Installing Linux Mint on an Old PC
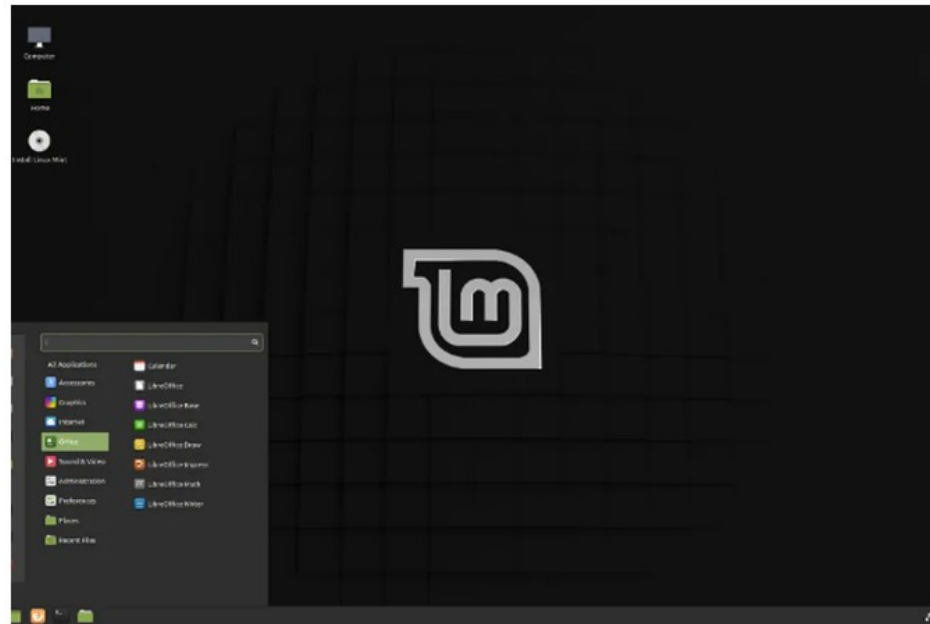
How to switch an old Windows laptop to Linux

https://www.theverge.com/21550815/windows-microsoft-linux-mint-laptop-how-to-switch
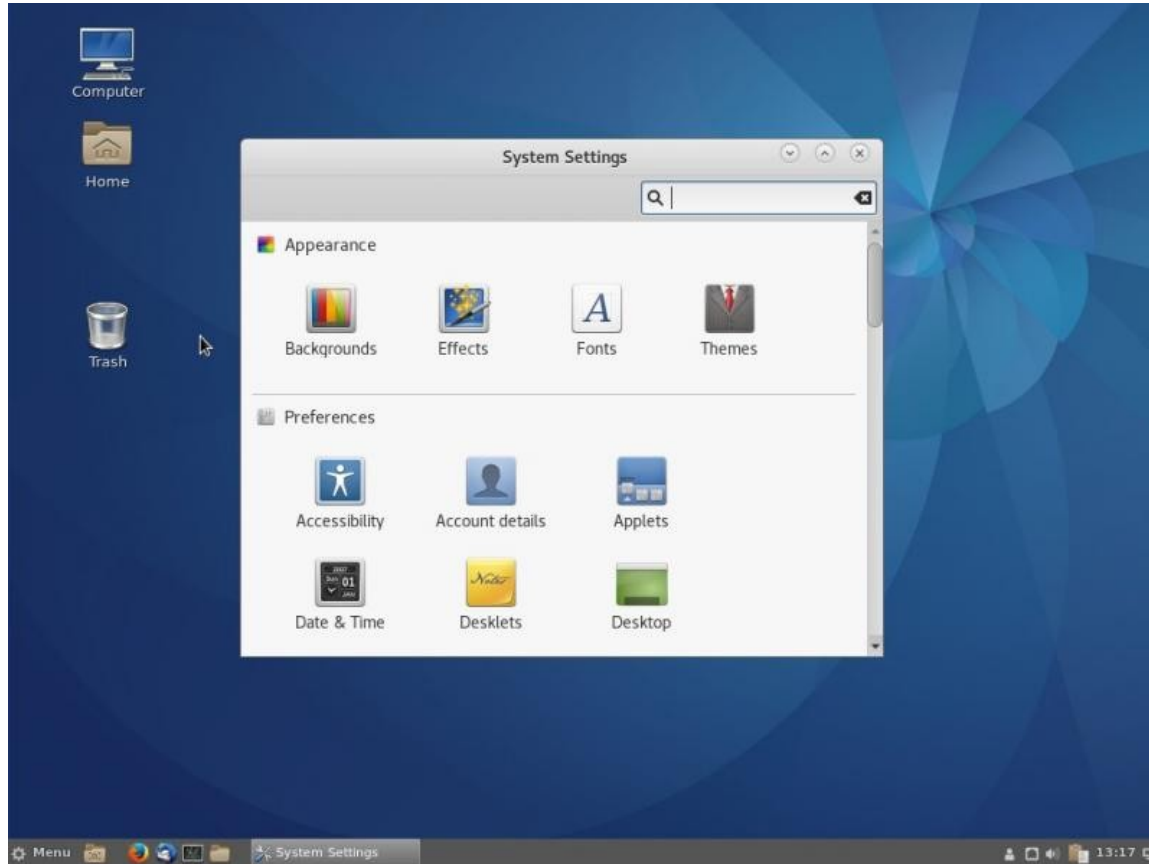
Installing Linux Mint on an Old PC

