Ubuntu Desktop User Experience

A Beginner's Roadmap to Learning Linux

This beginner's guide to the Ubuntu desktop user experience serves as an indispensable resource for beginners embarking on their Linux journey. Ubuntu is widely recommended for Linux beginners due to its massive community support, and great out-of-the-box experience. This guide combines trusted documentation, community resources, and practical learning techniques to help beginners confidently get started with Ubuntu on desktop systems or virtual machines.

Ubuntu Official Desktop Guide: An Essential Starting Point

The **Ubuntu Desktop Guide** is a key starting point for beginners, looking to become comfortable with the Ubuntu desktop environment. It provides official documentation for common desktop tasks and links directly to trusted support resources, including:

- **Ubuntu Help** – Official documentation for desktop usage
- **Ask Ubuntu forum** - A large community-driven question-and-answer forum

Ubuntu also offers beginner-friendly tutorials that gradually introduce the **Linux command line**, helping users understand the fundamentals of system navigation and administration. (Check out my Linux Essentials Cheatsheet below).

Ubuntu 26.04 LTS (Resolute Raccoon)

Ubuntu 26.04 LTS (Resolute Raccoon) is the latest long-term support (LTS) release for desktops PCs and laptops. This release focuses on performance, security, and modern hardware support, and includes several notable enhancements.

Key new features include:

- GNOME 50, featuring improved fractional scaling and overall desktop optimizations
- Updated core applications, including a new document viewer, image viewer, terminal emulator, and video player
- Support for TPM-backed full-disk encryption management
- Linux Kernel 7.0, providing enhanced compatibility with the latest hardware

Minimum System requirements

- 2 GHz dual-core processor or better
- 6 GB RAM (more than earlier versions)
- 25 GB of available disk space
- USB port or DVD drive for installation media
- Internet access is recommended

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Virtualization: A Secure Learning Environment

Virtualization is an excellent way to become familiar with a Linux operating system in a safe and secure environment without affecting the host operating system. **VirtualBox** is an essential companion that allows users to build and manage multiple virtual environments or various hands-on labs.

Ubuntu provides an official walkthrough for creating an **Ubuntu desktop virtual machine using VirtualBox 7**.

Lor Linux, who are looking for a Linux operating system that closely resembles the layout of Windows 10, check out **Zorin 18.** Zorin provides a comprehensive guide on on **installing Zorin OS in VirtualBox 7**.

Creating a New User Account

New accounts are standard users by default. A common best practice is to keep one administrator account for system changes and use standard accounts for everyday work. Be sure to disable automatic login, especially on shared devices. This approach reduces risk while remaining easy to use.

To create a new user:

1. Open **Settings** and search for **Users**.
2. Select **Users**, click **Unlock**, and enter the administrator password.
3. Click **Add User** and choose **Standard User**.
4. Set a strong password and ensure **Automatic Login** is off.

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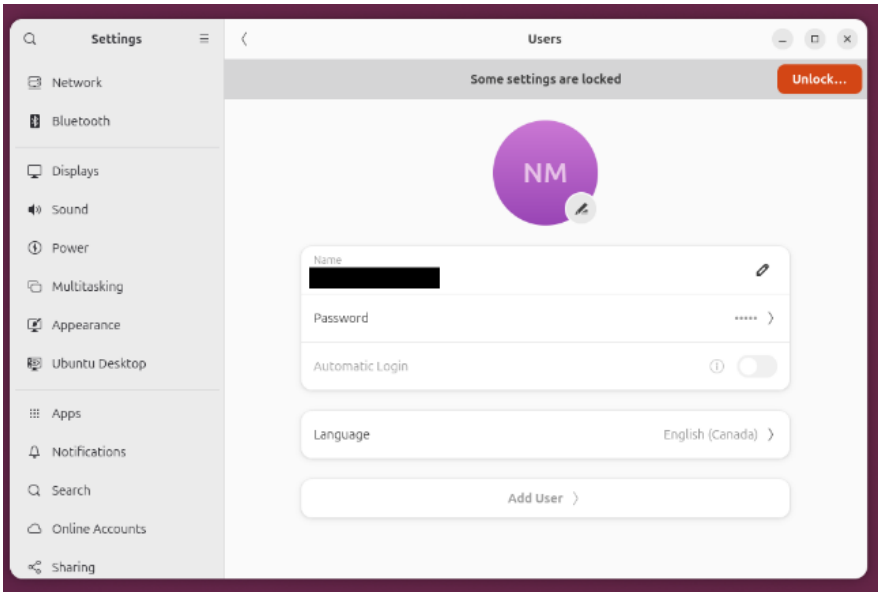

