

Getting Started with SteamOS/How to Dual-Boot SteamOS and Windows

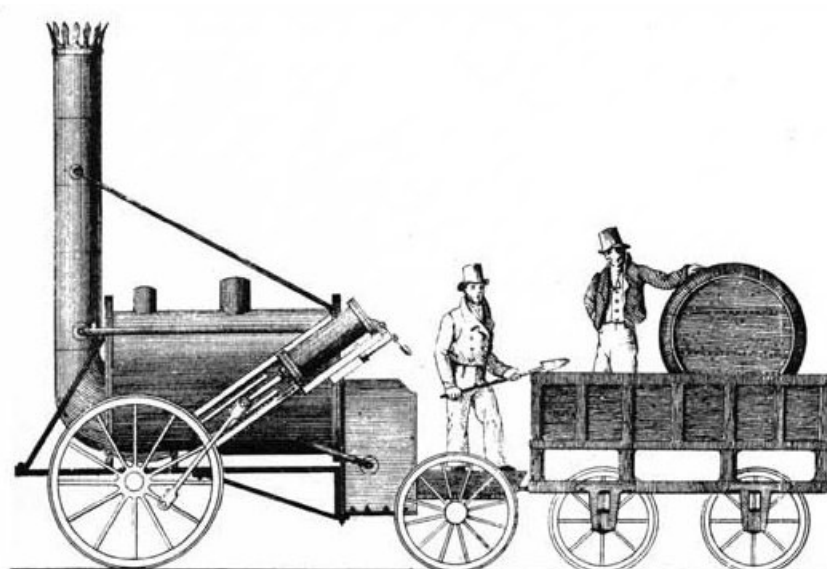
So first off, let's ask, what exactly is SteamOS? SteamOS is a Linux-based operating system – more specifically, Debian-based – that in a nutshell provides easy access to Steam in [Big Picture Mode](#). This distribution is designed for the living room – no keyboards or mice are required to interact with the OS.

Why use SteamOS? Ever wanted to play your PC games on the TV but often find it clunky to use Windows in the living room? That's where SteamOS comes in – to get rid of the keyboard and mouse hassle and make your PC behave in a console-esque manner.

So, if you ever wanted to give SteamOS a shot, what are we looking at in terms of hardware requirements? According to the [SteamOS FAQ](#), the recipe calls for a 64-bit CPU, 4 GB or more of RAM, 250+ GB of hard drive space, a graphics card, and of course an installer media, such as a DVD or flash drive, to install the operating system. I have been able to get away with less than 250 GB of hard drive space. You shouldn't need to have that much RAM either in case you don't. I have never tested SteamOS on AMD hardware, but AMD's support on Linux is still quite off the ledge compared to NVIDIA and users have reported [multiple issues](#). I recommend using an Intel processor and an NVIDIA graphics card.

Since we're making a dual-boot set up, you also need to either have two separate hard drives or at least an unformatted partition where we can set up SteamOS. You can make a new partition in Windows with Disk Management or by using the Stephenson's Rocket installer. I recommend having the partition/drive 60 GB or greater in size.

If your computer meets the requirements, we have a few options as to what SteamOS "flavor" we want to download – Alchemist (Debian 7 "Wheezy," AKA SteamOS 1.0), Brewmaster (Debian 8.1 "Jessie," AKA SteamOS 2.0), [VaporOS](#) (based off of alchemist, with a few packages added), and [Stephenson's Rocket](#), formerly called Ye Olde SteamOSe (adds support for older AMD and NVIDIA hardware and NTFS partition resizing). Brewmaster, although it is more up-to-date with Debian's repository, has its issues, like [not being able to access the terminal](#). VaporOS might be good if you want to have screen recording, but I have had issues installing the latest versions. And Stephenson's Rocket...well I've never tried it. So we'll use the official alchemist installer in this tutorial for simplicity's sake.

