

? Simple Help

How to Install Ubuntu on Your Mac Using VirtualBox

May 1, 2021 / By Ross McKillop

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This in depth guide will take you every step of the way through installing Ubuntu Linux on your Mac, by way of VirtualBox – a free and outstanding program. Using this method you'll be able to run Ubuntu and macOS at the same time!

Please note: although this guide was initially authored in 2015, it has been updated (2020) to be current. The following guide uses **Ubuntu 18.04.3 LTS "Bionic Beaver"**, but the steps and screenshots are *nearly identical* for most versions of Ubuntu, up to including 20.04.1 LTS.

Using this method to install Ubuntu not only allows you to run it and macOS at the same time, you can really try out Ubuntu – and if you don't like it – very easily get rid of it. Plus, it will not affect the files in

OS itself at all. None of the data on your Mac is at risk of being deleted or altered. The entire process

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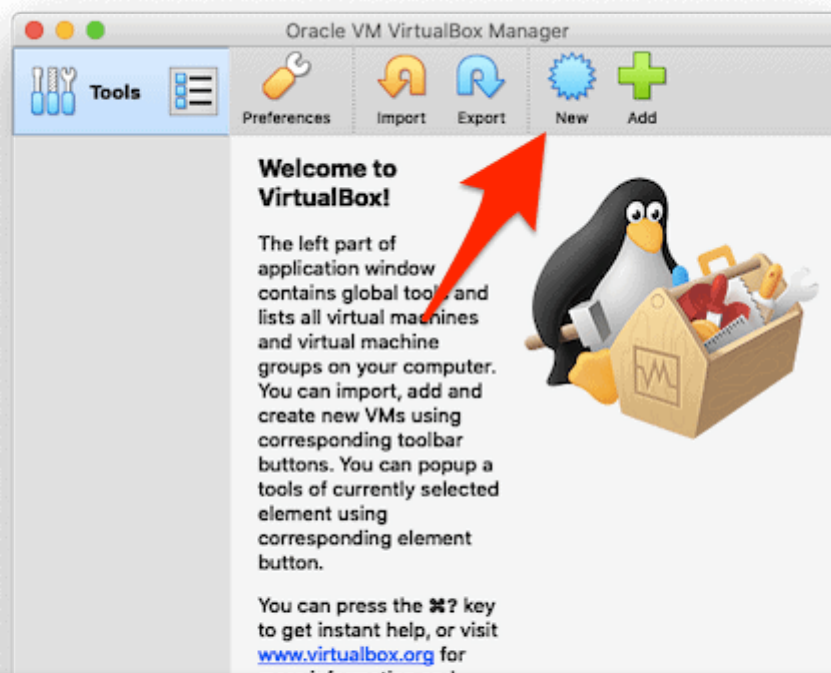
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may have to spend some time downloading updates as well.

2. The installation time is about 20 minutes, depending on the speed of your Mac, amount of memory etc. You may want to make yourself a cup of coffee or tea before you start.
3. Running both Ubuntu and macOS at the same time will “slow down” your Mac. The more memory you have and the faster your CPU and/or hard drive is, the less you’ll notice it.

Let’s get started!

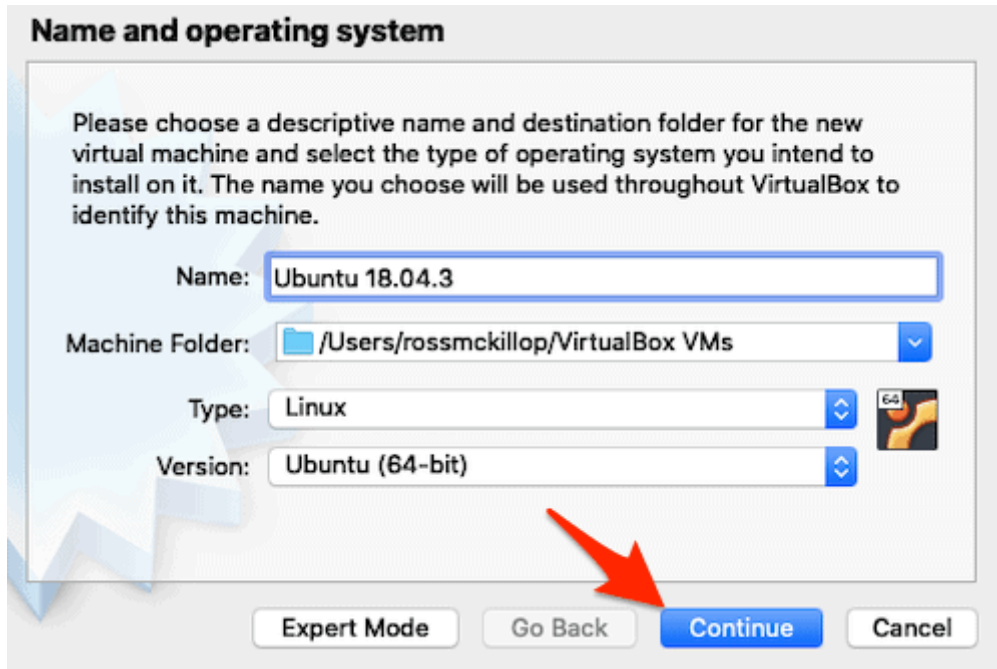
1. First up, head over to the [Ubuntu download page](#) and download Ubuntu.
2. Now you’ll need to download *and* install VirtualBox. Visit their [download page](#) and click the link **OS X hosts** (which is the current stable version). Once the download has completed, open the .dmg file and run the installer – the installation is as easy as clicking ‘next’ a bunch of times. When installation is done, launch VirtualBox from your **Applications** folder.
3. When VirtualBox opens, click the **New** button.



