

# Linus Torvalds



Torvalds was born in Helsinki, Finland in 1969. He is the son of journalists Anna and Nils Torvalds.

His interest in computers began with the Commodore VIC-20 at the age of 11 in 1981, for which he programmed mainly in BASIC or machine code. He later purchased a Sinclair QL, using which he honed his craft, modifying it extensively. Torvalds is quoted saying that it was hard to get software for the Sinclair QL in Finland, so he had to modify the operating system a lot. He is said to have written his own assembler and editor for the Sinclair QL as well as a lot of games including a clone of Pac-Man which he dubbed Cool Man.

In 1988 he began attending the University of Helsinki to attain a master's degree in computer science. Unfortunately his academic career was interrupted after just one year of study as he was drafted into the Finnish army. Out of multiple choices, he decided to do an 11 month officer training program to complete his mandatory military service in Finland. During his 11 months Torvalds was the Second Lieutenant his role being that of a ballistic calculation officer. While in the army in his downtime he decided to study Operating Systems: Design and Implementation by computer science professor Andrew Tanenbaum thanks to which he was first introduced to Unix, or more specifically a stripped down educational version of it dubbed MINIX by Tanenbaum.

After serving his mandatory 11 months, in 1990, he continued his academic career to graduate with a master's degree in computer science from the NODES research group in 1996. His M.Sc. thesis was called Linux: A Portable Operating System.

While in college Torvalds was continuously working on Linux. The first prototypes of Linux were publicly released in 1991 and version 1.0 was released on March 14, 1994.

Although Torvalds wanted to call what is now known as Linux Freax, his friend Ari Lemmke, who was the administrator of the FTP server where the kernel was first hosted had other plans. He called Torvalds's folder Linux and thanks to Lemmke, from that point on the name Linux stuck.

Torvalds first encountered the GNU Project in 1991 at the University of Technology while listening to Richard Stallman's speech. Inspired by the speech Torvalds decided to incorporate Stallman's GNU General Public License into his own Linux kernel.

After graduating Torvalds accepted a position at Transmeta in California, where he began employment in February 1997.

In 1999, he was named by the MIT Technology Review TR100 as one of the world's top 100 innovators under the age of 35. In that same year both Red Hat and VA Linux who were leading developers of Linux-based software, gifted Torvalds with stock options to thank him for his work on Linux. After both companies went public, Torvalds's share value temporarily went up to approximately twenty million dollars.

In June 2003 Torvalds began working for the Open Source Development Labs, which has since merged with the Free Standards Group to become the Linux Foundation, where he continues to work until this day. In 2004, Torvalds and his family moved to Oregon, to be closer to the Open Source Development Labs Oregon based headquarters.