WHICH LINUX?
There are hundreds of Linux desktop distributions (known as distros) out there. The best-known include such distros as Debian, openSUSE, and Ubuntu. But for our purposes, I'm going to tell you how to install Linux Mint.

https://opensource.com/article/17/1/cinnamon-desktop-environment

The Cinnamon Mint Desktop Environment

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There are four basic utilities which may be useful when you do this install:

(1) Ventoy for creating a Bootable USB Flash Drive with several utilities in one place.

(2) gParted Live, in case you need to change partitions on your target drive. (Advanced – I won't be doing this today.)

(3) the Install ISO for your chosen Linux distro (Mint in this case).

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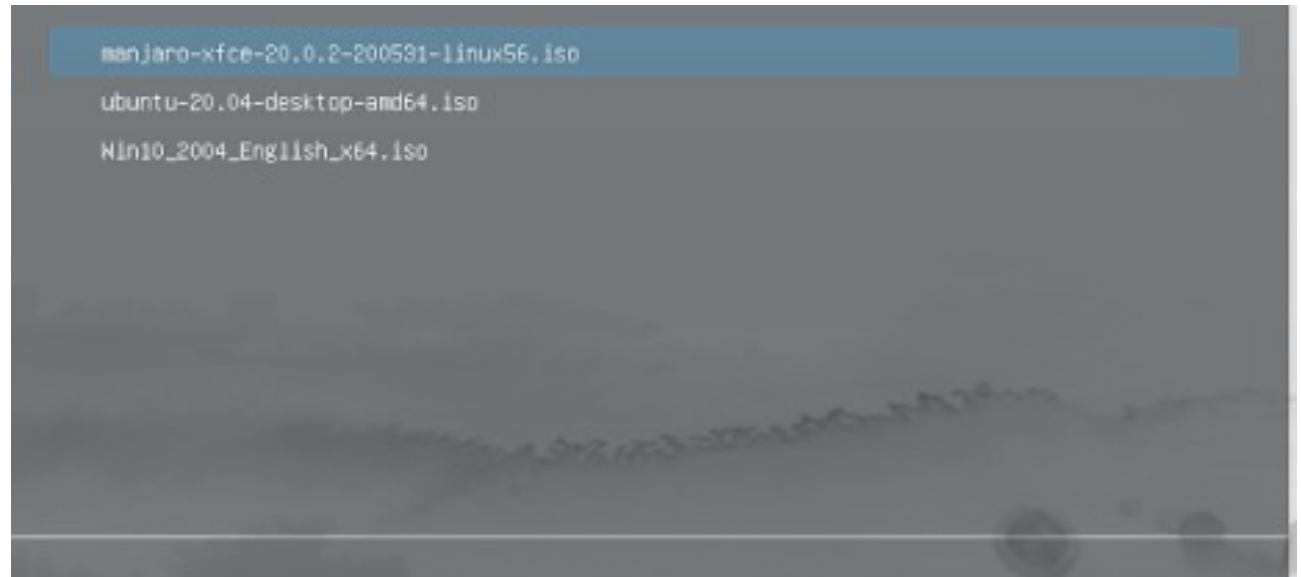
(tools needed) and