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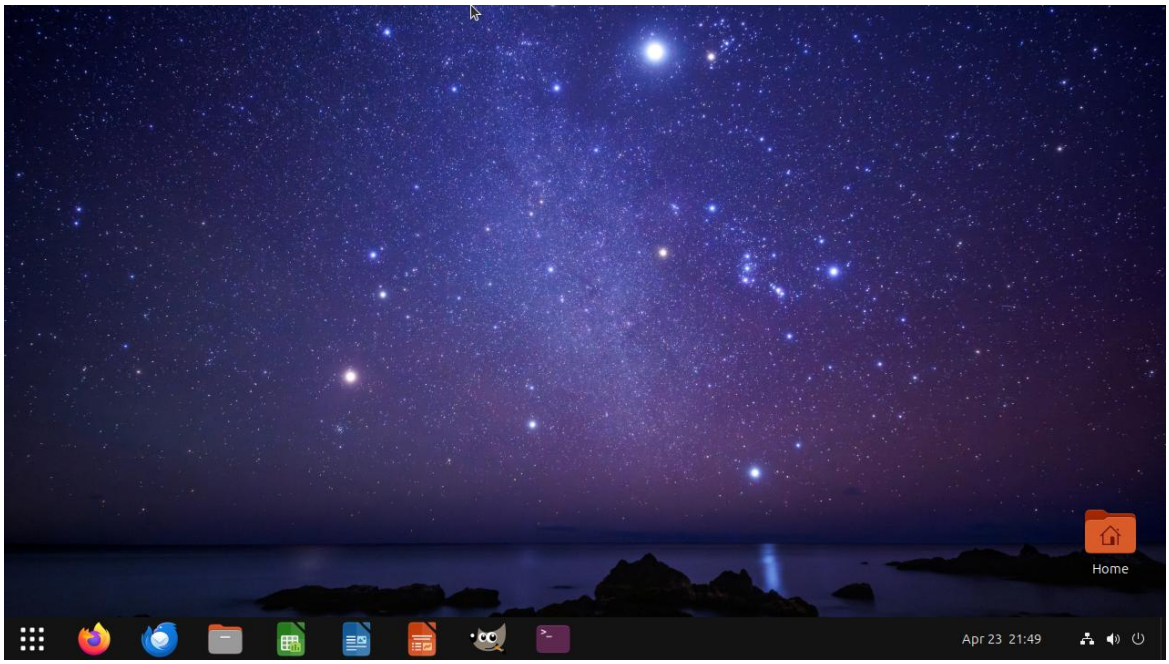
Customizing Ubuntu Environment



Enhance the look and feel of your Ubuntu desktop by utilizing the customization capabilities offered by **GNOME Tweaks** and **Extension Manager**.

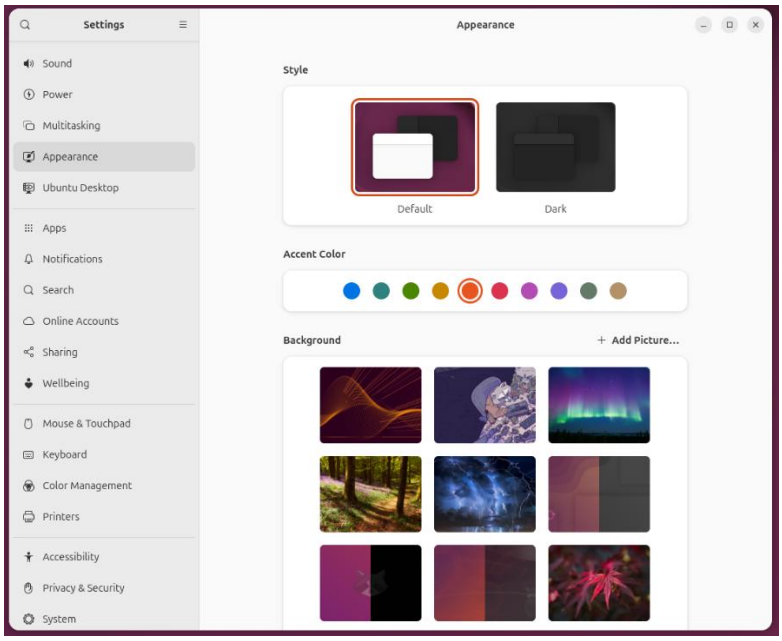
Extension Manager is a utility for browsing, installing, and managing GNOME Shell Extensions. This utility provides a convenient way to handle your extensions. Within the Ubuntu App Centre, proceed to search for **Extension Manager** and click on **install**.

Here are a few recommended GNOME Shell Extensions:

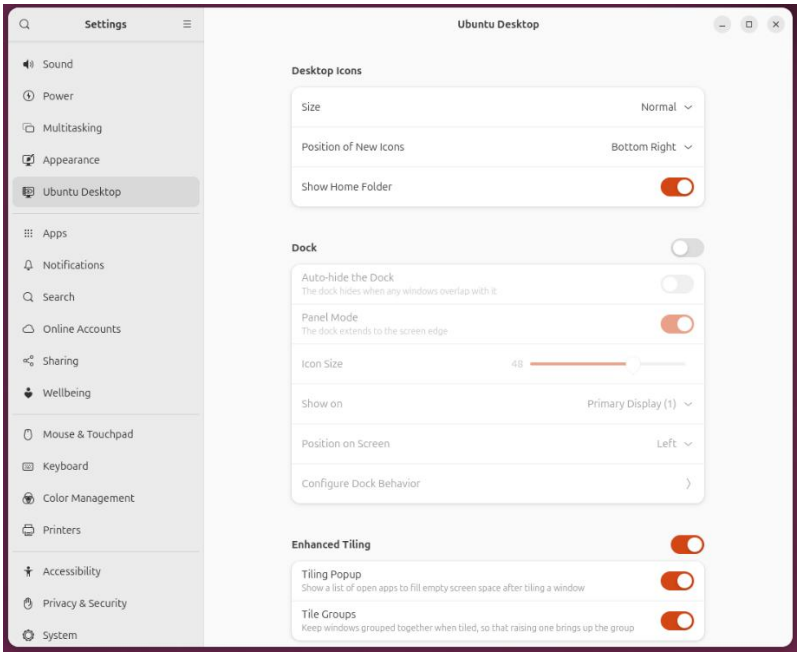
- **Blur My Shell** creates a more visually appealing desktop experience by adding a blue effect to different parts of the GNOME Shell, including the top panel, and dash.
- **Caffeine** keeps your screen awake with a single click. Perfect for presentations, long reads, or video playback.
- **Dash to Panel** provides a more traditional desktop experience by moving the dash to panel at the top of the screen.
- **Dash to Dock** transforms that dash into a dock at the bottom of the screen.
- **Just Perfection**: Tweak or hide almost any GNOME Shell element (panel size, animations, icons, padding) for a minimal or highly customized layout.
- **User Themes** allows users to easily change the GNOME Shell theme by applying different GTK themes.
- **Vitals** show system resource information like CPU, memory, network usage, disk usage, and temperature in the top panel, giving an overview of the system's performance.

More information about GNOME Extensions can be found **here**. Additional themes can be seen at **gnome-look** and **pling**.

Under **Appearance** in the left pane, further customizations of the Linux desktop can be adjusted to personal preferences.



In the **Ubuntu Desktop** on the left pane, useful customization option includes the adjustment of desktop icon, dock, and enhancing tiling.



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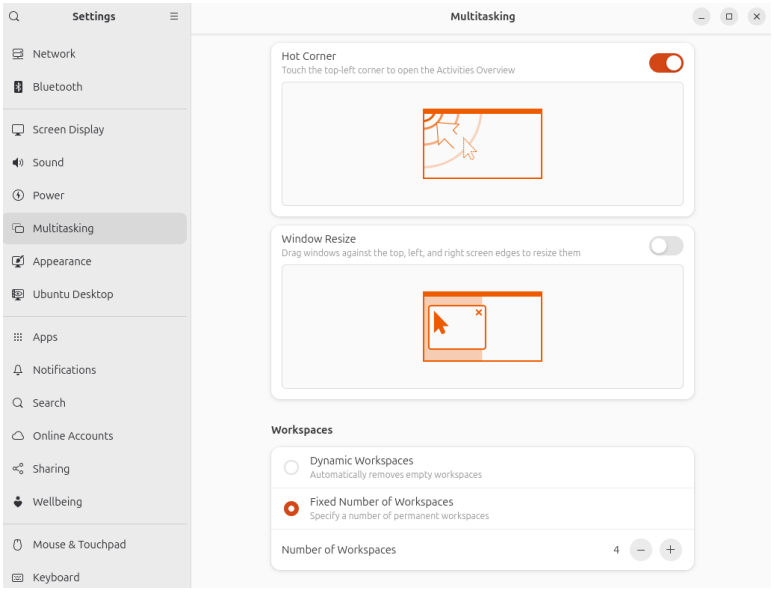
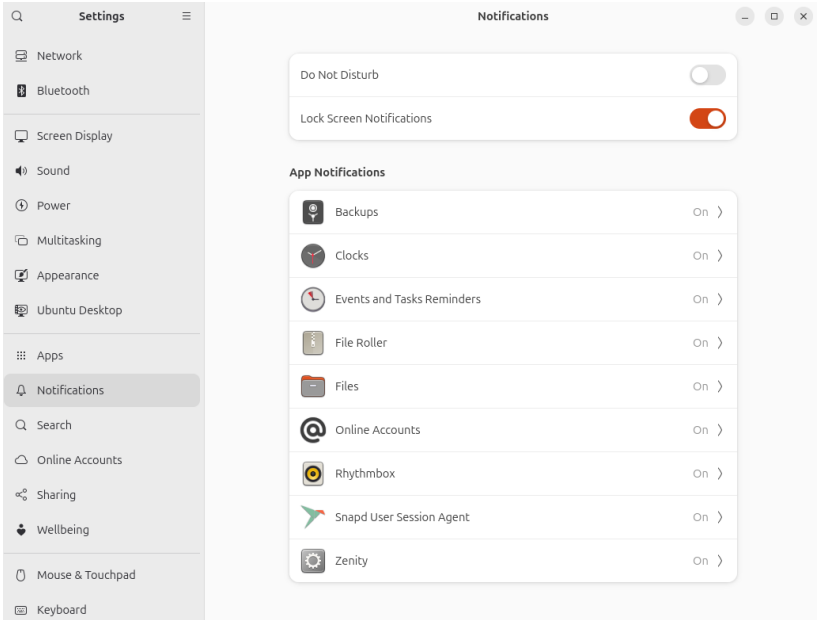
Multitasking

Within the General of Multitasking, Hot Corner and Active Screen Edges are turned off by default. For workspaces, one can choose between dynamic workspaces or fixed number of workspaces.

