be able to select among them using the boot menu.

Logging In

After Ubuntu has booted, you should see the login screen, as shown in Figure 7-2. Here, you enter the username and the password you created during the installation process. Clicking the Options button in the bottom-left corner of the screen brings up a menu from which you can opt to reboot the system or shut it down.

The user account you created during installation is similar to what Windows Vista and XP refer to as an “administrator” account. This means that the account you use on a day-to-day basis can also change important system settings and reconfigure the system. However, the main difference between Ubuntu and Windows is that you’ll need to enter your password to make any serious changes, rather than clicking in a confirmation dialog box, as you do with Vista (of course, XP doesn’t have any kind of confirmation requirement at all!).

Don’t worry about damaging anything accidentally; trying to reconfigure the system or access a serious system setting will invariably bring up a password prompt. You can simply click the Cancel button if you don’t want to continue.

Note Unlike some versions of Linux, Ubuntu doesn't encourage the user to use an actual root (or administrator) account. Instead, it operates on the principle of certain ordinary users adopting superuser privileges that allow them to administer the system when they need to. The user account you create during setup has these privileges.



Figure 7-2. *Type your username, enter your password, and then press Enter to log in.*

Exploring the Desktop

After you've logged in, you'll see the welcoming theme of the Ubuntu desktop, as shown in Figure 7-3. Feel free to click around and see what you can discover. There's little chance of you doing serious damage, so let yourself go wild and play around with your new operating system! However, be careful if any dialog boxes ask you to type your password—this indicates that you've clicked an action that has the potential to change the system in a fundamental way.

Tip Although you can't damage the system by messing around, you might find that you somehow cause programs to work incorrectly. Don't worry if this happens. You can always create a new account for yourself following the instructions in Chapter 29. When using this new account, you should find all the settings are returned to normal, and you'll be back to square one!

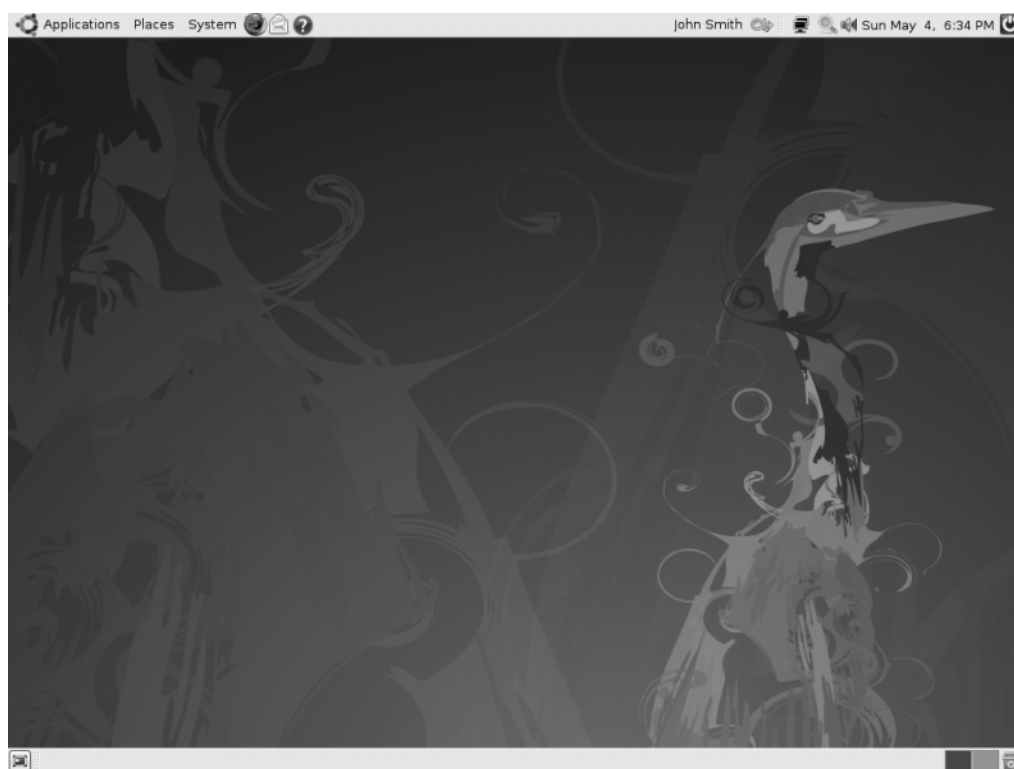


Figure 7-3. *Feel free to experiment with the Ubuntu desktop and see what you can discover.*

First Impressions

The first thing you'll notice is that the desktop is clean compared to Windows. You don't have a lot of icons littering the screen.