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4. Give your "virtual machine" a name (something descriptive is good, but it doesn't matter). Make sure the **Type:** is set to **Linux** and the **Version:** is **Ubuntu (64 bit)**. Then click the **Continue** button.

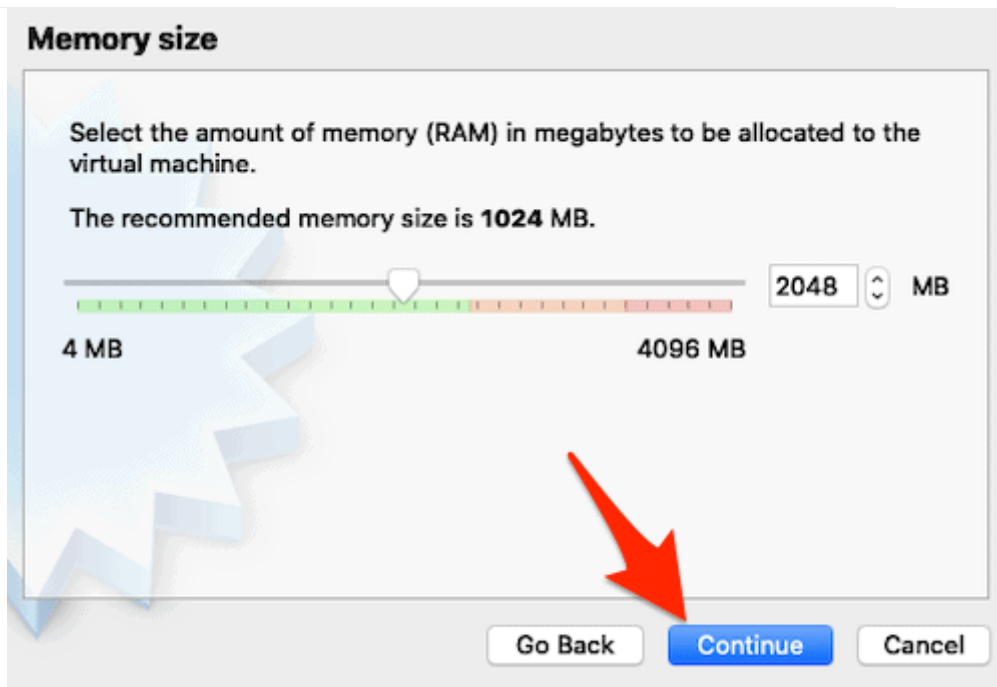


5. Now you're going to decide how much memory (RAM) you're going to allocate to Ubuntu when it's running, and how much to leave for macOS. As illustrated in the screenshot below, my total RAM is 4GB, so I allocated half of it to Ubuntu, and the other half to macOS. The more memory you give to Ubuntu, the faster it will run. The drawback is that macOS will have less to use while Ubuntu is running. At a minimum, give Ubuntu at 1GB (1024MB) of RAM. When you've decided how much memory (RAM) to give Ubuntu, click the **Continue** button.

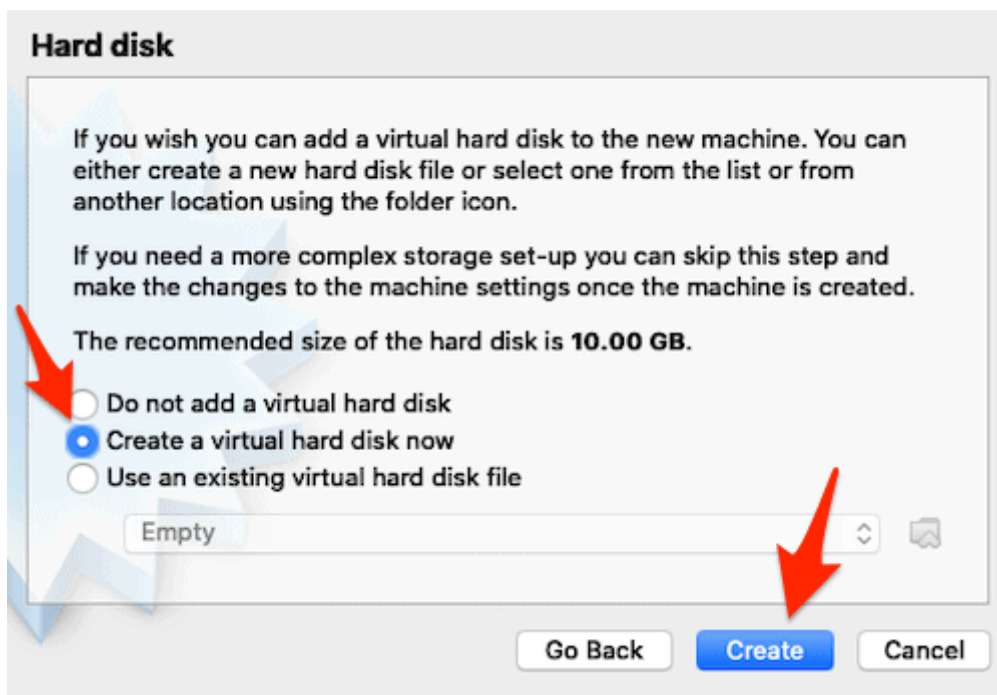


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6. On the **Hard drive** screen, select **Create a virtual hard drive now** and then click **Create**.