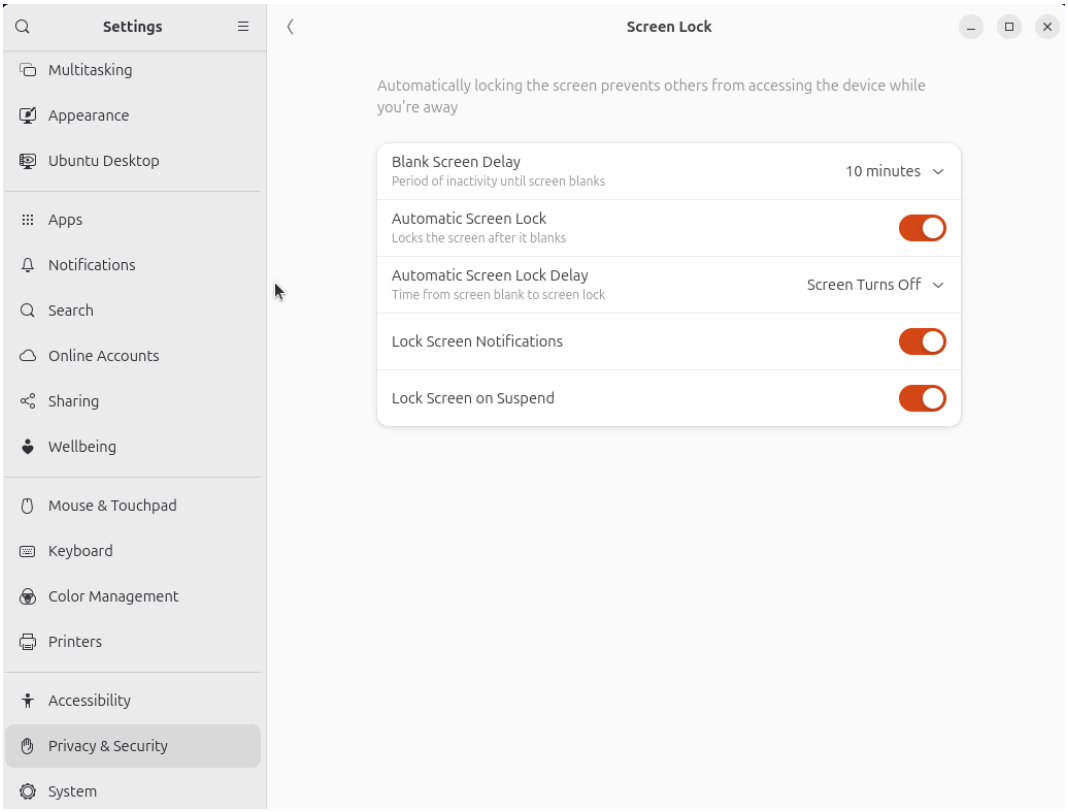


Notifications

Under Settings, one can find the Notifications options, such as **Do Not Disturb** and **Lock Screen Notifications**. Furthermore, one can select whether notifications will be enabled or disabled for a specific application.



Within the Privacy and Security, proceed to select **Screen Lock**. Here, adjustments can be made according to your personal preferences on automatic screen lock settings.



GNOME Tweaks (Recommended)

GNOME Tweaks is a modern, actively used tool for customizing Ubuntu's GNOME desktop. To install it, open Terminal and run:

sudo apt update
sudo apt install gnome-tweaks

Launch GNOME Tweaks by searching "Tweaks" app or open Terminal and run:

gnome-tweaks

This Tweaks interface allows users to:

- Change themes
- Enable/disable extensions
- Manage startup apps
- Adjust fonts, title bars, etc.