(4) A GRUB Boot Repair ISO. This is used only if there is an issue booting Linux after installing it. The Repair Utility is automatic and fixes most Linux booting issues. Usually not needed for a whole-disk, single-boot install as I am showing today.

We can put all of these tools onto one USB flash drive (as big as you want to use, but at least 16 GB) using a multiboot USB drive creation tool called Ventoy.

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Create A Bootable USB Drive By Simply Copying The ISO To The USB With Ventoy (Linux And Windows)

https://www.linuxuprising.com/2020/06/create-bootable-usb-drive-by-simply.html
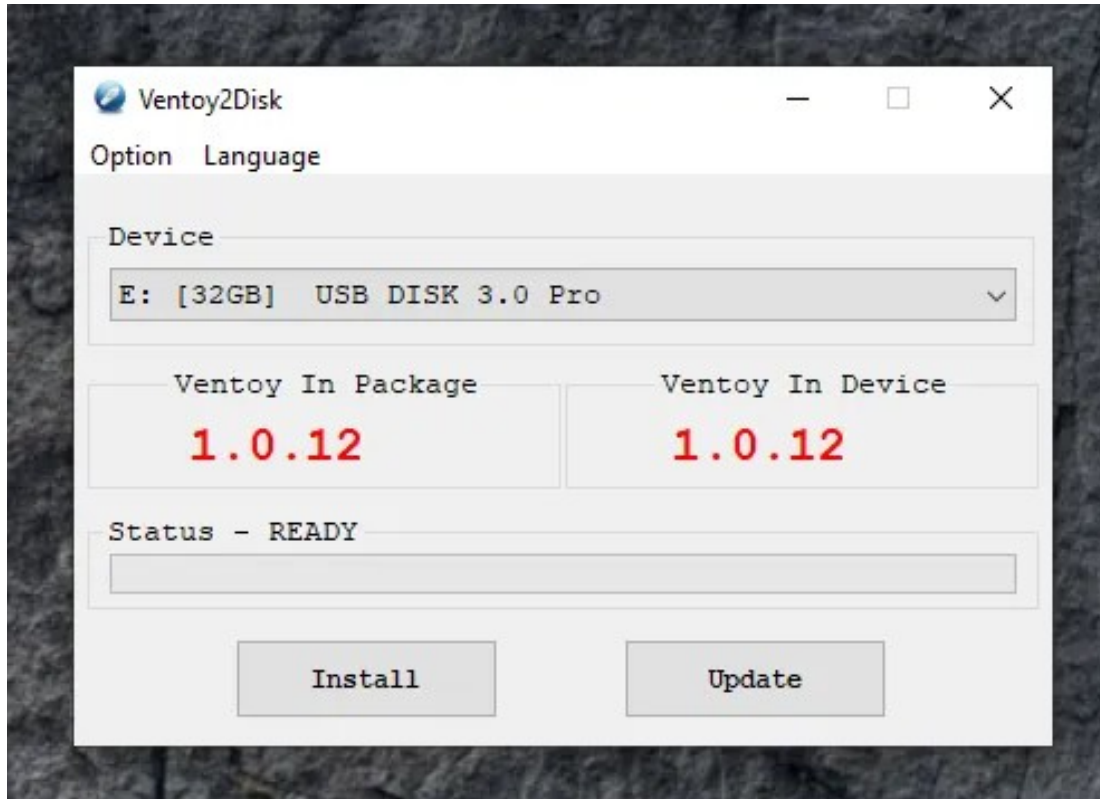
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You install this tool to a USB drive, then simply copy some ISO files to the USB drive and you can boot from it with no other changes. Change, update, add, delete ISOs and use the drive for other files, without having to rebuild Ventoy every time.

