Live (bootable) Linux CDs

"How to make and use bootable Linux discs"

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What is a bootable disc (Live CD)?

A bootable CD or DVD is a disc that contains a mini version of an operating system that can be used with your computer. The disc can be put into your computer's CD/DVD Rom and then chosen at startup to be used as a temporary operating system. Because these discs act as a temporary operating system they are sometimes referred to as Live CDs.

Why use a Live CD?

One great advantage of Live CDs containing Linux distributions is that they give you the option to try out that operating system without making any permanent changes to your existing system.

Linux Live CDs can also be used for data recovery.

Be Careful
Live CDs for testing out Linux distros usually have the option to install that distro as well. Installing any OS over another can potentially erase all data, programs, and other operating systems on that system if installed incorrectly.

Where can I get a Live CD?

Where you get a Live CD for a given Linux distribution depends on the distribution you are interested in. Many Live CDs are available as .iso files (a digital image of the disc) which can then be burned to a blank CD/DVD disc. These .iso files can often be found and downloaded for free from the official webpage of the distro. Here are some popular Linux distros:

Ubuntu Web Site
Ubuntu Netbook Edition
Linux Mint Web Site
openSUSE Web Site
Debian Web Site

Burning the .iso to a CD/DVD

See How to burn an .iso (coming soon)

How do I boot from a Live CD?

Once you have your Live CD/DVD burned you can boot to it by inserting it into your computer's CD/DVD rom and rebooting your computer. On PC's normally pressing the F12 key will bring up the boot options menu from which you can choose to boot from CD-Rom. On Mac computers holding down the letter C will boot from the CD. Some makes of computers have a different key for bringing up the boot options menu, in this case the appropriate key should be displayed during the start-up loading screen.

Once you've selected to boot from the CD the Live CD should load and depending on the distro a menu with options to try out or install the distro. Select the option to try out the system and it should load.
Step by Step:

1. Place Live CD into CD-Rom
2. Restart your computer
3. During the first loading screen (should look similar to the one below) enter the Boot Options menu by pressing the F12 key. (May be a different key depending on the computer model)
   Choose the CD/DVD rom option and press Enter
4. Once the Live CD menu has loaded choose the option that will let you Try the distro without installation.

Related Links

Install Linux from a USB drive
Linux Distribution Watch Web Site
Dual Booting (coming soon)
Linux Distributions
How to burn an .iso to a CD/DVD (coming soon)