Of course, you can fill the desktop with all of the icons you please. As with Windows, you can save files to the desktop for easy access. In addition, you can click and drag icons from any of the menus onto the desktop in order to create shortcuts.

Along the top of the desktop, you see three menus:

Applications: This menu is the equivalent of the Windows Start ► Programs menu. Here, you'll find access to all the software available under Ubuntu.

Places: This menu is somewhat like My Computer in Windows, in that it gives quick access to locations within the file system. The Places menu also provides access to network locations, such as file servers (this will probably be important only if you use Ubuntu in a business context).

System: This menu is a little like the Windows Control Panel, in that it allows you to change various system settings. The Preferences submenu lets you change trivial system settings, such as the screensaver, or start new system services, such as the remote desktop service that lets you view your desktop across a network connection. The Administration submenu lets you change underlying system settings, such as configuring new hardware (like printers) and installing software.

The counterpart of the Windows Recycle Bin lives at the bottom-right corner of the screen as a small icon and is called the Trash. Although diminished in stature compared to the Windows representation, it works in a similar way: you can drag icons and files onto the icon to delete them, and you can click it to open the Trash and salvage files.

Note There's one important difference between the Recycle Bin in Windows and Ubuntu's Trash. By default, the Recycle Bin uses only 10% of the remaining space on a hard disk. After this, the oldest items are automatically deleted. With Ubuntu's Trash, the only limit on the contents is the remaining free space on the disk. Nothing will ever be removed from the Trash unless you specifically choose to do remove it.

The mouse works largely as it does in Windows, in that you can move it around and click on things. You can also right-click virtually everything and everywhere to bring up context menus, which usually let you alter settings. And you should find that the scroll wheel in between the mouse buttons lets you scroll windows.

Whenever Ubuntu is busy, an animated, circular icon will appear that is similar in principle to the hourglass icon used in Windows. It also appears when programs are being launched.

Caution Bear in mind that Ubuntu isn't a clone of Windows and doesn't try to be. Although it works in a similar way—by providing menus, icons, and containing programs within windows—there are various potholes in the road that can trip up the unwary.

Shutting Down or Restarting Ubuntu

You can shut down or reboot your PC by selecting the System ► Quit menu option. Alternatively, you can click the icon at the top-right corner of the screen. Either method will open a dialog box showing icons for various options, as follows and as shown in Figure 7-4:

Log Out: This option will log you out of the current user account and return you to the Ubuntu login screen. Any open programs will be shut down automatically.

Caution During shutdown or logout operations, Ubuntu sometimes automatically shuts down applications that contain unsaved data without prompting you, so you should always save files prior to selecting any of the options here.

Lock Screen: This will enable the screensaver and password-protect the system. The only way to leave Lock Screen mode is to enter the user's password into the dialog box that will appear whenever you move the mouse or press a key.

Switch User: This will let you switch between two or more user accounts, if they're set up on the system (Chapter 29 discusses how to add user accounts). Therefore, you'll be returned to the Ubuntu login screen. Unlike the Log Out option, the user's session will continue running in the background while the computer is used to log in to a different user account. To switch back to the original user, select Switch User again, and type the original username and password. You'll be asked if you want to return to the previous session or create another session for the user. Be careful, however, because any new session will terminate the old session automatically.

Suspend: This uses your computer's suspend mode, in which most of the PC's systems are powered down except for the computer's memory. Suspend mode is designed to save power and allow a quick reactivation of the PC. Not all computers support suspend mode, however, so you should experiment to see if your computer works correctly. Ensure you save any open files before doing so.

Hibernate: This saves the contents of the computer's memory to the hard disk and then completely powers down the computer. When the computer is reactivated, the user chooses to start Ubuntu as normal, and the memory contents are read in from disk. This allows a faster startup and allows users to resume from where they were last working. For the hibernate feature to work, the swap file needs to be as large as or larger than the main memory. Ubuntu's installation program should have automatically done this, but if you didn't dedicate enough disk space to Ubuntu when repartitioning, it might not have been able to do so. The only way to find out is to attempt to hibernate your system and see if it works.