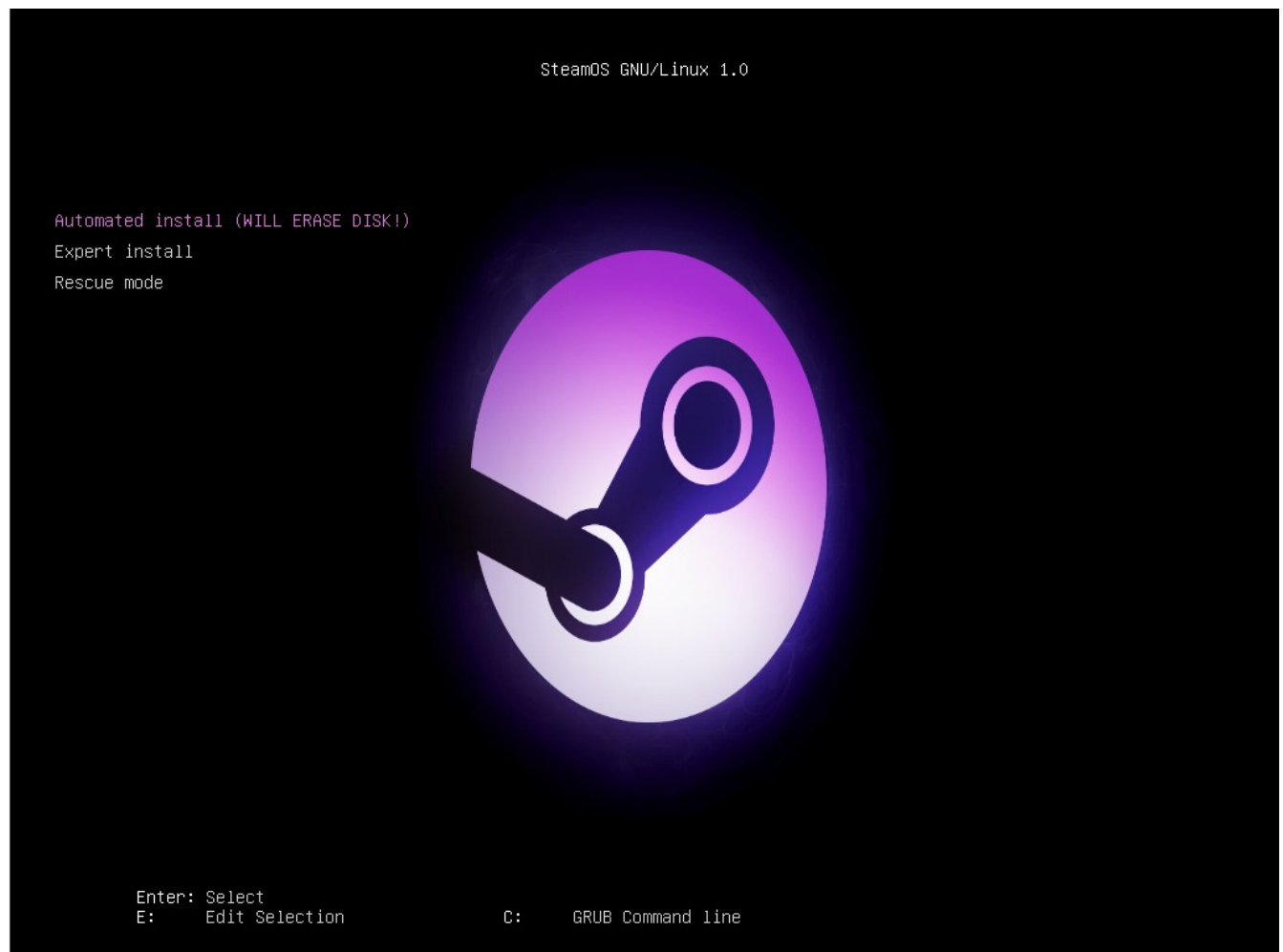


Ye Olde SteamOS! - er, I mean, Stephenson's Rocket!

Go ahead and [download](#) the ISO if you're going to burn the image to a blank DVD or download the installer zip file to use as a bootable flash drive. Use an image burner, such as [ImgBurn](#), to create a bootable disc. If you downloaded the installer zip file simply extract the contents to a blank, FAT32-formatted flash drive that's 4 GB or greater in storage capacity.

Make a mental note of whether Windows is installed as Master Boot Record (MBR) or GUID Partition Table (GPT). To do so, go to Computer Management > Disk Management > Right-click Windows disk and select Properties > Volumes tab.

Restart the computer with the bootable device. Access the boot options menu at the BIOS screen (in my case it's the F12 key). If your Windows drive is formatted as MBR, do NOT select the UEFI option. If, however, Windows is formatted as GPT, select the UEFI boot option. You should get a screen like this:



SteamOS Installer Screen

We could do this the easy way by selecting the 'Automated install', where the installer takes care of everything by itself, but we're more interested in the 'Expert install', where we'll be able to select which drive or partition we want the OS to be so we can dual-boot with Windows.

After selecting the 'Expert install' option, follow through the prompts until you get to the partitioning section.



Wait – Did I Do That?

You might notice your partitions look a bit odd. That's because this screen gives the recommended layout of how SteamOS should get installed. Double-click "Undo changes to partitions" and you should see your partitions as they normally are set.