An ISO is simply a disk image. In this case, it is the entire environment needed to launch and run the utility we want to use. Think of each ISO as a Portable App. But to use several ISOs from one boot menu we need a framework which will integrate all our ISOs and allow us to choose which one to boot.

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Install Ventoy on a USB drive using a GUI (Windows & Linux)

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Choose the USB drive from the Device list, optionally enable Secure Boot support (from the Option menu), then click the Install button to install Ventoy to the USB stick. Now that Ventoy is installed on your USB drive, you can create a bootable USB drive by simply copying some ISO files onto the USB, no matter if they are Linux distribution ISOs or Windows 10 / 8 / 7 ISO files.

I may be able to demo updating the Ventoy list after placing a new version of an ISO into a folder I set up called "ISOs". (Also, Video)

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The article goes into a lot more detail, but this is how Ventoy is set up.

Adding, taking out, modifying and updating are simply a matter of downloading your ISOs and placing them into the ISO folder. Then update Ventoy using its tools.

Now that your USB drive is ready, copy the ISO images you are going to use onto it. Note that you can organize them inside a folder, to keep them separated from other files on the USB drive. During boot, Ventoy searches all the directories and subdirectories recursively to find all the ISO files inside the USB drive.

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Download Mint ISO and boot into Live Session
https://www.linuxmint.com/download.php
Place a copy of the download into your Ventoy ISO folder, and copy it onto the flash drive for Ventoy to use. Then use the Ventoy Menu to select the Mint ISO. Select "Try Mint", not "Install Mint" just yet. (Video may have skipped this step.)

When you have satisfied yourself that you really can use Mint on your hardware, you can install it from the options in the Live Session. This will start the installation process. (Video)

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For this demo, I am assuming you want to use the entire drive of the PC for Mint. So we'll use the standard default setup, which is to do just this. The article shows how to do other setups. (Video)

Name your system, your user ID, and set up your password (Video)

The default setup is single partition, the whole disk, and the ext4 file system. There may also be efi related things which will be set up. MBR setup would be simpler, but few modern PCs use MBR boot. (Video)

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(Show any additional steps which take place, but most of the video is pretty self-explanatory.)

Post-install:

Set up a system snapshot – Mint 20's setup menu enables you to set up a system snapshot with Timeshift. This way, if something goes wrong, you can restore your system files and get back a working system. (Actual use of Timeshift and setting up a schedule are beyond the scope of this demo.)

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Check for additional drivers (Simple to do from a dialog box. If this does not show up you don't need additional drivers.)

Update Mint to the latest version – This simply means doing your first software update using the built-in Mint software update module. You most likely won't have to do a full version upgrade.

The setup routine also offers to let you look at system settings and find new programs with the Software Manager, but since you're probably a new user, you can skip those for now.

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Reset your computer to boot from your main drive

I ran into another issue with my Mint. It kept telling me that a Desklet (a sort of Mint Widget) wasn't working properly. I finally found online that this desklet was using out of date Python code and needed the desklet and my Python to be updated. I did both and all was well. So there may be additional post-install troubleshooting.

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I use Windows and several Linux distros on my PC. But I use Ubuntu Linux (similar to Mint) as my everyday workhorse operating system. I simply find myself more productive in Linux. I'm just hoping folks will enjoy Mint and use it sometimes.

So that's it – how you can use an old PC, and if you feel so inclined, how to install Linux on an old PC.

Any questions or comments?

– Bob Primak – December 29, 2021 –

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Steve Isenberg's (high-speed) video of the Mint Linux install process
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydy2lDoLHDM