4. Find the Boot Order menu. This varies from manufacturer to manufacturer. Read carefully.

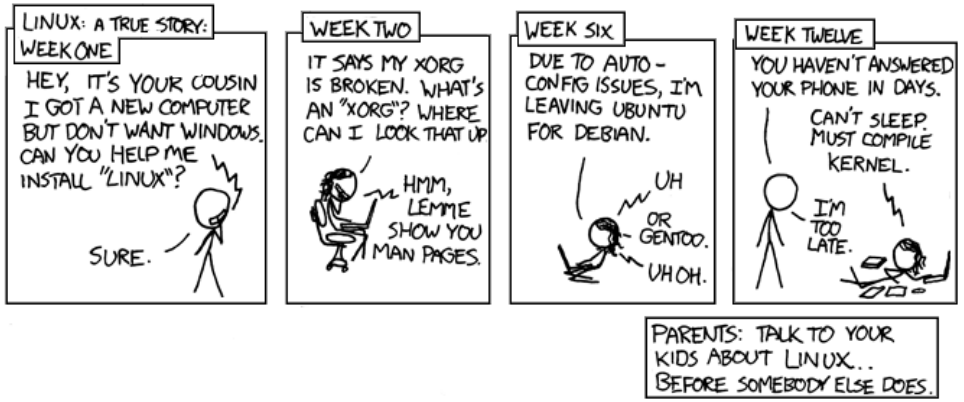
5. Move the USB to the top save and exit the BIOS. Again, this varies based on manufacturer. 'Reading carefully' is your friend.

5 ½. If the USB doesn't appear in the list, shut the computer off and try insert that USB drive in a different USB port. Some computers will not boot from some ports! Also, older computers like smaller USB drives. Try an 8GB if it didn't work on a 32 GB drive.

6. Wait patiently for Linux to boot. It will not run as fast an installed OS. If it asks you any questions, chose anything that will let you play with the machine **without installing** at first!

Once it starts: **Play!** Connect it to your WIFI or network. Try surfing the web. Try writing something in LibreOffice. Visit YouTube and play a video! This is where your journey begins! Click on every program to see what it does. Look in the settings menu and play with settings!

Then, if you're ready to start your journey, use the installer and make your machine a Linux machine! You'll only regret it for a minute or two!



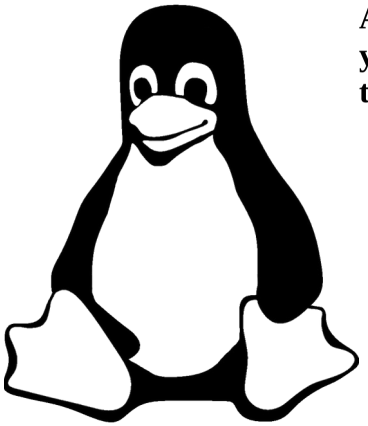
xkcd.com/456/

This flyer (in PDF) and additional resources are available here:
windrant.com/is-linux-for-you

Break things and have fun!

IS GNU Linux for you?

North Country Repair Fair, April 25th 2026
Chuck Henry, chuck@windrant.com



Ask yourself these questions. If you answer yes to most of these, you're ready to begin this journey!

- ☐ Do you have an old Windows PC that you stopped using because it was too slow?
- ☐ Are you sick of buying a new computer every 3 or 4 years? "planned obsolesce"
- ☐ Are you tired of paying for software to do something that should "just work"?
- ☐ Are you tired of viruses and malware?
- ☐ Are you tired of updates breaking your computer?
- ☐ Are you adventurous? *A broken thing is a thing to be fixed!*

Things to know before you begin:

- You'll be ***destroying*** the contents of that computer's hard drive. Nothing will survive the installation. Make backups of any files important to you.
- You'll be ***working directly*** with the operating system, frequently typing commands into a terminal or command line.
- You'll need to ***seek help from the Internet*** or from other Linux users. Your computer geek child, niece / nephew or neighbor may not be able to help (unless they too are Linux folks)!
- You'll need to ***learn new programs, new interfaces, and new ways of doing things***!
- Most popular software ***do not have*** Linux versions. But there are equivalents. (More on this later!)
- If you are a gamer: Steam has a Linux client and tools to help you play your games on Linux (Proton) but a lot of new, ***hot AAA games will not run smoothly*** under Linux.

Still interested? Read on!

Some vocabulary for Linux:

Open Source is software that is made freely available for possible modification by proving the source code of the software. You can modify any program you use if you choose to!

Operating Systems (OS) are made of two parts: the kernel (Linux) and the core utilities (GNU). The kernel is program that talks directly with the hardware in your computer. The core utilities are additional programs that manage other functionality. For the most part you don't interact with these programs directly. Both Windows and Mac OS have kernels and core utilities but generally don't encourage their direct use.

Desktop Environment (DE) is the graphical user interface (GUI) that you use a mouse, touch screen or keyboard to interact with. DEs provide windows, folders, menus that let you interact with the OS. Windows ("Sun Valley") and Mac OS ("Aqua") have a single DE available for each. Linux has *many* DEs available. You'll see GNOME and KDE Plasma most frequently.

Distribution "distro" is a combination of a specific Operating System, Desktop Environment, and default programs provided together as a set. In the Linux world, there are *many* distributions! Ubuntu, Fedora, Linux Mint, and Debian are examples. Distributions are often designed for a specific purpose: audio or video production, retro-video gaming, extremely old hardware, etc.

Repositories "repo" are catalogs of software that are known to work well with the distribution you've chosen. There are also two universal repositories: Snap and Flatpak. You can use both simultaneously but most folks don't to avoid problems.

Package Manager (Software Store) is an easy way to install (and update) software from repositories. The name of this changes from distribution to distribution but there will always be one included.

BIOS stands for "Basic Input/Output System". BIOS is a very basic operating system that initializes the hardware during start up. It usually provides hardware specific settings for memory, device boot order and attached storage. BIOS is being replaced by Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI) in newer computers. Still does the same things!

Popular Propriety Applications and their Linux Equivalents

These Linux applications do the same things as their propriety counterparts but have different interfaces. They are not clones!

- Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) ▸ LibreOffice (Writer, Calc, Impress)
- Adobe Photoshop ▸ GIMP (Graphics / Image Manipulation Program)
- Microsoft Outlook ▸ Thunderbird and many, many more email programs.
- Adobe Acrobat Reader ▸ There are hundreds of replacements. Every distribution ships with one! In GNOME it's called "Document Viewer" and in KDE Plasma it's called "Okular".

Google Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, Zoom, Slack, and Discord are all available on Windows, Mac OS and almost every Linux distribution! Just check your package manager!

Steps to try out Linux (and maybe install it)

1. Shut your computer off.
2. Plug in a Linux Live bootable USB drive.
3. Turn on your computer and access the BIOS of your computer.

Most computers have a key you can press when the computer starts to enter into the BIOS menus. This depends on your computers' hardware. Watching carefully as you turn on the computer will reveal the correct key press for your system.

Here's the more common ones:

- ASUS: F2 for all PCs, F2 or DEL for Motherboards
- Acer: F2 or DEL
- Dell: F2 or F12
- HP: F10
- Lenovo (Consumer Laptops): F2 or Fn + F2
- Lenovo (Desktops): F1
- Lenovo (ThinkPads): Enter then F1.
- Samsung: F2
- Toshiba: F2