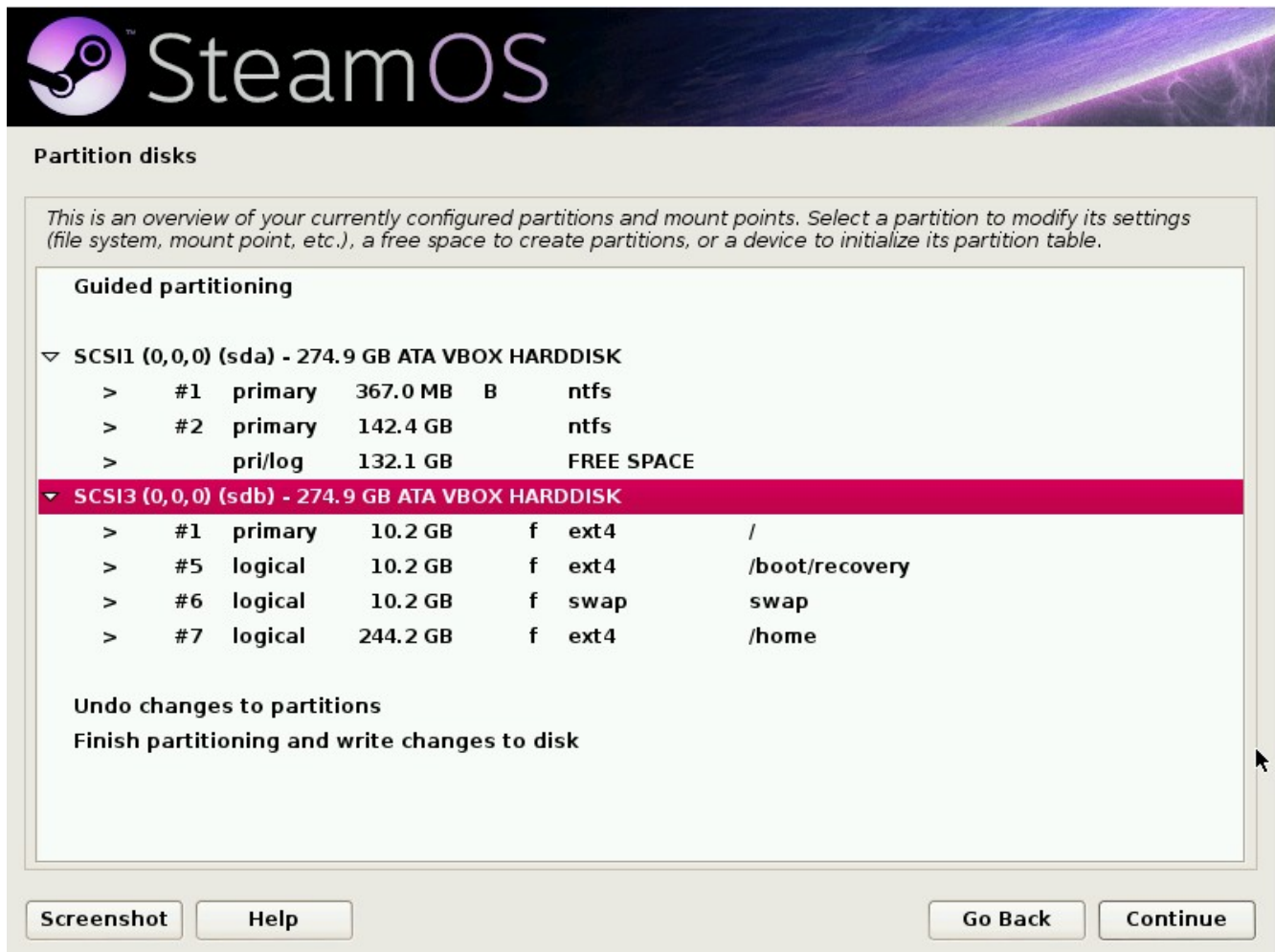


Ah...that's better...