Caution Some users have reported that their computer is sometimes unable to “wake” from hibernation, so you should save any open files before hibernating as insurance against the unlikely prospect that this happens. We’ve seen this happen a few times, although hundreds of other times it’s worked fine.

Restart: This option will shut down Ubuntu and then restart the computer.

Shut Down: This will shut down Ubuntu and then power off your computer, provided its BIOS is compatible with the standard shutdown commands (all computers bought within the past five years or so are; if you find that the computer hangs at the end of the Ubuntu shutdown procedure, simply turn it off manually via the power switch).

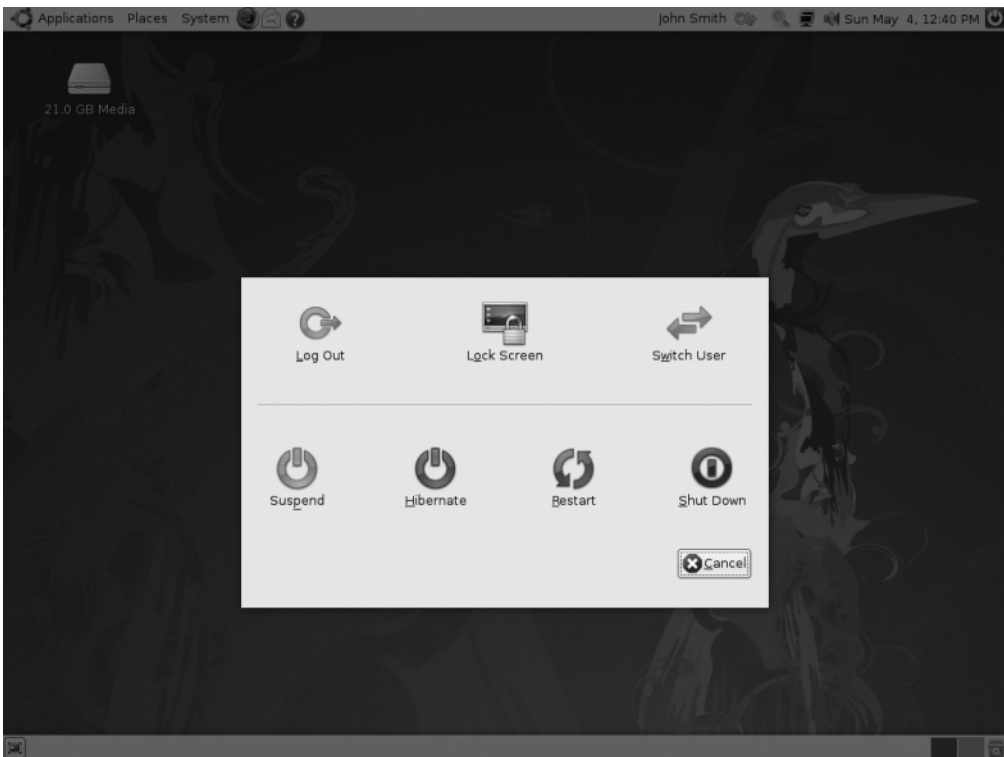


Figure 7-4. A variety of shutdown operations are available, some allowing for a quick resumption later on.

WRONG RESOLUTION!

You might find when you boot up that Ubuntu has defaulted to the wrong resolution. In other words, everything might be a little too large or too small. You might have trouble reading text, for example, or you might find that program windows fill the screen to the extent that their contents partially disappear off the edges.

Changing the resolution is simple. Select **System ► Preferences ► Screen Resolution** from the menu (at the top of the screen). In the Resolution drop-down list, select the appropriate setting for your monitor. For a 17-inch CRT monitor, the standard resolution is 1024×768 (although some people prefer 800×600). Most 17-inch TFT screens run at 1280×1024 resolution. A 15-inch TFT screen will usually run at 1024×768 resolution. For laptops, 13-inch to 15-inch LCD panels typically run at 1280×800 resolution. If you have a 15-inch CRT monitor (common on PCs made before 2000), you'll probably find 800×600 a maximum setting; others prefer 640×480. If you're in doubt as to your monitor's resolution, consult your monitor's manual for more information.

If the resolution you want isn't available, Ubuntu might have incorrectly set up your graphics card and monitor. See the "Graphical Problems" section in Chapter 6 to learn how to reconfigure the graphical subsystem.

