Arch Linux on the Raspberry Pi

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Abstract

Arch is a Linux distribution built around "The Arch Way," ¹ a philosophy of simplicity, code-correctness, user-centricity, openness, and freedom. Simplicity lends itself to a minimalist approach, which in turn leads to lower system resource overhead—exactly what one wants in an embedded system. Code-correctness means that the software is clean, correct, and simple, which implies a greater degree of comprehensibility and predictability, albeit sometimes accompanied with a steeper learning curve. User-centricity, not to be confused with user-friendliness, manifests itself as giving the user complete control over their system. Openness and freedom allow for greater control of the system; as Arch Linux's founder, Judd Vinet said, "[Arch Linux] is what you make it."

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¹https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/The_Arch_Way

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1 Overview

This guide aims to show you how to

- 1. install Arch Linux for Raspberry Pi onto a blank SD card,
- 2. expand the root partition to fill the disk,

- 3. add a new user,
- 4. modify user groups and grant superuser privileges,
- 5. establish wireless connectivity,
- 6. enable SSH access,
- 7. install GNU Compiler Collection (GCC),
- 8. install Python 3,
- 9. INSTALL IPYTHON !!!!!!
- 10. install Git,
- 11. install GNU Emacs 24+,
- 12. set up Emacs,
- 13. install WiringPi library,
- 14. install pigpio library,
- 15. install RPi.GPIO library,
- 16. ...
- 17. ??? install watchdog dæmon reboots Pi on failure http://pi.gadgetoid.com/article/who-watches-the-watcher
- 18. ??? install Lynx (text-based web browser)

For now, I'm assuming you're familiar with basic *nix commands like 1s, cd, mkdir, etc, although eventually I'd like to create a small appendix to get novices up to speed.

2 Syntax Guide

In order to avoid any confusion, here's a brief overview of the special syntax—all of which is assumed to be rendered in typewriter text—used in this document:

Table 1: Syntax guide

Description	Example	Meaning
bracketed purple slanted text	<username></username>	something to be entered by the user, the exact choice of which is up to them (note that brackets are to be omitted)
green text	n	exact user input, often found in a large block of prompts and outputs
bracketed green text	<return></return>	special key input
red hook right arrow	\hookrightarrow	line continuation character (i.e. in actual input/output, there is no linebreak)
plain text following \$ or # (shell prompt)	reboot	text between shell prompt and end of line should e en- tered by the user
slanted text	emphasized	emphasized text
bold sepia text	Emphasized!	strongly emphasized text (generally to highlight a letter that you might oth- erwise miss)
bracketed dark blue slanted text	<cwd></cwd>	,

3 Configuring Arch: The Hard Way

3.1 Installation

Download the Arch Linux disk image from http://archlinuxarm.org/platforms/armv6/raspberry-pi and follow the instructions. (Note: for Mac OS X², the process is a little different³:

1. Plug in your SD card and run $\frac{1}{2}$

 $^{^2}$ The bash terminal is assumed to be used, so user input lines are started with \$. Later, the tty prompt of Arch will start user input lines with #.

³source: http://www.embeddedarm.com/support/faqs.php?item=10

\$ diskutil list

to find the /dev/diskN node (e.g. disk3, which is the sdX in the linked instructions) on which it's located.

2. Unmount the drive by running

```
$ diskutil unmountDisk /dev/diskN
```

which will print

Unmount of all volumes on diskN was successful if successful.

3. Write the Arch image by running

```
$ dd bs=1m if=/path/to/ArchLinuxARM*-rpi.img of \hookrightarrow =/dev/rdiskN
```

as root⁴. Personal testing revealed that

tested on identical Class 4, 4 GB SD cards:

→ Downloads/ArchLinuxARM-2014.04-rpi.img of=/

⁴Some guides recommend using of=/dev/diskN instead of of=/dev/diskN for increased security as rdiskN is the raw path, while diskN is a buffered device. (source: http://elinux.org/RPi_Easy_SD_Card_Setup#Flashing_the_SD_card_using_Mac_OS~X)

3.2 Expanding the Root Partition

When you first boot up the Pi with a fresh Arch Linux installation, you will eventually be greeted with something like

```
Arch Linux 3.10.35-1-ARCH (tty1) alarmpi login:
```

for which the username and password are simply root.