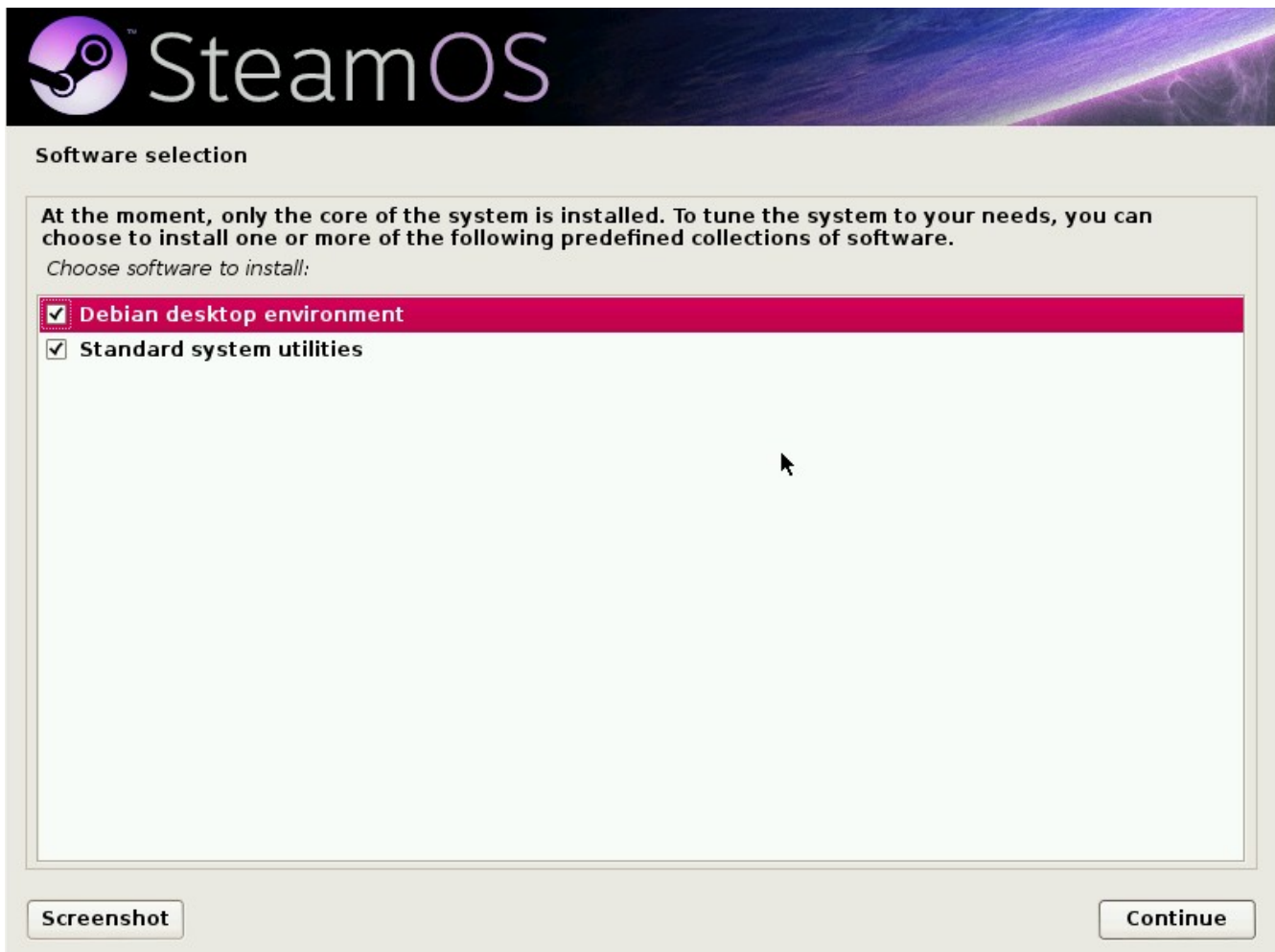
So in my case I have a blank partition of 132 GB. This is where we'll install SteamOS. Double-click the partition and you should have a few options as to how you want to set up the partition. Select the option to automatically partition the free space if it hasn't been selected already and you should see something like this:



If you're using a second hard drive, the set up is pretty similar. Double-click "Guided partitioning" and select "Guided – use entire disk," selecting the drive that will be using SteamOS.



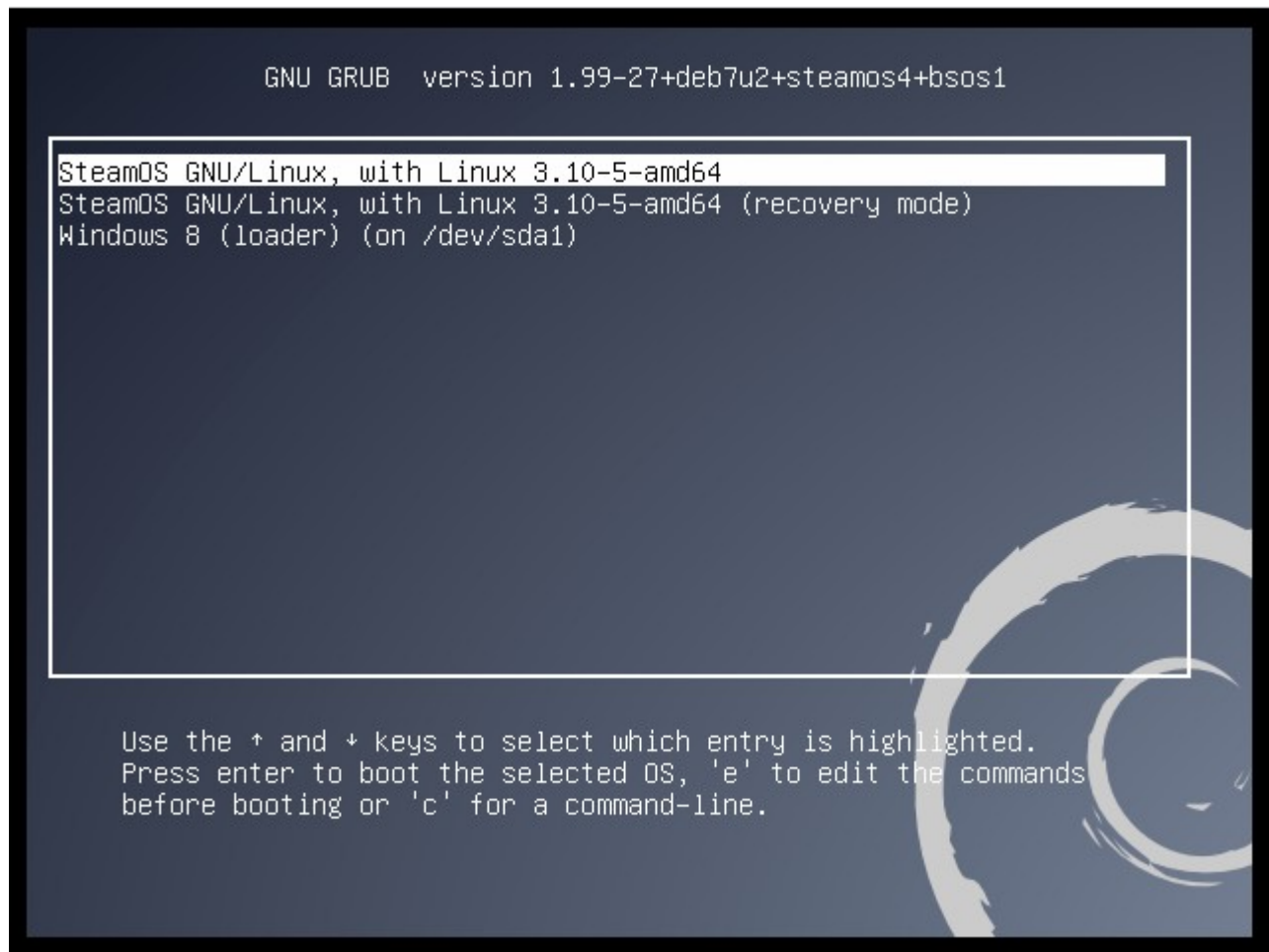
Looks a bit complicated, I know, but all we need to recognize is that the last partition there, set to /home, is where SteamOS, the Steam client, and all of the games will be installed. Double-click the option to write changes to disk and the installation will continue. At some point the installer will ask you what software you would like to install. Select both the desktop environment and the system utilities.