Desktop Elements

The Ubuntu desktop is similar to that of Windows. It has the following elements:

Menus: The three menus at the top left of the screen provide access to all of Ubuntu's functionality. As noted earlier, the Applications menu provides access to programs; the Places menu provides access to the file system, and the System menu provides access to configuration settings (as well as the Log Out option). You can click and drag practically every menu entry onto the desktop in order to create a shortcut.

Icons: Although the Ubuntu desktop is largely clean, some icons are tucked away at the top and bottom of the screen. Those at the top are located to the right of the menus and allow you to start the browser, e-mail client, and help system (and they are arranged in that order). At the top right is a speaker icon that lets you alter the sound volume, along with the Quit icon (additionally, if your system is online, you might see the System Update icon—this is explained in Chapter 9). At the bottom left is the Hide Windows button that instantly minimizes all open windows to give access to the desktop underneath. At the bottom right are the two virtual desktop buttons, which I'll discuss in the "Working with Virtual Desktops" section later in this chapter, and also the Trash icon.

Note If you're dual-booting with Windows, you might see an icon at the top left of the desktop that will let you access your Windows files. On one system, this was identified as `shda1`. Double-click the icon to view the Windows file system. Similarly, if you have a memory card reader or digital camera plugged into your PC, you might see desktop icons for them too, and any inserted CD/DVD discs will also be represented by desktop icons.

Window List: The bar at the bottom of the screen, called the Window List, shows which programs are currently running (if any). As with Windows, you can simply click the button for any program to bring that window “to the top.” Alternatively, you can right-click each entry to instantly minimize or maximize that particular window.

Clock: The clock is located at the top right of the screen. Clicking it brings up a handy monthly calendar and a drop-down panel that contains a mini world map, regional time, and weather for several locations. Click it again to hide this display. Right-clicking the clock brings up a context menu. On this menu, the Preferences option lets you alter the way the date and time are displayed. The Adjust Date & Time option lets you change the time and/or date if they're incorrect.

Notification area: The speaker icon and clock are located in the notification area, which is similar to the Windows system tray. Programs that like to hang around in memory, such as the Rhythmbox media player, will add an icon in this top-right area, to allow quick access to their functions. The Software Update Notifier appears in this area to let you know that software updates are available (similar to Windows Update). Network Manager displays an icon here when you are connected to the network. The notification area also has icons for other Ubuntu tools, such as the Tracker (for searching for your data) and the Restricted Device Manager (for managing proprietary drivers). Usually, you simply need to click (or right-click) their icons to access the program features.

Tip The small bar marks the leftmost boundary of the notification area. To resize the notification area, right-click this bar and remove the check from the Lock to Panel menu entry. Then you can click and drag the bar to a different size. This might be handy if the notification area starts to fill up with icons!

BEHIND THE DESKTOP: GNOME

Although we refer to the *Ubuntu desktop*, the fundamental software behind it is created by GNOME: The Free Software Desktop Project. This is one of the most well-established organizations currently producing desktop interfaces for Linux, as well as for other versions of Unix. Its home page is www.gnome.org.

Although it's based on GNOME, Ubuntu's desktop has its own set of individual features and programs, as well as a unique look and feel. That said, it works in an almost identical way to versions of GNOME that are used in other Linux distributions, such as Fedora.

The nature of open source software—whereby anyone can take the source code and create their own version of a program—makes Ubuntu's remodeling of the GNOME desktop possible. Unlike with Windows software, more than one current version of a particular program or software suite can exist, and each is usually tailored to the particular needs of one of the various Linux distributions.

There are also versions of Ubuntu built around KDE (www.kde.org) and Xfce (www.xfce.org), two similar desktop environments. They're called Kubuntu and Xubuntu, respectively, and they're supplied on the DVD-ROM that comes with this book. For more details, including installation instructions, see Appendix D.

Quick Desktop Guides

Refer to Figure 7-5 for an annotated diagram of the desktop. The figure includes an open menu, browser window, and program window, so you can get an idea of working from the desktop.

As another handy reference, Table 7-1 lists standard Windows desktop features and where similar functionality can be found on the Ubuntu desktop.