- 1. Begin⁵ by logging in as root.
- 2. Run fdisk on the SD card with

```
# fdisk /dev/mmcblk0
```

3. Print the partition table, which looks something like the following⁶:

```
Command (m for help): p
Disk /dev/mmcblk0: 3.7 GiB, 3965190144 bytes, 7744512
   → sectors
Units: sectors of 1 * 512 = 512 bytes
Sector size (logical/physical): 512 bytes / 512 bytes
I/O size (minimum/optimal): 512 bytes / 512 bytes
Disklabel type: dos
Disk identifier: 0x417ee54b
Device
                Boot
                      Start
                                        Blocks Id System
                                  End
                                                 c W95 FAT32
/dev/mmcblk0p1
                       2048
                                         92160
                               186367
   \hookrightarrow (LBA)
/dev/mmcblkp2
                             3667967
                                       1740800
                     186368
                                                 5 Extended
/dev/mmcblkp5
                     188416
                                       1739776 83 Linux
                             3667967
```

The first partition is the boot partition. The second is an extended partition used to overcome the 4 primary partition limit. The third partition—that is, partition 5—is contained within partition 2, and

⁵source: http://jan.alphadev.net/post/53594241659/growing-the-rpi-root-partition

⁶This example was performed on a 4GB class 4 SanDisk SDHC card. With the exception of the Disk and Disk identifier entries, all the numbers are in agreement with those posted on the previously referenced Jan's Stuff "Growing the RPi root partition" blog entry (but that concerned a 32GB disk, and the identifier is presumably unique).

holds only 849.5 MiB⁷, which is only a fraction of the disk's available space.

4. Now we must delete partition 2:

```
Command (m for help): d

Partition number (1,2,5, default 5): 2

Partition 2 has been deleted.
```

If you print the partition table (i.e. enter p), you'll see that partition 5 is also gone because it was contained within partition 2.

5. We will now recreate the extended partition. Add a new partition in the following manner⁸:

The extended partition has now been created, but this time it occupies the disk space not taken up by the boot partition.

⁷Note the distinction between MiB (1 mebibyte = $1024 \cdot 1024$ bytes) and MB (1 megabyte = 10^6 bytes). I've tried to be consistent in this document, but mistakes have a way of creeping in, and it's ultimately not terribly important.

⁸Rather than pressing $\langle RETURN \rangle$ where indicated, you could manually enter the number, make a mistake, and *ruin everything*, but I think the former way is easier since the latter still involves pressing $\langle RETURN \rangle$.

6. The root partition will now be recreated following a similar process. For the sake of brevity, I won't detail each step but instead show it done all at once.

Note: it is absolutely critical that the first block of the old and new partition match. The data within the old partition is still there; all we're doing is resizing the partition while keeping its data intact. Changing the starting block can (and almost assuredly will) render useless the data we want to preserve.

Success!

7. Well, not so fast. We haven't actually written any of our changes yet, and we also want to make sure that we got the first block of our root partition right (see the note in step 6).

To do that, print the partition table:

```
Command (m for help): p

Disk /dev/mmcblk0: 3.7 GiB, 3965190144 bytes, 7744512

Sectors

Units: sectors of 1 * 512 = 512 bytes

Sector size (logical/physical): 512 bytes / 512 bytes

I/O size (minimum/optimal): 512 bytes / 512 bytes

Disklabel type: dos

Disk identifier: 0x417ee54b
```

```
Device Boot Start End Blocks Id System
/dev/mmcblkOp1 2048 186367 92160 c W95

→ FAT32 (LBA)
/dev/mmcblkOp2 186368 7744511 3779072 5 Extended
/dev/mmcblkOp5 186416 7744511 3778048 83 Linux
```

Looks like everything checks out, so write the table to disk and exit (and don't worry about the failure warning):

```
Command (m for help): W
The partition table has been altered.
Calling ioctl() to re-read partition table.
Re-reading the partition table failed.: Device

→ or resource busy

The kernel still uses the old table. The new

→ table will be used at the next reboot or

→ after you run partprobe(8) or kpartx(8).
```

8. Reboot the system:

```
# reboot
```

- 9. When the system restarts, log back in as root.
- 10. (optional) We will use resize2fs to actually resize the partitions, but first, let's run df and see what our filesystem looks like currently (displayed in an abbreviated form):

```
# df
Filesystem 1K-blocks Used Available Use% Mounted on
/dev/root 1679632 441176 1135084 28% /
...
/dev/mmcblk0p1 91962 25328 66634 28% /boot
...
```

11. Now it's time to use resize2fs:

```
The filesystem on /dev/mmcblk0p5 is now 944512 \hookrightarrow blocks long.
```

12. (optional) Finally, we'll run a quick check with df to see how our filesystem looks now:

```
# df
Filesystem 1K-blocks Used Available Use% Mounted on
/dev/root 3688608 442024 3065496 13% /
...
/dev/mmcblk0p1 91962 25328 66634 28% /boot
...
```

Now only 13% of the root partition is being used instead of 28%, which is a quick and easy sanity check.