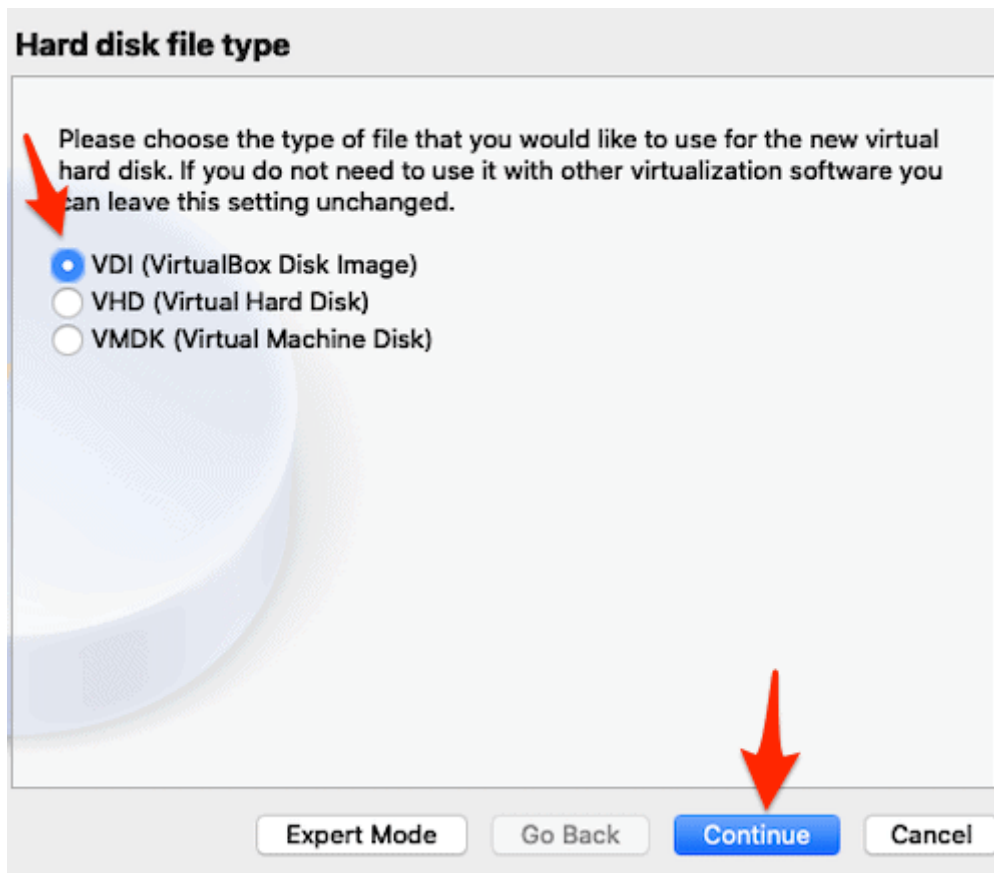


7. Now select **VDI (VirtualBox Disk Image)** and click **Continue**

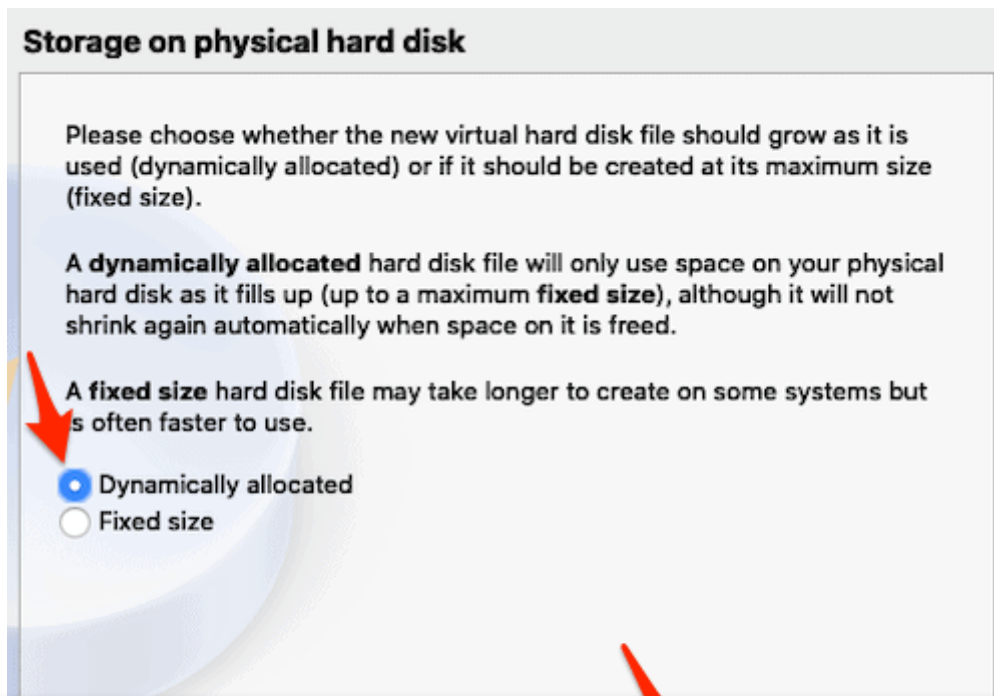


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8. Select **Dynamically allocated** and yep – you guessed it – click **Continue**