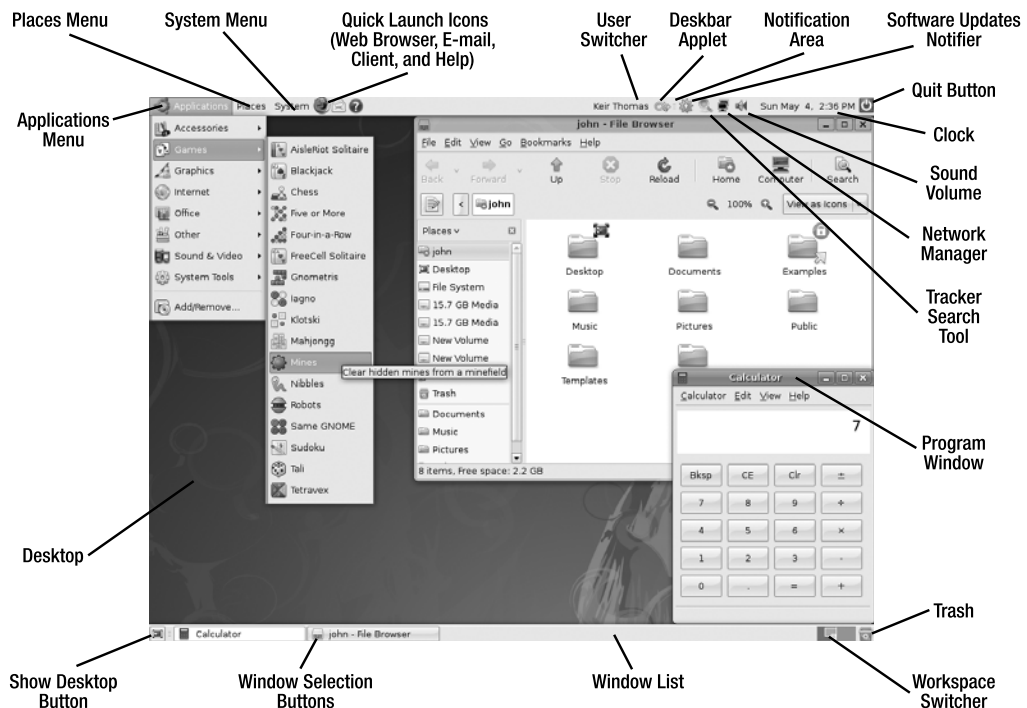


Figure 7-5. The Ubuntu desktop is broadly similar to the Windows desktop, with a few minor differences.

Table 7-1. *Windows Desktop Features Equivalents Under Ubuntu*

Windows Function	Description	Ubuntu Equivalent
My Computer/ Computer	Double-clicking the My Computer/Computer icon gives you access to the PC system. In particular, it lets you browse the file system.	Click Places ► Computer to see all the drives attached to the computer in the file browser window. If you wish to browse the file system, double-click File System in the list on the left side of the file browser window.
Recycle Bin	The Recycle Bin is the repository of deleted files.	Click the small Trash icon located at the bottom-right corner of the Ubuntu desktop.
Start menu	The Start menu provides access to many computer functions, as well as a list of the programs installed on the system.	This function is split between the Applications and System menus. The Applications menu provides access to software installed under Ubuntu. The System menu lets you configure and administer the system, similar to the Windows Control Panel.
Quick Launch toolbar	Located just to the right of the Start button, these small icons let you launch popular programs with a single click.	Similar icons are located to the right of the main menus at the top of the Ubuntu desktop. You can add your own entries here by clicking and dragging program icons from the Applications menu.
My Network Places/ Network Neighborhood	This icon is used to access network services, usually within a business environment (on newer versions of Windows, this icon is often hidden by default).	To browse the local network, click Places ► Network Servers.
My Documents/ Documents	The My Documents/Documents folder, accessed via its icon on the Windows desktop, is a storage space set aside for a user's documents.	The user's Home folder serves this purpose and can be accessed by clicking Places ► Home Folder.
Control Panel	The Windows Control Panel, located off the Start menu, allows the user to change system settings and preferences.	Similar functionality can be found under the System ► Administration and System ► Preferences menu options.
Find Files/ Start Search	Located on the Start menu, the Find Files/Start Search function lets a user search the file system for missing items.	To find files, click Places ► Search for Files. You can also click the Deskbar applet, located to the left of the notification area, or the Tracker search tool icon, located in the notification area, to search for files.
Shutdown/Reboot	At the bottom of the Start menu within Windows is the Shutdown/Reboot button.	Clicking System ► Quit brings up a dialog box that is almost identical to the one displayed in Windows XP and offers the same options as the Windows Vista shutdown submenu.