Then you will be asked to install the Grand Unified Bootloader (GRUB), which will replace your current bootloader. Please do so.



When the installer finishes, the computer will reboot. If everything worked, you should have both SteamOS and Windows as boot options.

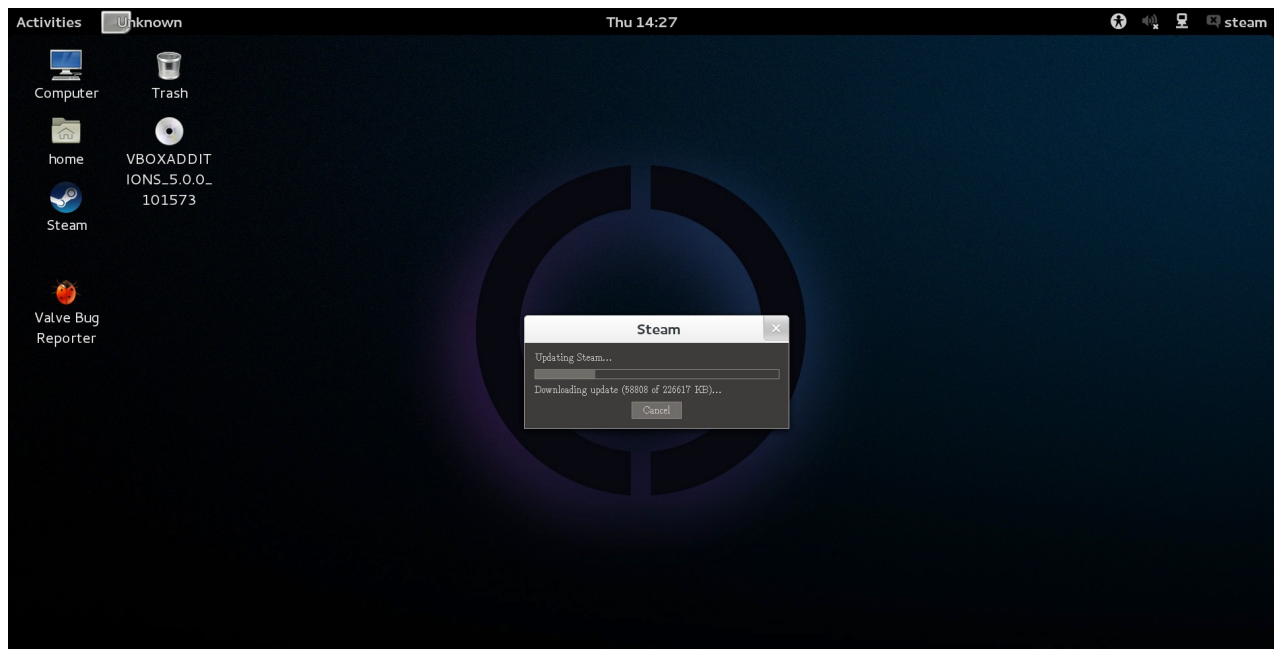


Continue to boot the default SteamOS option.

SteamOS may or may not configure the hardware drivers at this point, but in either case you should eventually be presented with the GNOME desktop. If the installer did not present any network options to you, connect to the Internet now with the little Internet icon on the top-right of the screen.