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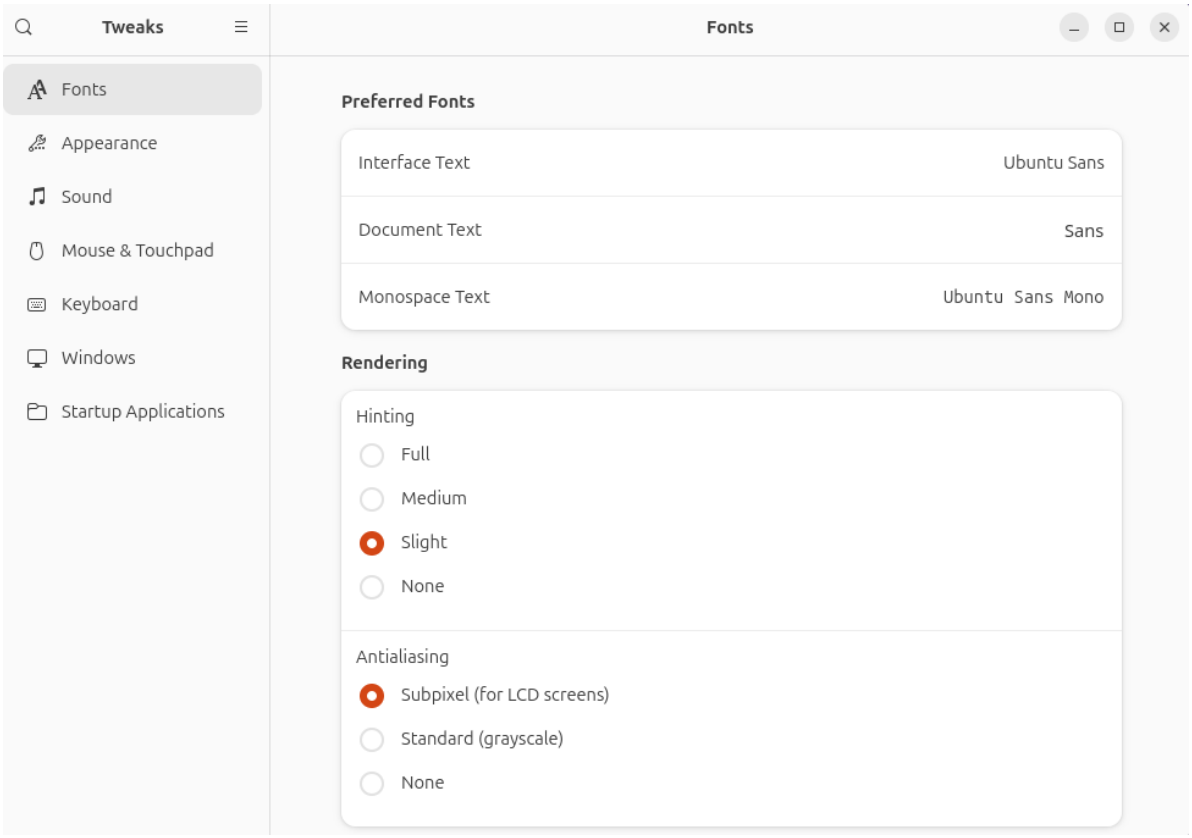

Essential Productivity Software Application

Here is a list of popular software applications for Ubuntu.

- **LibreOffice**: Full-featured office suite (word processor, spreadsheet, presentation).
- **Thunderbird**: Robust email client with calendar and RSS support.
- **GNOME Calendar**: Clean calendar app that syncs with Google, Nextcloud, and others.
- **Firefox**: Default browser on Ubuntu — privacy-focused and customizable.
- **Google Chrome:** Popular for syncing and extensions (not open source).
- **GIMP:** Advanced image editor — often compared to Photoshop.
- **VLC:** Universal media player.
- **Zoom:** a popular video conferencing and online communication platform.

Microsoft 365 web version does work well within Ubuntu. However, some advanced tools/features may be missing, such as macros, large datasets, and advanced Excel add-ins.

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LibreOffice and Microsoft Office Compatibility

LibreOffice does not include Microsoft fonts by default due to licensing restrictions. However, **missing fonts are the single most common cause of layout changes and formatting drift** when LibreOffice documents are opened in Microsoft Word.

On Ubuntu, you can significantly reduce these issues by installing the Microsoft core fonts with the following command:

sudo apt install ttf-mscorefonts-installer

This package installs widely used Microsoft fonts, including:

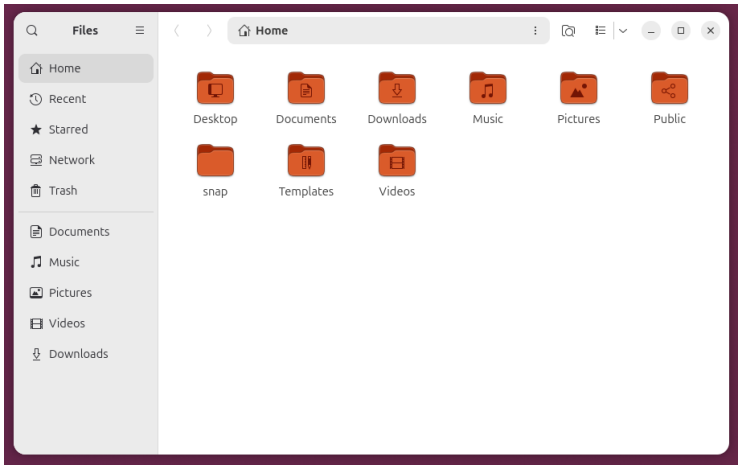
- Arial
- Times New Roman
- Verdana
- Tahoma

These fonts are commonly used in Word documents and are **strongly recommended** for improving compatibility. Having them installed helps minimize differences in spacing, line-break, and page-layout that occur when LibreOffice substitutes alternative fonts.

Graphical File Management with Nautilus

Nautilus, the default file manager in Ubuntu's GNOME desktop environment, is designed to make browsing and managing files intuitive, making it an excellent starting point for new Linux users becoming familiar with the Ubuntu desktop.