Table 7-1. *Windows Desktop Features Equivalents Under Ubuntu (Continued)*

Windows Function	Description	Ubuntu Equivalent
Windows Update	Located in the system tray, the Windows Update program checks for and downloads software updates, and then notifies you that the updates are ready to be installed at your command.	The Software Update Notifier checks for software updates, and then notifies you when updates are available. Clicking the Update Manager icon pops up a window from which you can download and install updates.
Switch User	This option is available when you choose to log off from Windows. You can keep the login session of the current user alive, while allowing another user to log in to Windows.	The User Switcher is located on the left side of the notification area. Click the username or real name, select another user to log in to the system, and supply the correct password. The current user's session will be locked, while a new session will be activated for the new logged-in user.

It will take some time to get used to the look and feel of Ubuntu; everything will initially seem odd. You'll find that the on-screen fonts look a little different from those in Windows, for example. The icons also won't be the same as you're used to in Windows. This can be a little disconcerting, but that feeling will quickly pass, and everything will become second nature. We'll look at how you can personalize the desktop in Chapter 10.

UBUNTU FOR MAC OS X USERS

Migrating to Ubuntu from Mac OS X shouldn't present too many surprises and, in some ways, Ubuntu has more in common with OS X than it does with Windows. After all, both Linux and OS X are versions of Unix. Here is a list of OS X functions alongside details of where they can be found within Ubuntu:

- **Finder (File Browsing):** Finder under OS X offers access to files, applications, and much more and is represented on the Dock by the Mac smiley face icon. In terms of file browsing functionality, clicking Places ► Home under Ubuntu is all that's needed for similar behavior.
- **Finder (Applications):** The Applications option within Finder shows a list of all installed programs. Exactly the same thing can be found by clicking the Applications button under Ubuntu, although the programs are arranged into submenus to make finding what you're looking for easier.
- **Finder (Network Locations):** Clicking the Network button in Finder allows the user to browse the local area network or access remote file servers. This functionality can be found on the Places menu—click Places ► Network Servers to browse the local network and Places ► Connect to Server to access a remote server, such as FTP (this function also allows the user to connect to local servers by specifying their addresses).

- **Macintosh HD:** Double-clicking this icon on the desktop allows the user to access the root of the Macintosh file system. To access the root file system under Ubuntu, click Places ► Computer, and then click the File System link in the left pane of the file browsing window.
- **Dock:** There is no direct analogy to the Mac OS X Dock under Ubuntu, but the Quick Launch icons to the right of the Applications/Places/System menus offer quick access to the web browser, e-mail client, and help system. Additional programs can be added to the Quick Launch toolbar by clicking and dragging them from the Applications menu. The Window List controls the active window.
- **Trash:** Located on the Dock, the Trash icon lets OS X users salvage deleted files. The same functionality is offered by the Ubuntu Trash icon, which is located at the bottom-right corner of the screen.
- **System Preferences:** Located on the Dock and in the Applications menu, the System Preferences icon offers access to all of OS X's configuration utilities. Similar functionality can be found on the System ► Preferences and System ► Administration menus.
- **Spaces (version 10.5 and above):** Spaces allow you to unclutter your desktop by arranging your applications into separate workspaces. Similar functionality is available by using virtual desktops, which are located at the right side of the Window List.
- **Spotlight (version 10.4 and above):** Spotlight allows users to search their hard disk for files. To access Ubuntu's search function, click Places ► Search for Files. You can also click the Deskbar applet, located to the left of the notification area, or the Tracker search tool icon, located in the notification area, to search for files.

Running Programs

Starting a new program is easy. Just click the Applications menu, and then choose a program from the list, just as you would in Windows using the Start ► Programs menu. The menu, shown in Figure 7-6, is split into various subcategories of programs, such as office tools, graphics programs, and even games!

If you want to start the web browser or e-mail client (arguably two of the most popular programs offered by Ubuntu), you can click their icons on the top panel bar, just to the right of the menus at the top of the screen (see Figure 7-6).

At the top right of every program window under Ubuntu, you'll see the familiar close, minimize, and maximize buttons, albeit with a slightly different look and feel than you're used to. Clicking the close button will end each program, as in Windows.