3.3 Enabling Wireless Connectivity

Because of Arch's minimalist approach, very little software is included out of the box—not even something as common as **sudo!** As a result, establishing an internet connection so that additional packages can be downloaded is a high priority in any new Arch installation. In this case, we're going to assume a wireless connection is being used⁹, specifically a USB wifi adapter¹⁰.

1. First, the wireless device driver must be determined to be correctly installed. The Arch wiki suggests checking the output of

```
# lsusb -v
```

but it appears to produce screenfuls of output that would only be helpful to the kind of person not reading this document. The other suggestion is to look at the output of

```
# dmesg | grep usbcore
```

which for me output a few lines, one of which was

```
[ 9.216794] usbcore: registered new interface 

→ driver rt18192cu
```

which is what the wiki said to expect.

⁹sources: https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/Wireless_network_configuration and http://raspberrypi.stackexchange.com/questions/7987/wifi-configuration-on-arch-linux-arm

¹⁰In my particular case, I'm using an Edimax EW-7811Un 802.11n USB wifi adapter

2. Check the output of

```
# ip link
```

which in my case has five entries, the last of which is what we're looking for (i.e. something starting with a w, like wlan0):

3. Run

```
# ip link set wlan0 up
```

If you see the message

```
SIOCSIFFLAGS: No such file or directory
```

your wireless device requires firmware to be properly installed and configured. Since everything seems to be working for me, you can work out the details for yourself if you've encountered an issue at this point.

4. Copy a netctl profile¹¹:

5. Edit the newly-copied <profile> with nano or vi¹²:

```
# nano /etc/netctl/<profile>
```

so that it looks something like

```
Description='<a descriptive phrase>'
Interface=<wifi card name>
Connection=wireless
```

¹¹ In this case, I'm assuming that you're connecting to a network with WPA/WPA2 encryption. If you want to see what other examples are available, run # ls /etc/netctl → /examples.

¹²There may be other editors included in Arch, but # which ed and # which emacs both failed, so I'm guessing our choices are very limited. For the record, between nano and vi, I recommend nano.

where <wifi card name> is probably something like wlan0.

6. Start your netctl profile:

```
# netctl start file>
```

where profile> is simply the profile name and not the full path,
which will result in netctl exiting with an error code.

7. Enable netctl profile to run on startup¹³:

```
# netctl enable profile>
```

3.3.1 Additional netctl Information

There are a few more helpful commands to know with netctl. In the event you encounter an error, you can generate status logs with

```
# journalctl -xn
```

```
# netctl status cprofile>
```

and

If you modify your netctl refile>, the changes do not propagate to the service file until you run

```
# netctl reenable profile>
```

¹³Technically, this enables a systemd service that starts on startup, but why bother with the details when you're using Arch?

3.4 Adding a User

It's generally considered unsafe to log in as root¹⁴, so we will add a user¹⁵. To see what users currently exist, run

```
# cat /etc/passwd
```

which lists users in the format

```
account:password:UID:GID:GECOS:directory:shell
```

where UID is the user ID, GID is the primary group ID, GECOS is an optional field usually containing the full user name, directory is the path of \$HOME, and shell is the user's command interpreter, which defaults to /bin/sh.

Adding a user is straightforward, and uses the following syntax:

We'll worry about groups in the next section, so for now enter something like

```
# useradd -m -s /bin/bash matlock
```

although I generally suggest you pick a different username unless you're a relative or an Andy Griffith fan.

To change the password, enter

```
# passwd <username>
```

which in my case is set to *******.

To force a user to change this password on their first login, run

```
chage -d 0 <username>
```

(Yes, that's right, it's **chage**, not change—remember that **chage** deals with password *age*, not password change.)

The GECOS field is edited by issuing the command

```
# chfn <username>
```

but doing so is not especially important.