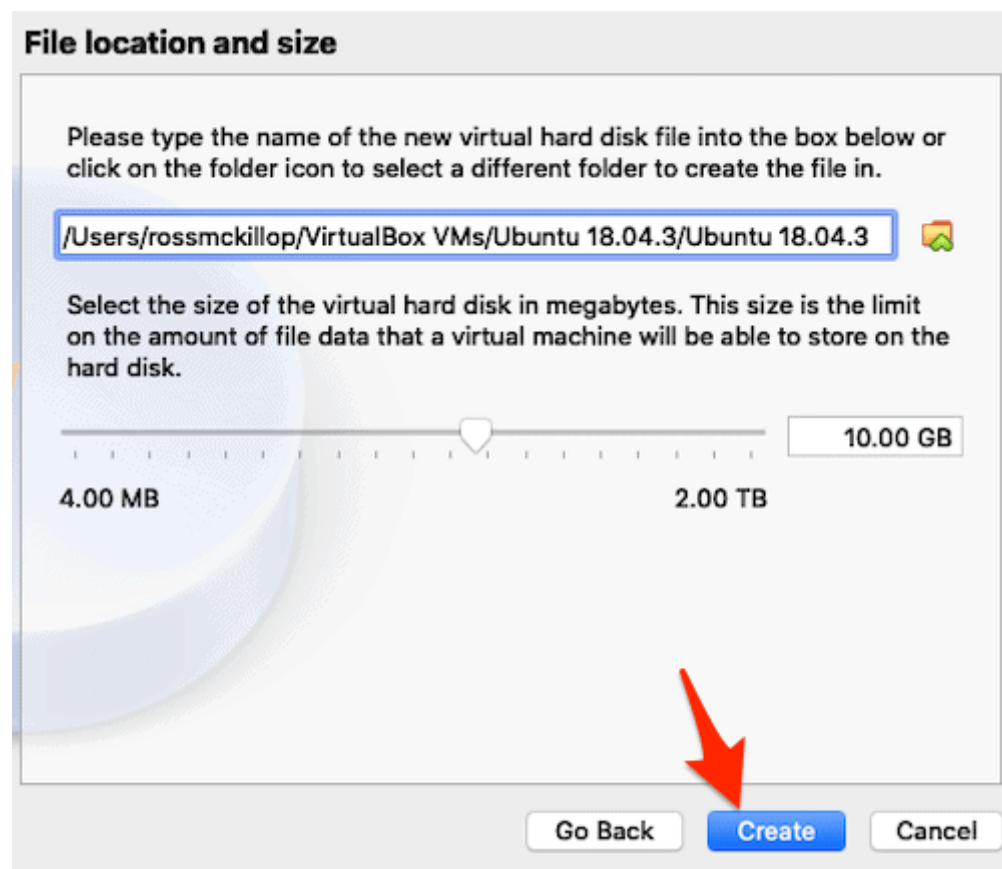


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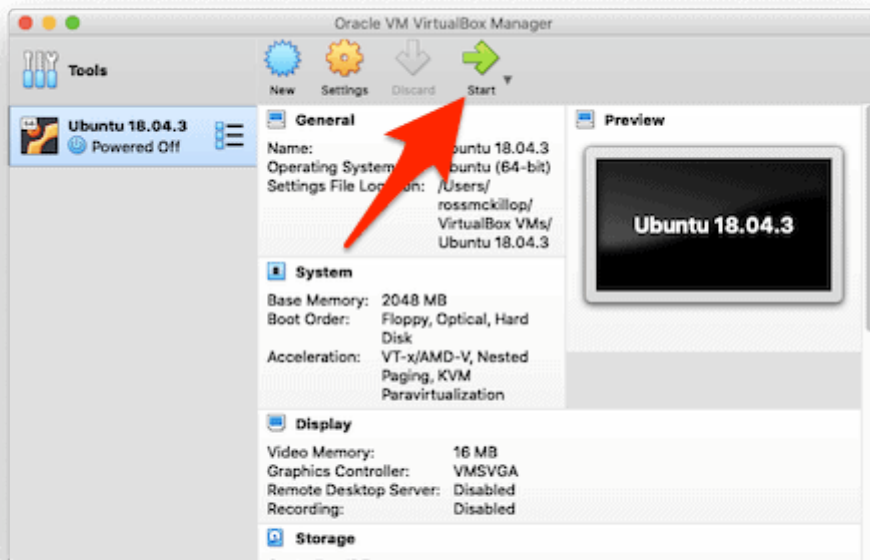
9. Use the “slider” to determine the size you want to make the “hard drive” for Ubuntu. At a minimum, you’ll want to select 6GB – and that will not allow for you to install many programs, let alone store files etc. Keep in mind that because you selected “Dynamically allocated” in the previous step, that does *not* mean that VirtualBox is going to take up that space right away. It means that as Ubuntu needs more space, it will allow the “hard drive” to increase up to whatever size you set at this step.

As illustrated in the screenshot below, I opted to give Ubuntu 10GB. That’s enough for the installation and to install quite a few programs. Since I won’t be “storing” many files in Ubuntu (movies, pictures, music etc) – 10GB will suit my needs. Plus, I have a small hard drive on my MacBook Air. If you have a big hard drive, you might as well allocate more rather than less, again – the space won’t be used until it’s needed. After you’ve made your selection, click **Create**.