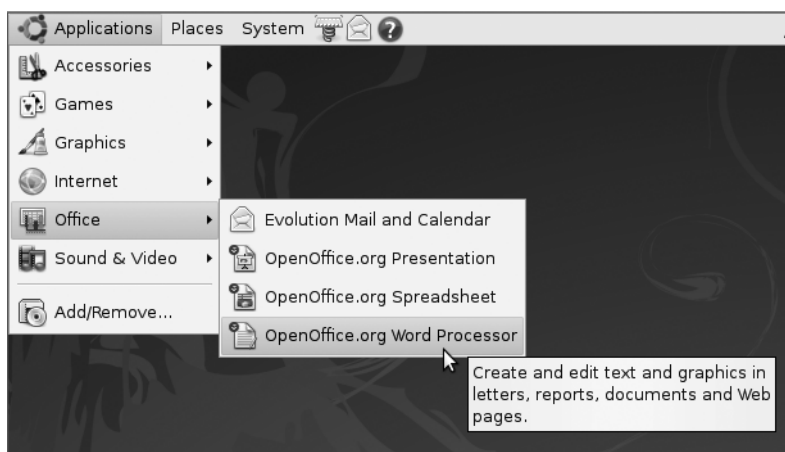


Figure 7-6. *The programs on the Applications menu are split into various categories.*

Working with Virtual Desktops

Windows works on the premise of everything taking place on top of a single desktop. When you start a new program, it runs on top of the desktop, effectively covering up the desktop. In fact, all programs are run on this desktop, so it can get a bit confusing when you have more than a couple of programs running at the same time. Which Microsoft Word window contains the document you're working on, rather than the one you've opened to take notes from? Where is that My Computer window you were using to copy files?

Ubuntu overcomes this problem by having more than one desktop area. By using the Workspace Switcher tool, located at the bottom right of the desktop, you can switch between two virtual desktops. This is best explained by a demonstration.

1. Make sure that you're currently on the first virtual desktop (click the leftmost square on the Workspace Switcher), and start up the web browser by clicking its icon at the top of the screen (the globe icon located to the right of the menus).
2. Click the second square on the Workspace Switcher. This will switch you to a clean desktop, where no programs are running—desktop number two.
3. Start up the file browser by selecting the Places ► Home menu option. A file browser window appears.
4. Click the first square in the Workspace Switcher again. You should switch back to the desktop that is running the web browser.
5. Click the second square, and you'll switch back to the other desktop, which is running the file browser.

Tip Right-clicking any of the program entries in the Window List will bring up a menu where you can move a program from one virtual desktop to another. Just select **Move to Another Workspace**.

See how it works? You can create more than two virtual desktops—as many as 36, in fact! To set the number of workspaces, right-click the Workspace Switcher and select **Preferences**. In the window that appears, click the up/down arrow next to the **Number of Workspaces** entry, as shown in Figure 7-7.



Figure 7-7. Four virtual desktops are set up by default, but you can have as many as 36.

You can also rename each virtual desktop by double-clicking its entry in the list in the Workspace Names list. This allows you to be even more organized. For example, you might reserve desktop 1 for running Internet programs and give it a name that indicates this, such as **Net Programs**. You might then use desktop 2 to run office programs, giving it an appropriate title; use desktop 3 for file browsing; and so on. This name will appear whenever you right-click a program's entry on the panel and attempt to move it to a different desktop. Additionally, these titles will appear whenever you right-click and choose to send each program window to a different desktop.

Tip Putting your mouse over the Workspace Switcher and scrolling the mouse wheel switches between the various virtual desktops instantly. Alternatively, you can hold down **Ctrl+Alt** and press the left and right cursor keys to switch between virtual desktops.

The Workspace Switcher provides a way of organizing your programs and also reducing the clutter. You can experiment with virtual desktops to see if you want to organize your work this way. Some people swear by them. Experienced Ubuntu users may have in excess of ten virtual desktops, although clearly this will appeal only to organizational geniuses! Other users think multiple desktops are a waste of time. They're certainly worth trying out to see if they suit the way you work.

Using the Mouse

As noted earlier, the mouse works mostly the same under Ubuntu as it does under Windows: a left-click selects things, and a right-click usually brings up a context menu. Try right-clicking various items, such as icons on the desktop or even the desktop itself.

Tip Right-clicking a blank spot on the desktop and selecting Create Launcher lets you create shortcuts to applications. Clicking Create Folder lets you create new empty folders.

You can use the mouse to drag icons on top of other icons. For example, you can drag a file onto a program icon in order to run it. You can also click and drag in certain areas to create an “elastic band” and, as in Windows, this lets you select more than one icon at once.