If you're ever curious as to what user you are, it's a simple as

```
# whoami
```

 $^{^{14} \}rm see$ http://www.slackbook.org/html/shell.html and http://lmgtfy.com/?q=why+shouldn% 27t+you+log+in+as+root

¹⁵source: https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/users_and_groups

which may be among the least arcane Linux commands. To switch between users,

logout

3.5 User Groups

To add a user to a group or groups, run

```
# usermod -aG <additional groups> <username>
```

Note that if the -a flag is omitted, the user is removed from all groups not explicity named in <additional groups>. For the sake of clarity, here are the groups to which I added matlock:

```
# usermod -aG users, rfkill, wheel matlock
```

None of documentation I found explictly stated that *<additional groups>* is a list of groups separated by commas without spaces, but that's probably obvious to most people.

You can verify that you've properly assigned groups to a user with the command

```
# groups <username>
```

Before you go about adding a user to a group, it's helpful to know what groups exist, the purpose of existing groups, and how to create/delete groups.

First, listing groups is similar to listing users; it's simply

```
# cat /etc/group
```

The main groups we care about are users, rfkill, and wheel. Granting membership to users is a nice thing to do, rfkill lets you turn off RF devices (e.g. Bluetooth and wifi), and wheel is the typical name for the administrative group.

3.6 Installing and Configuring sudo

sudo grants the temporary privilege of root to a non-root user and logs all commands and failed access attempts. Working as a non-root user ensures that you're less likely to cause damage to your system through a mistake or a bug in a command you execute.

When you run a command through sudo, you'll receive the following warning:

```
We trust you have received the usual lecture from the local

→ System

Administrator. It usually boils down to these three things:

#1) Respect the privacy of others.

#2) Think before you type.

#3) With great power comes great responsibility.
```

It's a message that bears repeating.

1. Install¹⁶ sudo:

```
# pacman -S sudo
```

2. Print the current sudo configuration:

```
# sudo -11
```

and do nothing with that information. Hey, the wiki said to do it. The output for me was as follows:

```
User root may run the following commands on alarmpi:

Sudoers entry:

RunAsUsers: ALL

Commands:

ALL
```

3. The configuration file for sudo, /etc/sudoers, should *always* be edited with visudo because it locks the sudoers file, saves edits to a temporary file, and checks the syntax before copying it back to /etc/sudoers.

Unfortunately but unsurprisingly, the default editor for visudo is vi. You can fix this problem with

```
# EDITOR=nano visudo
```

which will open sudoers for editing.

Uncomment the line

```
# %wheel ALL=(ALL) ALL
```

¹⁶source: https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/sudo

to give members of the wheel group sudo privileges.

To permanently set nano as your visudo EDITOR, add the following to your sudoers file:

Upon saving and exiting, running # sudo -ll again produces

```
User root may run the following commands on alarmpi:

Sudoers entry:
RunAsUsers: ALL
Commands:
ALL
Sudoers entry:
RunAsUsers: ALL
Commands:
ALL
```

which isn't necessarily what you'd expect.

At this point, I highly encourage you to log out as root and log in as the user you created. Because we set bash as our default terminal, lines will now start with \$ instead of #.

3.6.1 Disabling root Login

https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/sudo#Disable_root_login (actually detail how to do this in here)

3.7 Enabling SSH Access

1. Now that we have an internet connection, we should sync our repo database and upgrade our system:

```
$ sudo pacman -Syu
```

which should ensure that openssh is up-to-date.

2. Check systemctl¹⁷ to see if an SSH dæmon is running¹⁸:

```
$ systemctl list-units | grep -i 'ssh'
which for me produced
sshd.service loaded active running OpenSSH Daemon
```

3. Edit the SSH dæmon configuration file¹⁹:

```
$ sudo nano /etc/ssh/sshd_config
```

and add the lines

```
AllowGroups users wheel
PermitRootLogin no
```

If you want a custom greeting, add the line

```
Banner /etc/issue
```

and edit the file /etc/issue (you'll need root permissions).

4. (optional) To change the name of your Raspberry Pi²⁰:

```
$ sudo hostnamectl set-hostname <new name>
```

That's it! You can now connect to your Pi²¹ by running the following on a computer connected to the same network as your Pi²²:

¹⁷ systemctl seems to have replaced initscripts, so ignore any advice that says you need to look at your /etc/rc.conf file, which you probably don't even have!

¹⁸Trust me, you don't want to leave off the | grep -i 'ssh'—it's a bit much to read through. Also, the -i isn't strictly necessary in this case, but it gives you a case-insensitive search, which is nice.