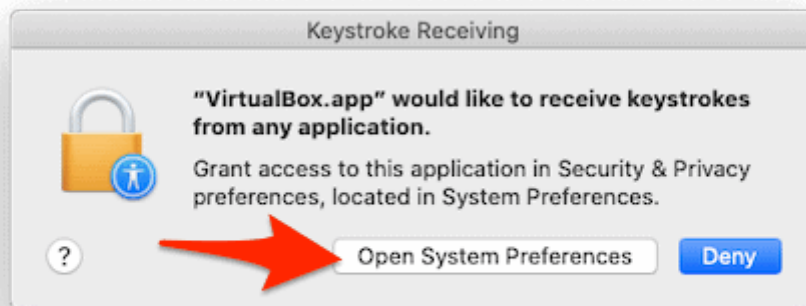
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11. If you're using macOS 10.15 (Catalina) or later, you're going to need to 'allow' Virtualbox to receive keystrokes from any application (which is completely safe). Click the **Open System Preferences** button.

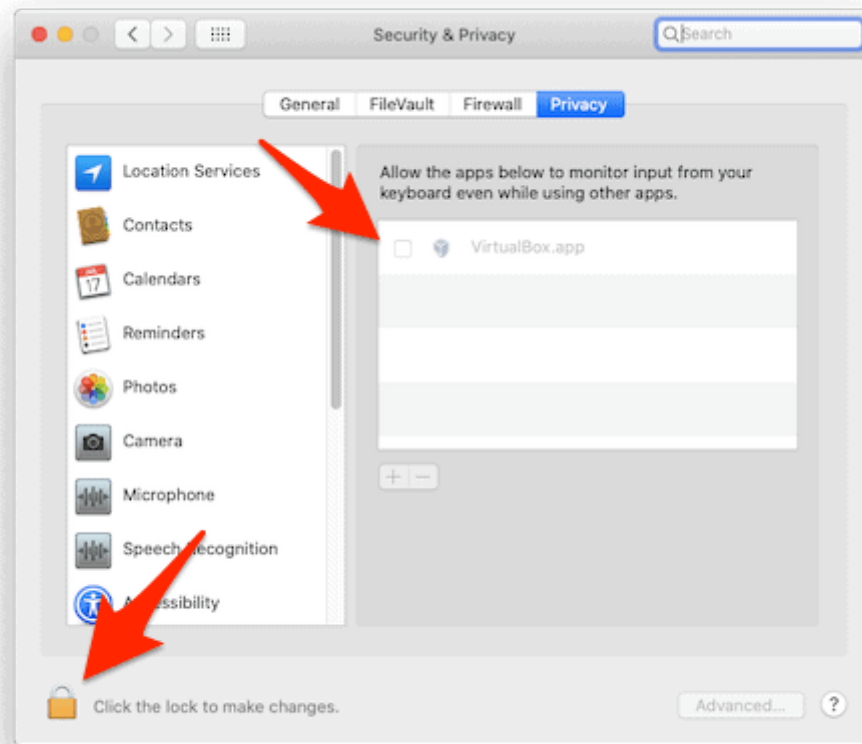


12. Click the 'lock' icon in the bottom left corner of the screen. After entering your password, place a check in the box next to the **Virtualbox** item in the list.



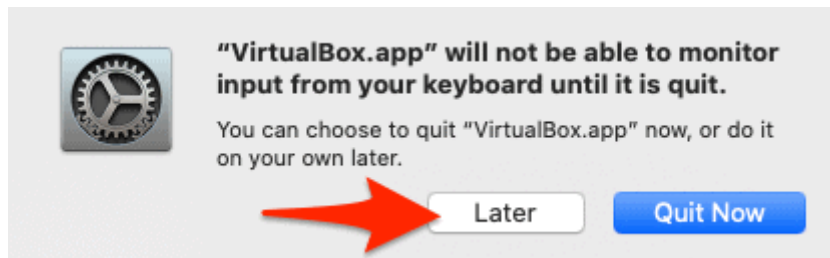
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[www.simplehelp.net](https://www.simplehelp.net/2015/06/09/how-to-install-ubuntu-on-your-mac/)



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13. Click **Later** when prompted.

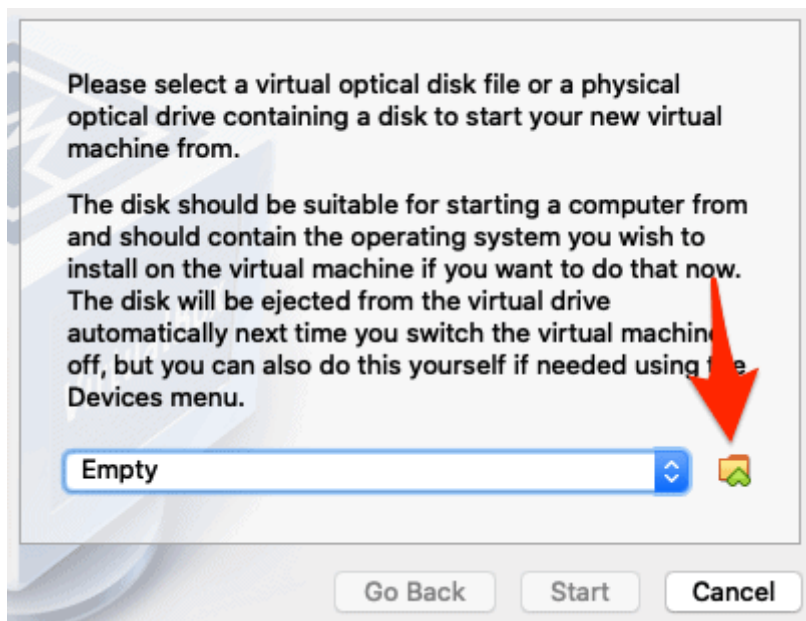


14. Back in Virtualbox you'll be prompted to locate a file. Click the "folder" icon next to menu that says **Empty** (see screenshot below).

