

Getting Started with Linux

Installing a virtual machine and setting up Ubuntu or Kali

A simple, no-jargon walkthrough for beginners. By the end, you'll have a full Linux system running safely inside a window on your own computer — fully set up and ready to use.

Part 1 — Choose and Install Your Virtual Machine Program

A "virtual machine" program lets you run a second computer system inside a window on your real computer, without changing anything on your actual machine. The two most popular free options are VirtualBox and VMware — pick whichever one you like; the rest of this guide works the same either way.

Option A: Install VirtualBox

1

Open your browser

Open any web browser like Chrome, Edge, or Firefox on your computer.

2

Go to the VirtualBox website

Type in [virtualbox.org](https://www.virtualbox.org) and press enter. This is the official, safe place to get the program.

3

Click the Download button

You'll see a "Downloads" link on the homepage. Click it, then pick the version that matches your computer (Windows, Mac, or Linux).

4

Open the downloaded file

Once it finishes downloading, find the file (usually in your Downloads folder) and double-click it to start installing.

5

Click through the setup

A setup window will pop up. Just keep clicking "Next" and then "Install" or "Finish." The default settings are fine for beginners.

6

Open VirtualBox

Once installed, open the program. You should see an empty window — this is where your virtual computers will live.

Option B: Install VMware

1

Open your browser

Open any web browser like Chrome, Edge, or Firefox on your computer.

2

Go to the VMware website

Type in [vmware.com](https://www.vmware.com) and press enter. Look for "VMware Workstation Player" (Windows or Linux) or "VMware Fusion" (Mac) — both are free to download for personal use.

3

Click the Download button

Pick the version that matches your computer and start the download.

4

Open the downloaded file

Once it finishes downloading, find the file (usually in your Downloads folder) and double-click it to start installing.

5

Click through the setup

A setup window will pop up. Keep clicking "Next" and then "Install" or "Finish." You may be asked to restart your computer once — that's normal.

6

Open VMware

Once installed, open the program. You should see an empty window — this is where your virtual computers will live.

Part 2 — Download Ubuntu or Kali

1

Pick Ubuntu or Kali

Ubuntu is friendly and great for everyday learning. Kali is built for security testing and is a bit more advanced. If you're just starting out, Ubuntu is the easier pick.

2

Download the ISO file

Go to ubuntu.com/download or kali.org/get-kali, and download the "ISO" file. Think of an ISO as a disc image — it's the whole operating system packed into one file. It's large, so this may take a while.

3

Wait for the download to finish

Once it's done, remember where it was saved (usually the Downloads folder) — you'll need it in the next step.

Part 3 — Create Your Virtual Machine

These steps work the same whether you installed VirtualBox or VMware — the button names are just slightly different.

1

Start a new virtual machine

In VirtualBox, click "New." In VMware, click "Create a New Virtual Machine." Give it a name, like "My Ubuntu" or "My Kali."

2

Point it to your ISO file

When asked for an installation disc or ISO, click the folder icon and select the ISO file you downloaded in Part 2.

3

Choose the operating system type

Select "Linux" as the type. For Ubuntu, pick "Ubuntu (64-bit)." For Kali, pick "Debian (64-bit)" if Kali isn't listed — Kali is built on Debian, so this works fine.

4

Set memory and storage

You'll be asked how much memory (RAM) and storage (hard drive space) to give it. For beginners, around 4 GB of memory and 25 GB of storage works well — the suggested defaults are usually fine too.

5

Finish and start the virtual machine

Click "Finish" or "Create," then click "Start" (or "Power On"). It will boot up using the ISO, just like installing Linux on a real computer.

Part 4 — Install and Set Up Ubuntu

1

Click "Install Ubuntu"

On the first screen that appears, choose your language, then click "Install Ubuntu."

2

Choose your keyboard layout

Pick the layout that matches your keyboard (the default is usually correct), then click "Continue."

3

Choose a normal installation

Select "Normal installation." You can leave the checkboxes for updates and other software as they are, then click "Continue."

4

Erase disk and install

Choose "Erase disk and install Ubuntu." This sounds scary, but it only affects the virtual machine's own storage — your real computer is not touched.

5

Create your account

Enter your name, a name for the computer, a username, and a password. This password is important: you'll use it to log in and anytime you need to make admin-level changes. Choose one you'll remember, then click "Continue."

6

Wait for the installation to finish

This can take several minutes. Grab a coffee — no need to click anything until it's done.

7

Restart the computer

When prompted, click "Restart Now." If asked to remove the installation disc, just press Enter.

8

Log in

Enter the username and password you created, and you'll land on the Ubuntu desktop.

9

Run your first update

Open the "Terminal" app and type: `sudo apt update && sudo apt upgrade -y`, then press Enter. It will ask for the password you just created — type it in (it won't show on screen, that's normal) and press Enter again. This makes sure everything is fresh and up to date.

Part 5 — Install and Set Up Kali

1

Choose "Graphical install"

When the virtual machine boots up, use the arrow keys to select "Graphical install" from the menu, then press Enter.

2

Choose your language, location, and keyboard

Click through each of these screens, picking the options that match you, then click "Continue" after each one.

3

Set a hostname

This is just a name for your computer, like "my-kali." Leave the "domain name" box empty — that's normal for a personal setup.

4

Create your user account

Enter your full name, then choose a username and a password. This is the password you'll use every time you log in, so pick one you'll remember.

5**Partition the disk**

Choose "Guided — use entire disk," then select the only disk listed (it's the virtual machine's disk, not your real computer). Choose "All files in one partition" — the simplest option for beginners — then confirm the changes.

6**Wait while Kali installs**

This step takes a while as it installs the base system and desktop. If asked about extra software, the default selections are fine — just continue.

7**Install the boot loader (GRUB)**

When asked, choose "Yes" and select the virtual hard disk shown. This lets the virtual machine start Kali properly each time.

8**Restart and log in**

Click "Continue" to restart. Remove the installation disc if prompted (press Enter), then log in with the username and password you created.

9**Run your first update**

Open a "Terminal" window and type: `sudo apt update && sudo apt full-upgrade -y`, then press Enter. Type in your password when asked (it won't show on screen) and press Enter again. This brings Kali fully up to date.

Good to know

A virtual machine is just a program pretending to be a separate computer. If anything goes wrong while you're learning or practicing, your real computer stays completely safe — you can always delete the virtual machine and start fresh. Also, write down the username and password you create during setup somewhere safe — you'll need them every time you log in or make changes to the system.