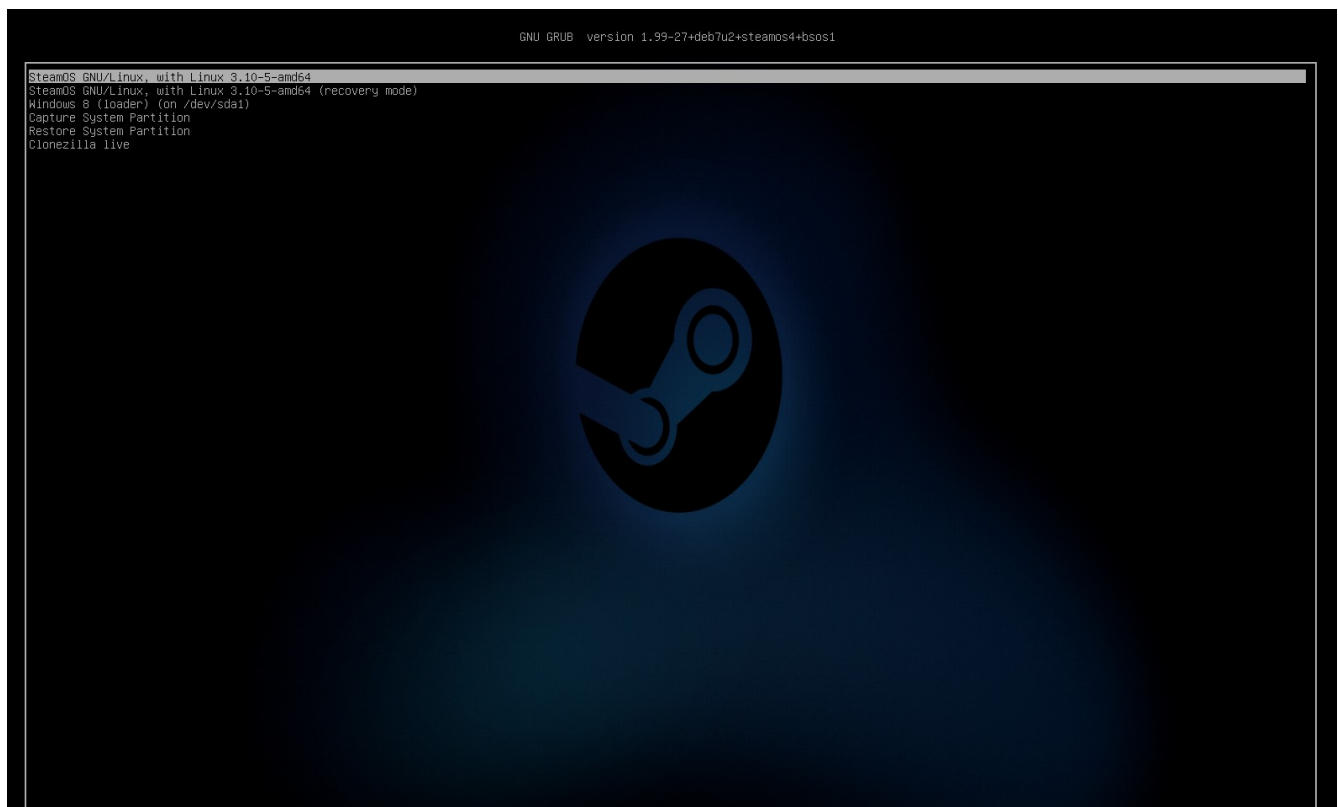
The Steam client will now automatically download. Then the operating system will configure the kernel.

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The Default SteamOS Desktop

The computer will reboot again. Hopefully you should now see a new boot image with some additional options added.