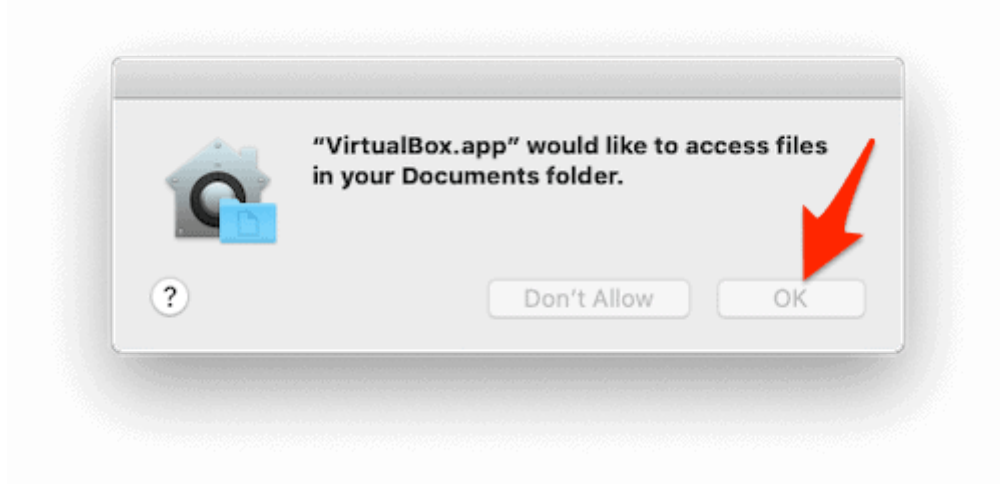


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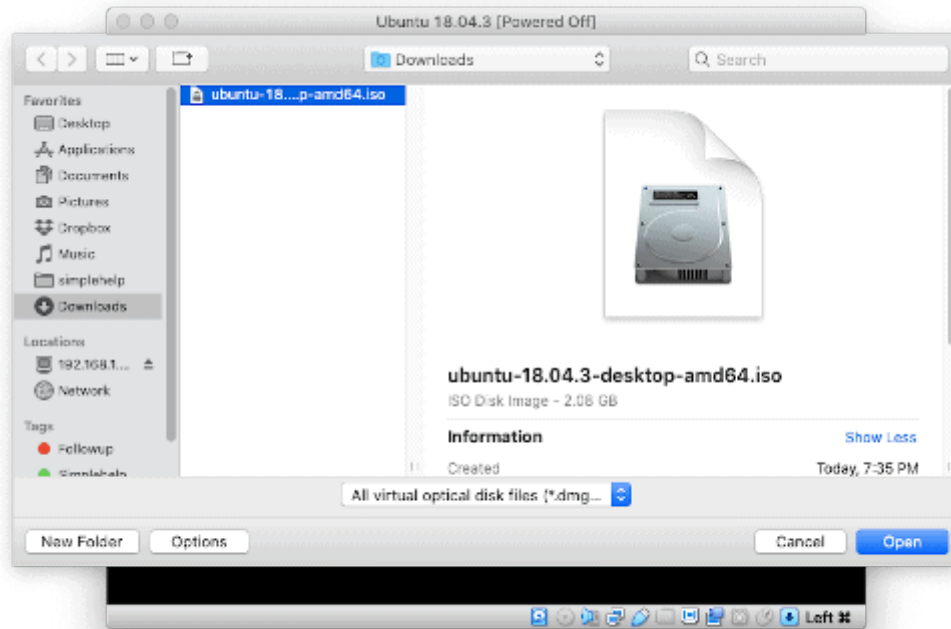
15. *IF* VirtualBox crashes right around now, or in the next step or two – check out the 13 minute 45 second mark of [this video](#) (link will open in a new tab/window). Hopefully there are no crashes and everything goes smoothly, but there is a known issue with Big Sur that may arise.
16. Again, if you're using macOS 10.15 or later, you'll be prompted to grant permission for Virtualbox to access a folder. Click **OK**. You may be prompted to do this several more times – just click **OK** each time.