¹⁹If you omit sudo, you won't have the necessary permissions to edit the file. In case you forget (as I did upon doing this myelf), you can save it elsewhere (e.g. ./sshd_config, and if you're unsure what your current working directory is, run \$ pwd), exit nano, and run \$ sudo mv ./sshd_config /etc/ssh/sshd_config.

²⁰source: https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/Network_configuration#Set_the_hostname

²¹If you've changed your Pi's hostname but previously connected to it through SSH before doing so, the computer through which you're trying to connect will likely have a line in \$HOME/.ssh/known_hosts that prevents you from connecting through the new name. (source: https://bbs.archlinux.org/viewtopic.php?id=168055) In my case, running \$ dscacheutil -flushcache fixed the issue.

²²I'm assuming you're connecting through port 22

\$ ssh -p 22 <username>@<hostname>

where <hostname> is alarmpi by default or <new name> if you elected to change it.

Alternately, if you know your Pi's IP address, you can connect to it with²³

```
$ ssh -p 22 <username>@<IP address>
```

You can supposedly make your life more convenient with an ssh_config file. If that sounds appealing, see Simplify your life with an SSH config file²⁴.

3.7.1 SSH Keys Versus Password Logins

Using SSH keys is more secure²⁵, but for now, it's easier to go with password logins.

3.8 Making Use of SSH

Now we've set up SSH, I'd suggest that's how you connect to your Pi because it's just easier.

If you want to figure out how to copy files, see the subsection on Emacs Setup (§ 3.9.8).

3.9 Recommended Software

The following subsections make heavy use of Arch's package management system, pacman.

3.9.1 Installing the GNU Compiler Collection (GCC)

Installing gcc is as simple as

\$ sudo pacman -S gcc

To verify your gcc installation works, type the following into a file named hello-world.c

²³Again, assuming that you're going through port 22.

²⁴http://nerderati.com/2011/03/simplify-your-life-with-an-ssh-config-file/

²⁵source: https://wiki.archlinux.org/index.php/SSH_Keys

```
#include <stdio.h>

void main()
{
    printf("Hello, world!\n");
    return;
}
```

run

```
$ gcc hello-world.c -o hello-world.app
$ ./hello-world.app
```

Congratulations! If you haven't already, you can now add "C programmer" to your résumé.

3.9.2 Installing Python 3

```
$ sudo pacman -S python
```

If you also want Python 2, replacing python with python2 is all you need to do.

To test your Python installation, run

```
$ python
```

you should see something like

```
Python 3.4.0 (default, Apr 27 2014, 10:47:09)

[GCC 4.8.2 20131219 (prerelease)] on linux

Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license" for

→ more information.

>>>
```

Of course, it's more satisfying if you try a hello world, which is just

```
>>> print("Hello, world!")
```

3.9.3 Installing GNU Make

```
$ sudo pacman -S make
```

3.9.4 Installing Git

\$ sudo pacman -S git

3.9.5 Installing WiringPi

There doesn't appear to be an Arch Linux ARM-compatible packaged release of WiringPi, so this installation process looks a little different. First, clone WiringPi using git²⁶:

```
$ git clone git://git.drogon.net/wiringPi
```

then go into the folder and build the library:

- \$ cd wiringPi
- \$./build

(I still need to look up where the installation puts everything to ensure that

is safe to do, but I have a feeling that because ./build invokes sudo, everything is put in a place that requires special permission, that is, not your home folder.)

3.9.6 Installing I2C Tools

\$ sudo pacman -S i2c-tools

Looks like you get Python 2 for free with this. I'm not sure how you invoke this, but according to Sonny, we need it.

3.9.7 Installing GNU Emacs

\$ sudo pacman -S emacs

Be forewarned: Emacs is quite large—over 330 MiB when I installed it—but it's worth it.

²⁶source: https://projects.drogon.net/raspberry-pi/wiringpi/download-and-install/

3.9.8 Emacs Setup

I recommend actually ignoring this section for the time being. Emacs is a very personal thing, but my general recommendation is to try

```
$ mkdir ~/elisp
$ mkdir ~/.emacs.d
```

through SSH, and then, in another terminal, try

which in my case looks like

4 Configuring Arch: The Easy Way

Haha, there is no "easy" way (yet—I'm working on it).

5 Miscellaneous Useful Commands

5.1 Shutdown and reboot as user other than root

Shutdown:

```
$ systemctl poweroff
Reboot
$ systemctl reboot
```