- Creating, renaming, copying, and deleting files or folders using right-click menus
- Moving files between directories with drag-and-drop actions
- Navigating quickly through the filesystem using the sidebar
- Viewing file details, including size, file type, and access permissions



Effective Backup Methods

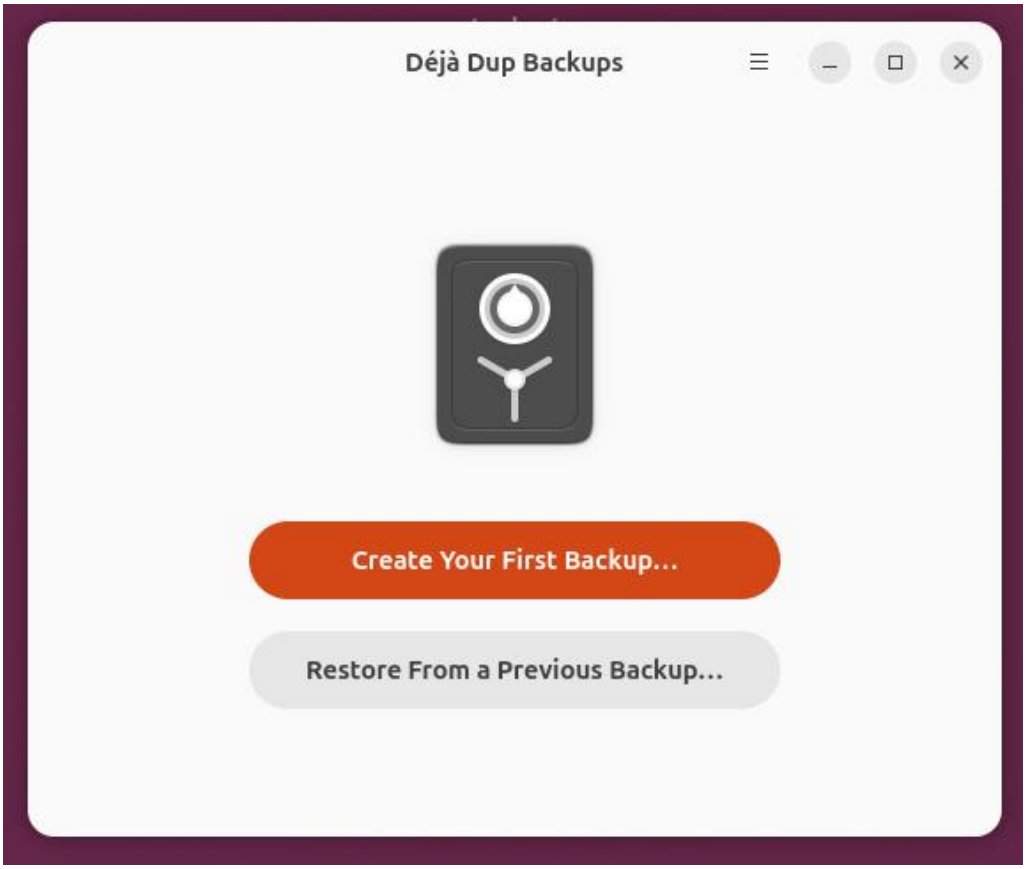
Data loss can have a significant impact on home and business environments. Backing up files is crucial for safeguarding your data against loss due to hardware failures, accidental deletions, and malware attacks. Regular maintenance is vital to ensure that backups are stored securely and in a timeline fashion.

Deja Dup is a built-in utility in Ubuntu that is designed to be a user-friendly and is suitable for users, who prefer a simple backup solution with a graphical interface.

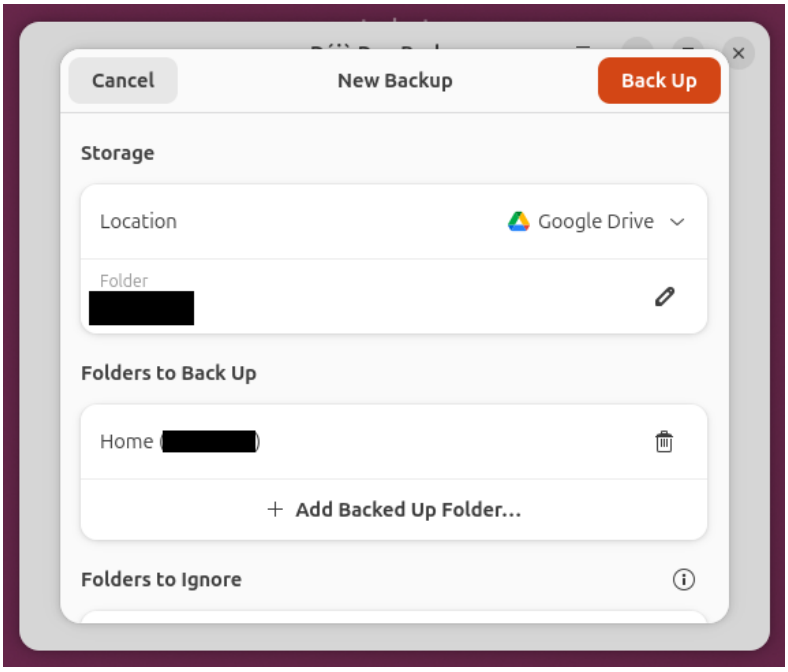
Even though Deja Dup is often installed on Ubuntu by default, the application can still be installed in Terminal via the following command line:

sudo apt install deja-dup

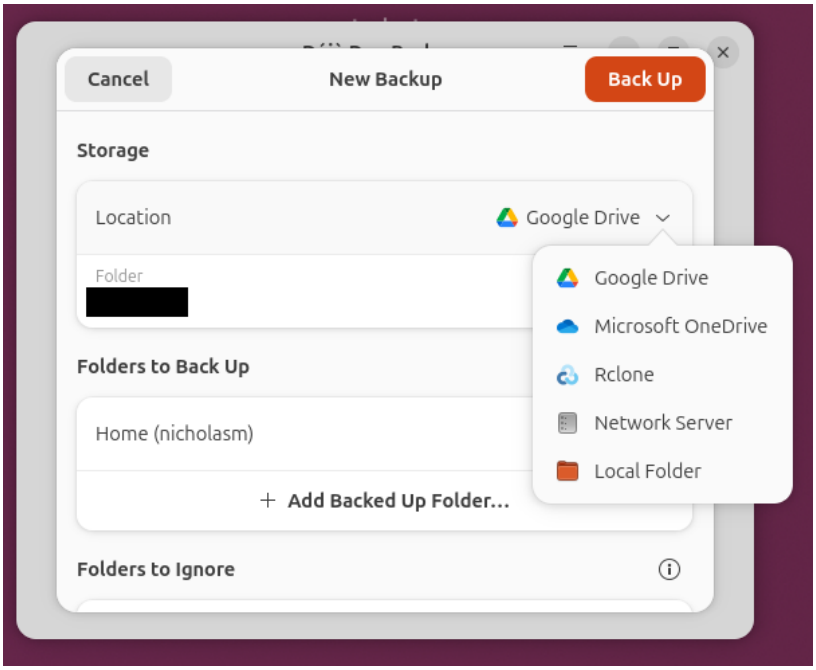
In the Applications menu, proceed to open **Deja Dup**. Alternatively, search for "Backup" or Deja Dup" and open the application.



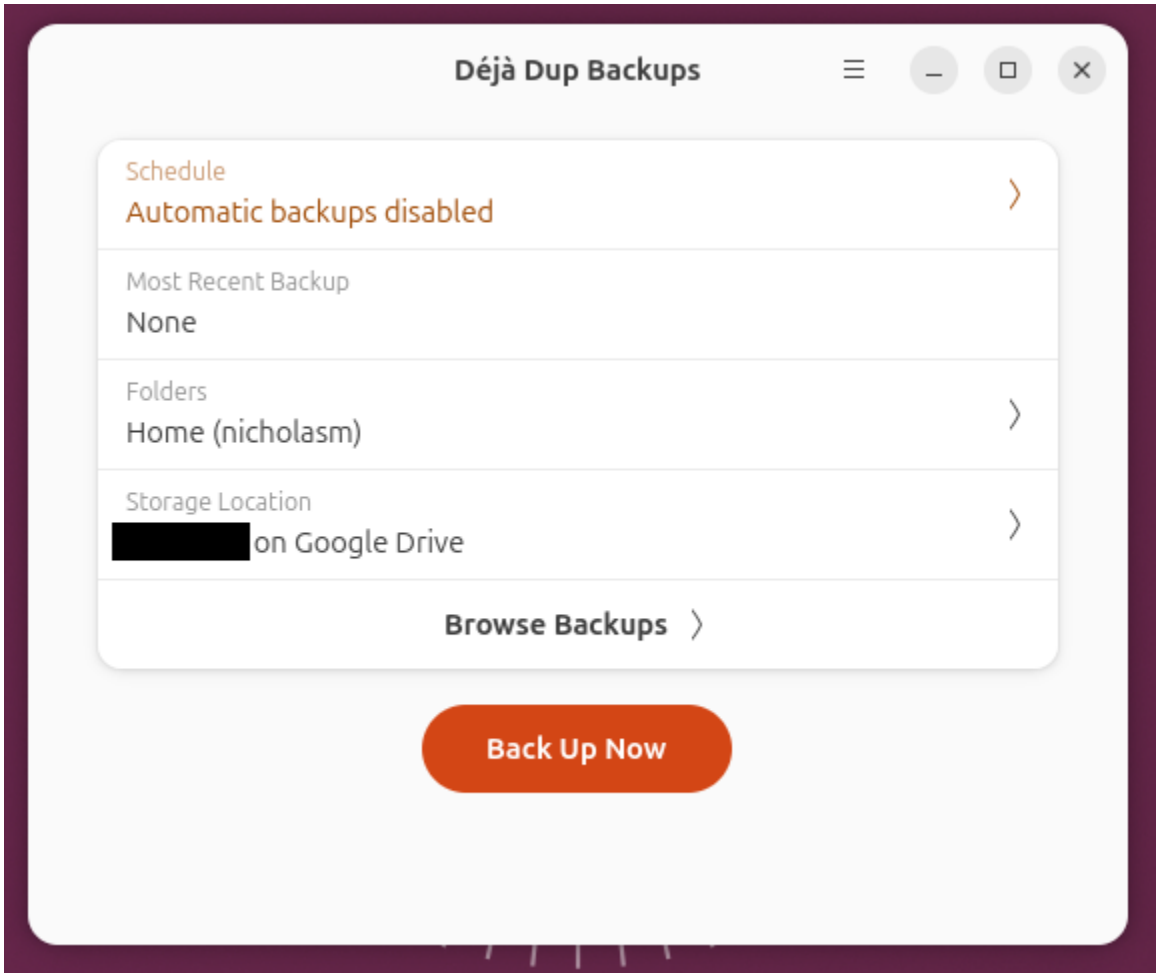
Once **Deja Dup** is opened, proceed to configure the backup settings. There are options for your backup location, schedule, and other preferences. The storage location can be local, network or cloud. Specify the desired folders to be included or excluded from backups.



