Arch Linux is an independently developed, x86-64 general-purpose GNU/Linux distribution that strives to provide the latest stable versions of most software by following a rolling-release model.

The default installation is a minimal base system, configured by the user to only add what is purposely required.

Arch Linux defines simplicity as without unnecessary additions or modifications.

It ships software as released by the original developers (upstream) with minimal distribution-specific (downstream) changes: patches not accepted by upstream are avoided, and Arch's downstream patches consist almost entirely of backported bug fixes that are obsoleted by the project's next release.

It does not add automation features such as enabling a service simply because the package was installed.

Packages are only split when compelling advantages exist, such as to save disk space in particularly bad cases of waste.

Arch Linux strives to maintain the latest stable release versions of its software as long as systemic package breakage can be reasonably avoided.

Arch incorporates many of the newer features available to GNU/Linux users, including the systemd init system, modern file systems, LVM2, software RAID, udev support and initcpio (with mkinitcpio), as well as the latest available kernels.

Ultimately, design decisions are made on a case-by-case basis through developer consensus.

Evidence-based technical analysis and debate are what matter, not politics or popular opinion.

The large number of packages and build scripts in the various Arch Linux repositories offer free and open source software for those who prefer it, as well as proprietary software packages for those who embrace functionality over ideology.

Whereas many GNU/Linux distributions attempt to be more user-friendly, Arch Linux has always been, and shall always remain user-centric.

It is targeted at the proficient GNU/Linux user, or anyone with a do-it-yourself attitude who is willing to read the documentation, and solve their own problems.

Reporting and helping fix bugs is highly valued and patches improving packages or the core projects are very appreciated: Arch's developers are volunteers and active contributors will often find themselves becoming part of that team.

Archers can freely contribute packages to the Arch User Repository, improve the ArchWiki documentation, provide technical assistance to others or just exchange opinions in the forums, mailing lists, or IRC channels.

Arch Linux is the operating system of choice for many people around the globe, and there exist several international communities that offer help and provide documentation in many different languages.

Upon installation, only a command-line environment is provided; rather than tearing out unneeded and unwanted packages, the user is offered the ability to build a custom system by choosing among thousands of high-quality packages provided in the official repositories for the x86-64 architecture.

Arch is a rolling-release model backed by pacman, a lightweight, simple and fast package manager that allows for continuously upgrading the entire system with one command.

In addition, the Arch User Repository contains many thousands of community-contributed PKGBUILD scripts for compiling installable packages from source using the makepkg application.

The Arch community has grown and matured to become one of the most popular and influential Linux distributions, also testified by the attention and review received over the years.

Judd Vinet, a Canadian programmer and occasional guitarist, began developing Arch Linux in early 2001.

Inspired by the elegant simplicity of Slackware, BSD, PLD Linux and CRUX, and yet disappointed with their lack of package management at the time, Vinet built his own distribution on similar principles as those distros.

The early Arch community grew steadily, as evidenced by this chart of forum posts, users, and bug reports.

In late 2007, Judd Vinet retired from active participation as an Arch developer, and smoothly transferred the reins over to American programmer Aaron Griffin, also known as Phrakture.

On 2017-01-25 it was announced that support for the i686 architecture would be phased out due to its decreasing popularity among the developers and the community.

Several months later, in November 2023, the old bug tracker (Flyspray) had been migrated to GitLab and its collaboration features (issues and merge requests) have been open for public.

For archiving reasons there will be a static copy of the old bug tracker so that links (for example the randomly picked FS#56716) are still valid.