You can resize windows using the mouse in much the same way as in Windows. Just click and drag the edges and corners of the windows. In addition, you can double-click the title bar to maximize and subsequently restore windows.

Ubuntu also makes use of the third mouse button for middle-clicking. You might not think your mouse has one of these but, actually, if it's relatively modern, it probably does. Such mice have a scroll wheel between the buttons, and this can act as a third button when pressed.

In Ubuntu, the main use of the middle mouse button is in copying and pasting, as described in the next section. Middle-clicking also has a handful of other functions; for example, middle-clicking the title bar of any open window will switch to the window underneath.

Tip If your mouse doesn't have a scroll wheel, or if it has one that doesn't click, you can still middle-click. Simply press the left and right mouse buttons at the same time. This emulates a middle-click, although it takes a little skill to get right. Generally speaking, you need to press one button a fraction of a second before you press the other button.

Cutting and Pasting Text

Ubuntu offers two separate methods of cutting and pasting text. The first method is identical to that under Windows. In a word processor or another application that deals with text, you can click and drag the mouse to highlight text, right-click anywhere on it, and then select to copy or cut the text. In many programs, you can also use the keyboard shortcuts of Ctrl+X to cut, Ctrl+C to copy, and Ctrl+V to paste.

However, there's a quicker method of copying and pasting. Simply click and drag to highlight some text, and then immediately click the middle mouse button where you want the text to appear. This will copy and paste the highlighted text automatically, as shown in Figure 7-8.

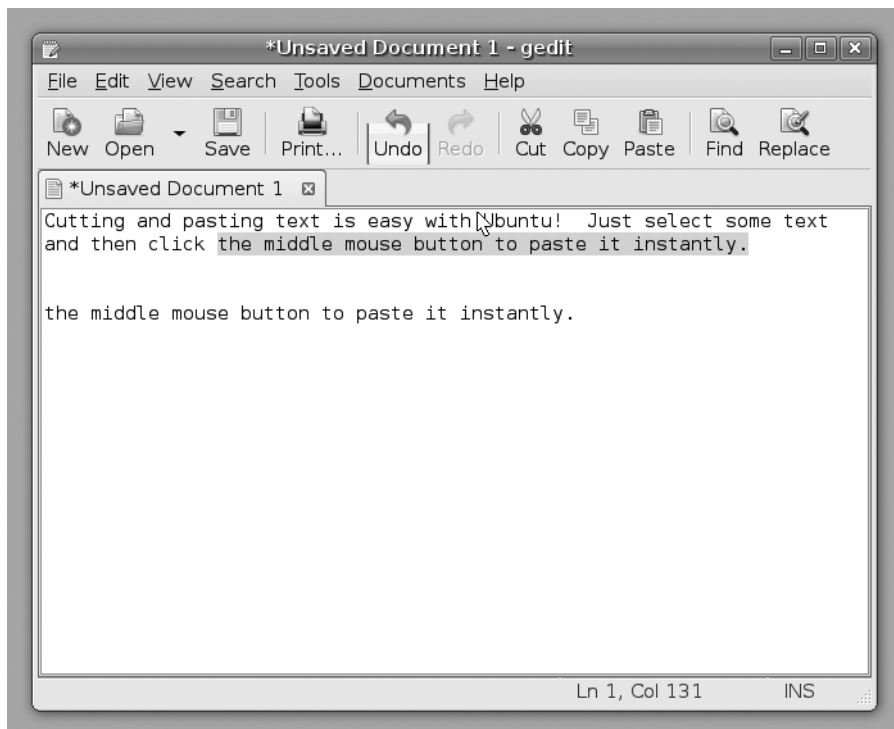


Figure 7-8. Highlight the text, and then middle-click to paste it instantly.

This special method of cutting and pasting bypasses the usual clipboard, so you should find that any text you've copied or cut previously should still be there. The downside is that it doesn't work across all applications within Ubuntu, although it does work with the majority of them.

Summary

This chapter covered booting into Ubuntu for the first time and discovering the desktop. We've looked at starting programs, working with virtual desktops, using the mouse on the Ubuntu desktop, and much more. You should have become confident in some basic Ubuntu skills and should now be ready to learn more!

In the next chapter, we'll look at getting your system up and running, focusing in particular on items of hardware that experience day-to-day use.