

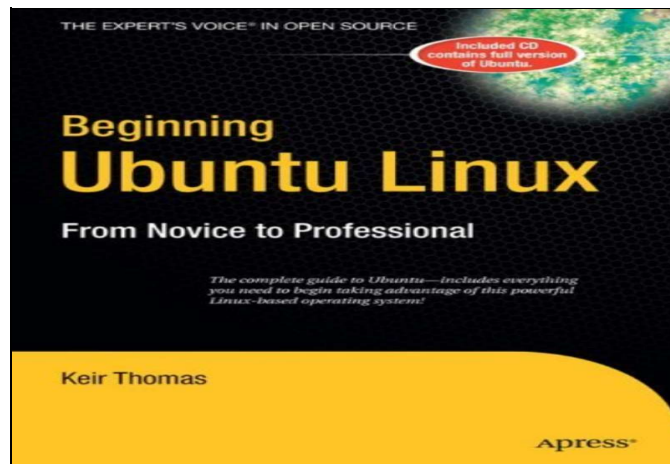


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Book review: Beginning Ubuntu Linux: From Novice to Professional *by Keir Thomas*

By Bridget Kulakauskas

Are you, or do you know, a non-techie? A non-techie who takes pride in their lack of techno-savvy, who still clings to the belief that while other people might use GNU/Linux, it's a bit technological for the likes of them? Someone who takes pride in being a passive computer user, who wants it all spelled out in black and white? Well here you go, ladies and gents, Beginning Ubuntu Linux takes everything about Ubuntu from before the moment you pick up distro CD, spells it out and sits you down and makes sure if there was a test, you'd get top marks. Beginning Ubuntu Linux is written by Keir Thomas, an author and editor for Apress' open source line, and is published by Apress.



The book's cover

This book is really for people who want to use Linux but have little to no idea what they are doing—basically, ex-Windows converts who are keen but don't know much. Given this context, what is great about the book is the tone Thomas sets in his writing—comforting and knowledgeable, but not at all pretentious. It's a bit like having a really good teacher sitting with you—who is explaining everything to you patiently and isn't getting cross when you ask stupid questions. Also, if you were feeling un-confident about migration, Beginning Ubuntu Linux is just the thing to make you feel like actually, you are in control and you can do it, because someone is with you giving you step-by-step instructions.

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The contents

Beginning Ubuntu Linux is 540 pages long—it's physically pretty heavy because it's jam-packed full of useful information, but don't let the size intimidate you. As I mentioned before it is very well written and is a breeze to use. Furthermore, it has practical application and contains Ubuntu version 5.10 (Breezy Badger). So

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if you actually do the installation while you are reading and follow all the instructions, you will find it invaluable.

The book is divided into seven parts, starting off very generally and then getting into specifics. Part 1 introduces the “World of Linux”: why use it, the history, the politics. Part 2 describes how to install Ubuntu—discussing the possibilities of having the dual boot option, or using an old computer until you’re sure, and other such useful things. You don’t feel pressured, in other words: it doesn’t seem like such a big deal. This part also contains troubleshooting for problems that may arise in installation—Thomas is right there with you every step of the way! Part 3 explores Ubuntu—logging in for the first time, protecting yourself, making your system look pretty, replacing Windows stuff with alternatives. Part 4 introduces the BASH shell—as Thomas says, not only is it a convenient alternative to the mouse, but knowing it it also enhances your Linux street cred—and maybe more importantly, it gives you control over your system. Part 5 discusses how to use Multimedia programs with Ubuntu, and Part 6 delves into Open Office and gives some in depth analyses of each of the programs. These two parts are really good because they show definitively what these programs are capable of in comparison to the corresponding Windows programs. Finally, Part 7 is about keeping your system going. It talks about optimising your system, managing users, backups, scheduling, remote access, and other such matters.

Who’s this book for?

This book isn’t aimed at techies. However, it would make an excellent gift for a techie’s less savvy family members and friends, for example. As I mentioned, it is very well written—something even your non-geek granny would be able to use comfortably. It is excellently comprehensive and depicts the relevant dialogue boxes and what you should be pressing to make things happen. It tells you when to put the CD in, and what to do if something doesn’t work. I recommend it for anyone who has ever said “Linux is just for geeks” or “I can’t migrate, it’s too complex and I don’t have the CD” or basically anyone who has used a lame excuse for not migrating. It would also be excellent for a fledgling Ubuntu user, who has got the thing up and running, but feels like they want to know a bit more about everything.

Relevance to free software

This book epitomises FLOSS—it even comes with a CD. The only time it so much as comes close to promoting proprietary software is when it explains that you can dual boot so you don’t have to leave Windows forever if you don’t want to. This book is particularly relevant to recent Ubuntu migrants and those seriously considering migration.

Pros

So you want to migrate or you know people that do—get this book and that’s really all you’ll need. I can’t stress enough how comprehensive and easy to use this book is.

Cons

As I said, this book isn’t for GNU/Linux geeks. If you are a geek with no idea about the Ubuntu distro and want to have a quick look, this book could certainly help you, but if you are a geek the pace of the book might seem frustratingly slow. One point I will make is that the CD included with the book contains version 5.10, and the Ubuntu developers are now up to version 6.06 (Dapper Drake). So bear in mind that there are more

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recent versions available (for free, obviously).

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CD included Yes
FS Oriented 10
Over all score 10

In short

Biography

[Bridget Kulakauskas](/user/11) (/user/11" title="View user profile.): Bridget has a degree in Sociology and English and a keen interest in the social implications of technology. She has two websites: [Illiterarty](http://www.illiterarty.com/) (http://www.illiterarty.com/) and [The Top 10 Everything](http://www.thetop10everything.com/) (http://www.thetop10everything.com/). She also handles [accounts and administration](http://www.freesoftwaremagazine.com/contacts/b.kulakauskas) (http://www.freesoftwaremagazine.com/contacts/b.kulakauskas) for Free Software Magazine.

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