17. Navigate to the Ubuntu **.iso** file that you downloaded all the way back in step #1. Select it, and click **Open**.

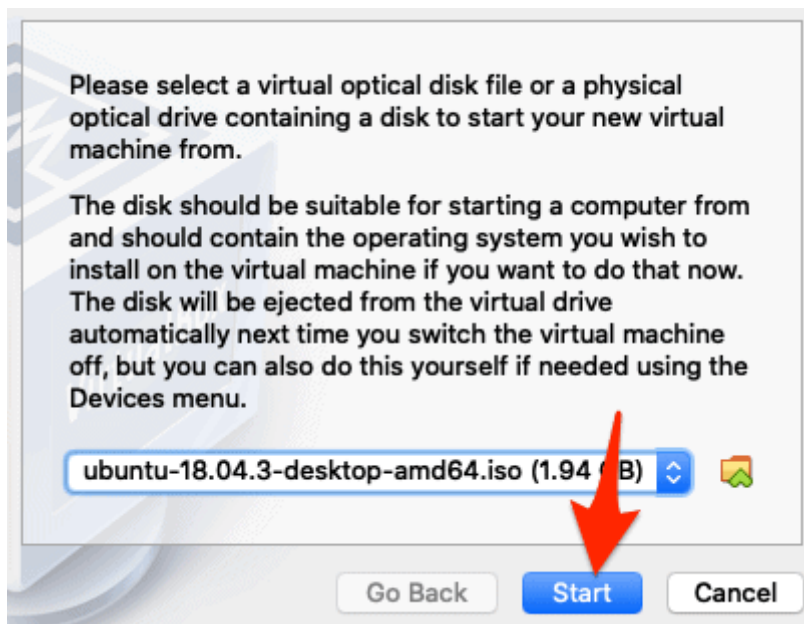
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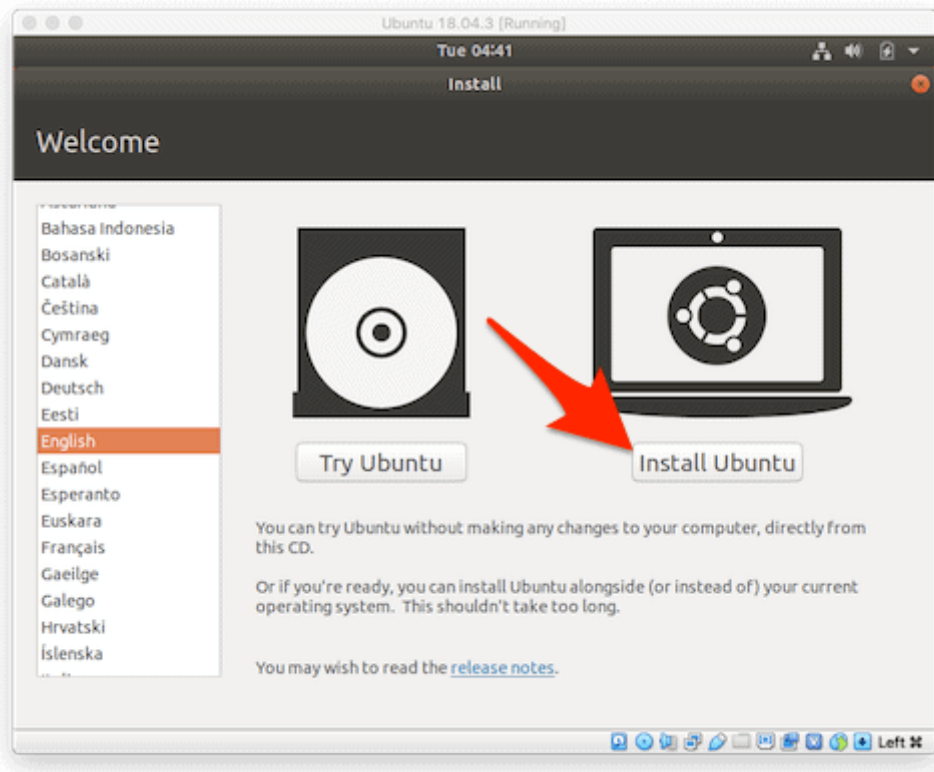
18. Now click **Start**