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Do not press any keys and let GRUB select the capture system partition option. Partclone will now create a backup of the system partition. When it's finished, select the reboot option.

```

- Partclone -
Partclone v0.2.66 http://partclone.org
Starting to clone device (/dev/sda2) to image (-)
Reading Super Block
Calculating bitmap... Please wait... done!
File system:  EXTFS
Device size:   10.2 GB = 2500096 Blocks
Space in use:  2.8 GB = 680525 Blocks
Free Space:    7.5 GB = 1819571 Blocks
Block size:    4096 Byte

Elapsed: 00:00:14 Remaining: 00:01:00   Rate:   2.25GB/min
Current Block: 187337   Total Block: 2500096

Data Block Process:
 18.82%

Total Block Process:
 7.49%

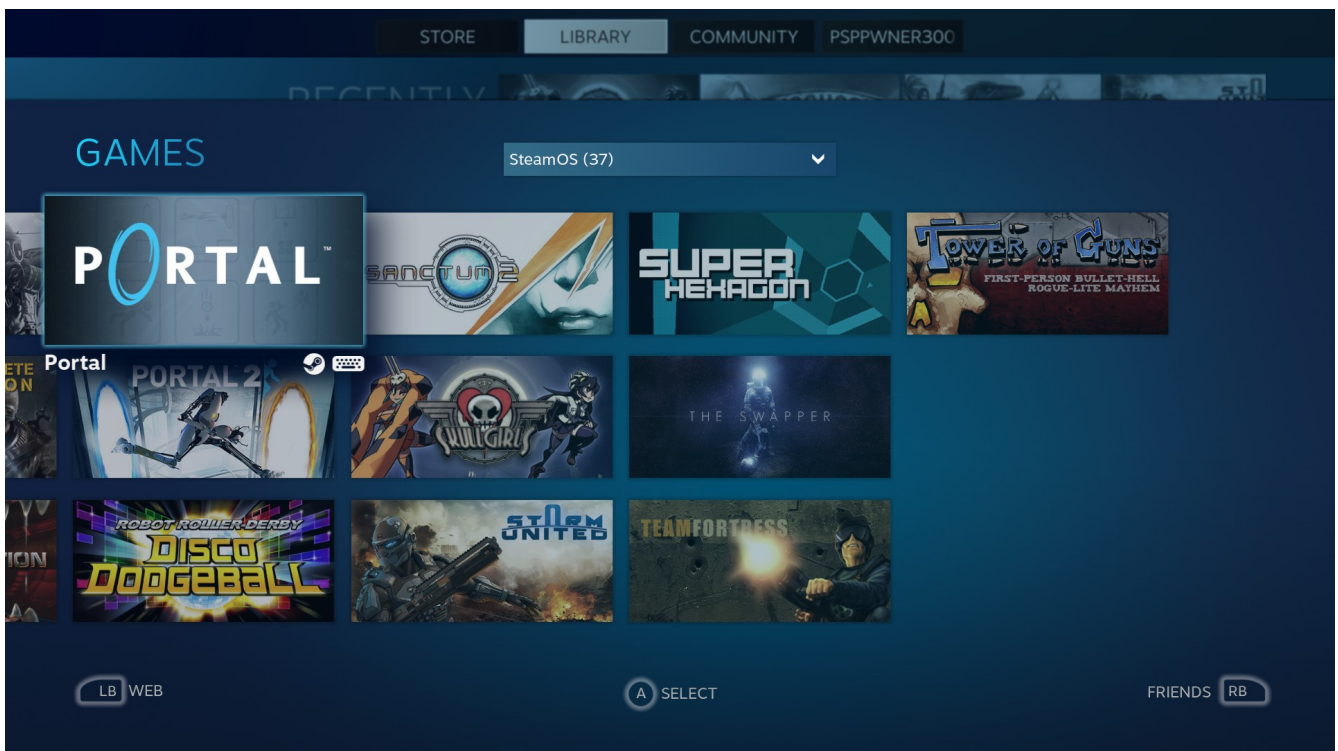
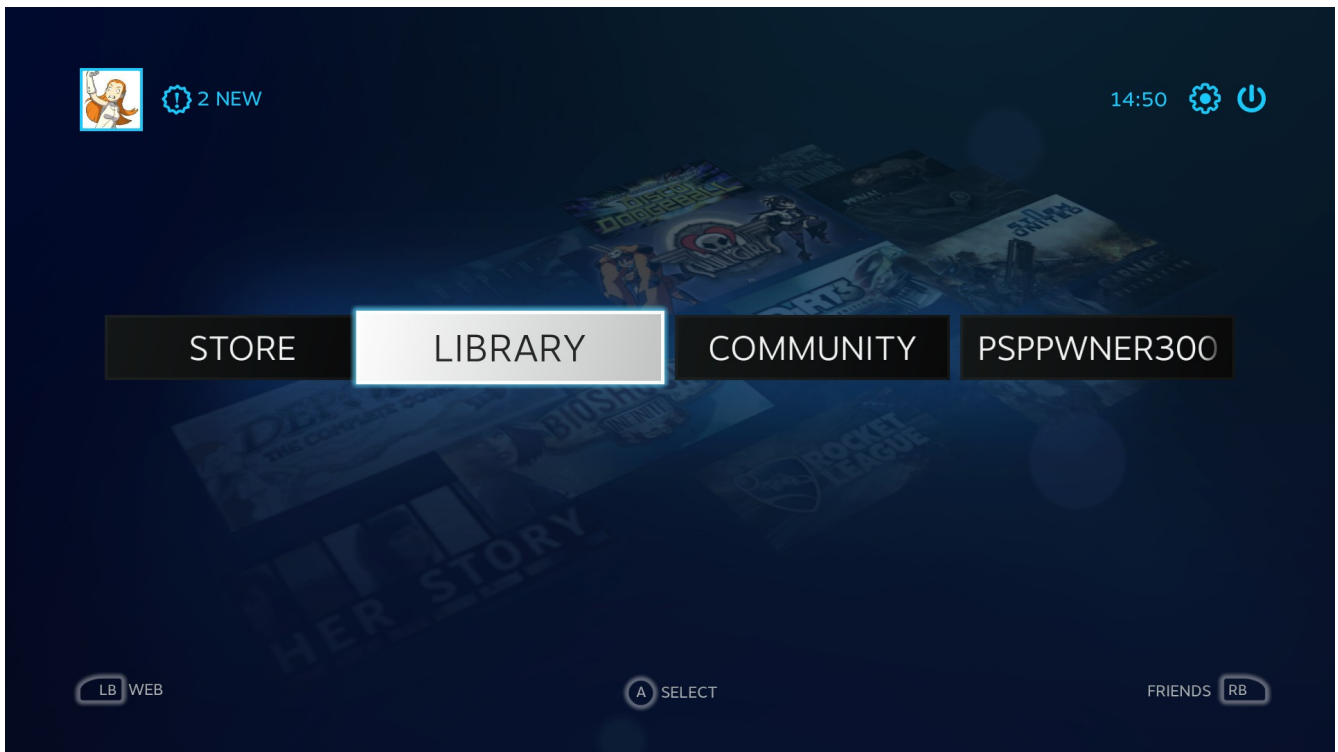
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Again, let GRUB select the default SteamOS option. SteamOS will then prepare hardware drivers, and then Steam should launch in Big Picture mode!

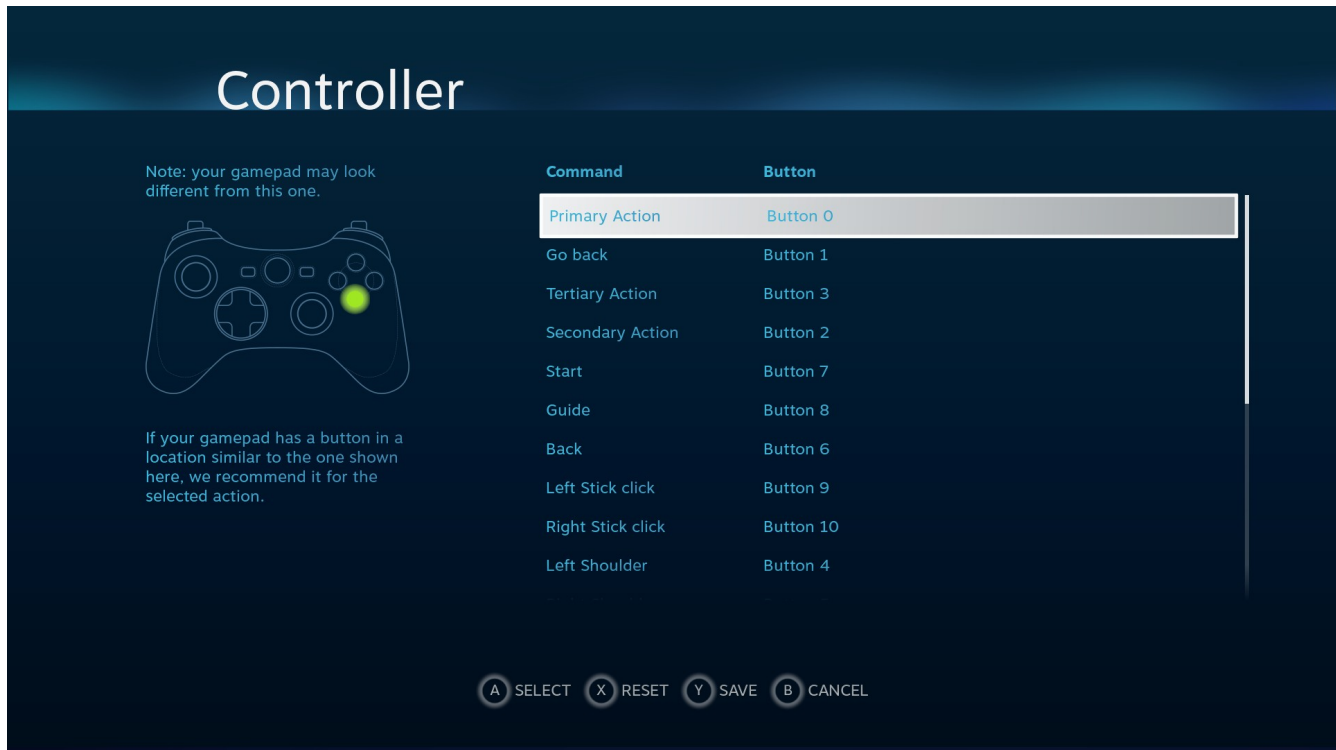
You will be asked to configure some settings, including the time zone and the resolution. After that you should be able to log in to your Steam account like you normally would on other devices.

If all of this has worked for you, great! You have successfully transformed your PC into a 10-foot masterpiece. Eventually, *Skullgirls* and *Rocket League* will be available. In the meantime, you can still launch Windows to have access to any Windows-exclusive titles.

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Most gamepads, including the Xbox 360 and One controllers, have out-of-the-box support. However, you may notice that the 'A' button is mapped to, say, the 'X' button and the 'B' button is mapped to 'A'. To modify the controls, go to Settings (cog wheel icon on top-right of home screen) > Controller > Edit controls. Also, if the blinking green light on the Guide button bothers you, simply disconnect the controller and reconnect it.



From here there are a few additions that you can add to enhance the functionality of the operating system as a whole. You can [opt-in to alchemist_beta](#) to receive updates for the OS more often and [add repositories other than Valve's](#) so you can install such packages as vlc or kodi. For the time being, though, bathe yourself in the glory of being a PC-console hybrid champion.