When selecting **Forward**, in Location, there are options to save files to Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, Network Server and Local Folder. An external hard drive, USC Thumb Drive, or a WD My Cloud Home, Synology or Qnap NAS are also viable options for backup.



One can schedule automatic backups now. You can browse backup locations. At a later step, you can setup encryption (Optional) -> for added security, you have the option to encrypt your backup for added security. Be sure to remember the password.



Configuring Samba

A Samba file server provides seamless file sharing across different operating system platforms over a network. This beginner guide will cover the setup of Samba on Ubuntu. Ubuntu does offer an excellent **installation and configuration guide for samba**.

How to install ClamAV Antivirus

ClamAV is an antivirus software designed to detect trojans, viruses, malware, and other malicious threats. ClamAV can be installed by the Software Center or Synaptic Package Manager. Alternative antivirus programs for Ubuntu can be found **here**.

Configuring Firewall for Linux

The default firewall configuration tool for Ubuntu is the **Uncomplicated Firewall (UFW)**. Developed to ease iptables firewall configuration, ufw provides a user-friendly way to create an IPv4 or IPv6 host-based firewall. By default, **UFW** is disabled. **Gufw** is a GUI that is available as a frontend. Setting of a firewall for Ubuntu lies in three primary reasons:

- **Security:** A firewall safeguards your device controlling incoming and outgoing network traffic based on predetermined security rules.
- **Access Control:** It allows you to specify which services or applications can be access from outside your network. This process will reduce the risk of unauthorized access.
- **Network Segmentation:** Firewalls can help segment your network and limit the potential threat of malware or attackers within your network.

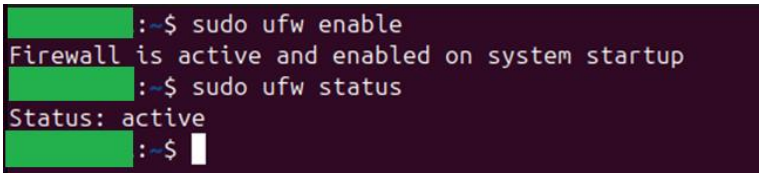
Steps to Set Up UFW in Ubuntu

The **Uncomplicated Firewall (UFW)** is a simple firewall application that is included with Ubuntu and can be installed on other distributions of Linux. By default, UFW is disabled.

In order to see the status of UFW, open Terminal and type in the following command line:

sudo ufw status

To enable UFW, enter the following command: **sudo ufw enable**



By default, ALL incoming traffic is blocked. Here are a few command lines to allow UFW. Proceed to allow for SSH, HTTP and HTTPS.

sudo ufw allow 22	Allow 22 for SSH
sudo ufw allow 80	Allow 80 for HTTP
sudo ufw allow 443	Allow 443 for HTTPS
ufw default allow	Allow all connections by default
ufw default deny	Drop all connections by default
ufw allow port	Allow traffic on port
ufw deny port	Block port
ufw deny from ip	Block ip address
sudo ufw allow <app_name>	To allow application profiles
sudo ufw allow samba	Allows samba

How to Troubleshoot Networking Issues

IP route show

The **ip route show** command in Linux is used to display the routing table of the system. It shows the currently configured routes, including the destination network or host, the gateway (if any) used to reach that destination, and the network interface through which the traffic will be routed. This command is useful for troubleshooting network connectivity issues and understanding how network traffic is being routed on the system.

1. Use the **Ping** command in Terminal. For example, ping google website or another device in your network.

   ping 8.8.8.8
   ping google.com

2. In Linux,'**dhclient**' is a DHCP (Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol) client used to obtain an IP address and other network confirmation settings from a DHCP server. Here are a few common commands.

   1. **Renew DHCP Lease**: Forces the client to renew its DHCP leave.

      sudo dhclient -r # Release current lease
      sudo dhclient # Request new lease

   2. **Release DHCP Lease**: Releases the current DHCP lease

      sudo dhclient -r

   3. **Specify Interface**: Specify the network interface to use (eg. '**eth0**', '**wlan0**')

      sudo dhclient etho

3. **Testing Latency, Download, and Upload speeds**

   The '**speedtest-cli**' command will test your Internet connect to the nearest speedtest.net server and display the latency, download speed, and upload speed.

   1. Proceed to Install '**speedtest-cli'i**

      sudo apt update
      sudo apt install speedtest-cli

   2. Run the speed test.

      speedtest-cli