19. Finally! Click **Install Ubuntu**

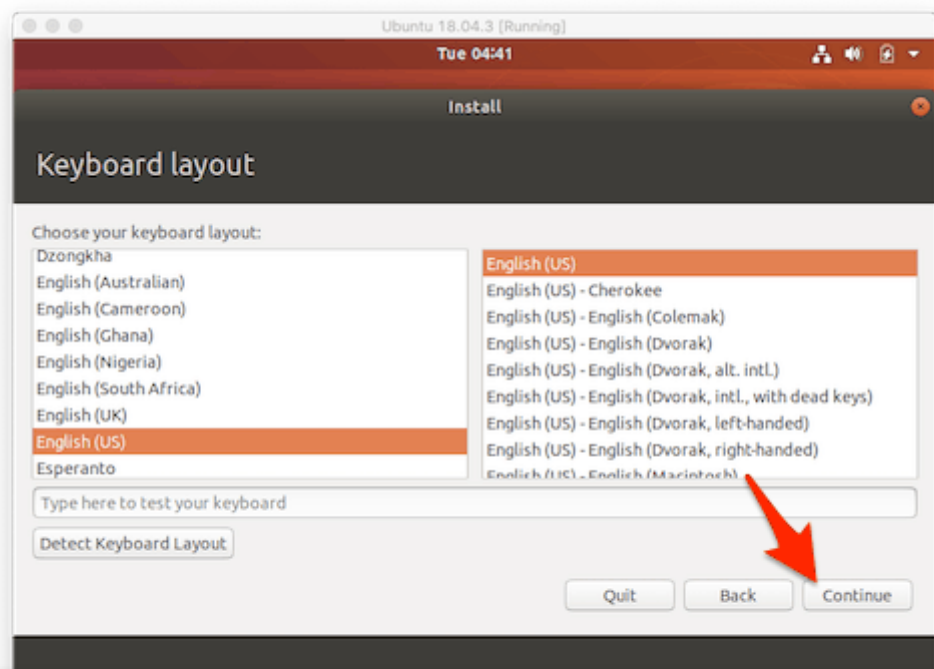
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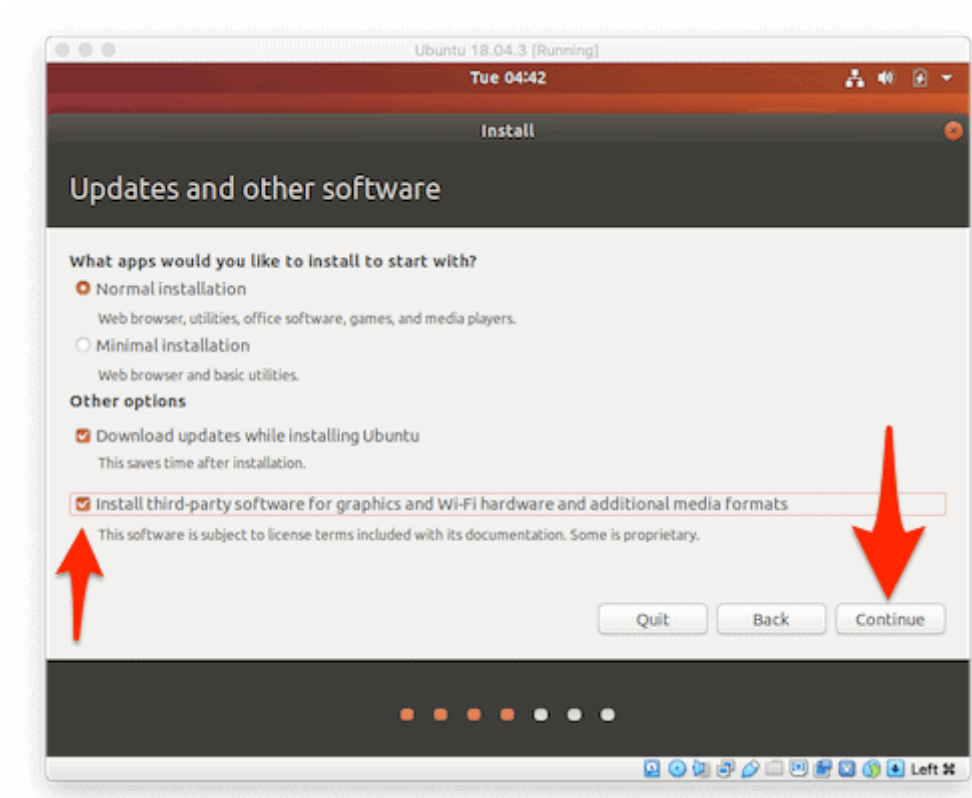
20. Select your keyboard layout and preferred language then click **Continue**



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21. Make sure to place a check in *both* of the boxes – **Download updates while installing Ubuntu** and **Install third-party software for graphics and Wi-Fi hardware and additional media formats** – *then* click the **Continue** button.



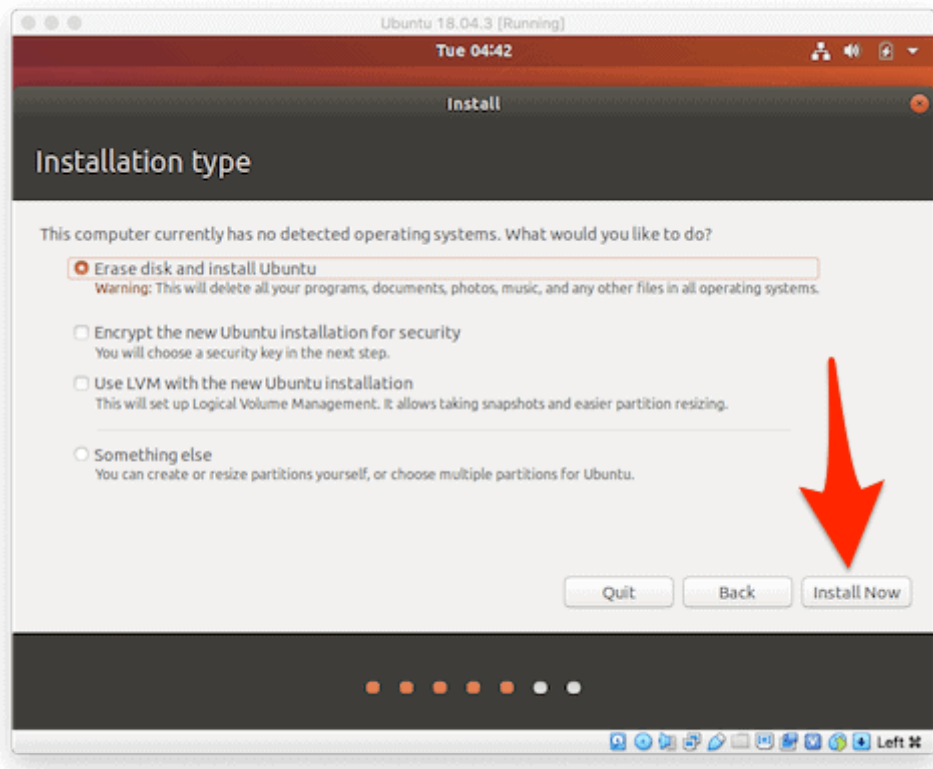
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22. Select **Erase disk and install Ubuntu**. NOTE: this is ***not*** going to 'wipe out' or erase any data in macOS. None. It is safe to click **Install Now**, so do just that.



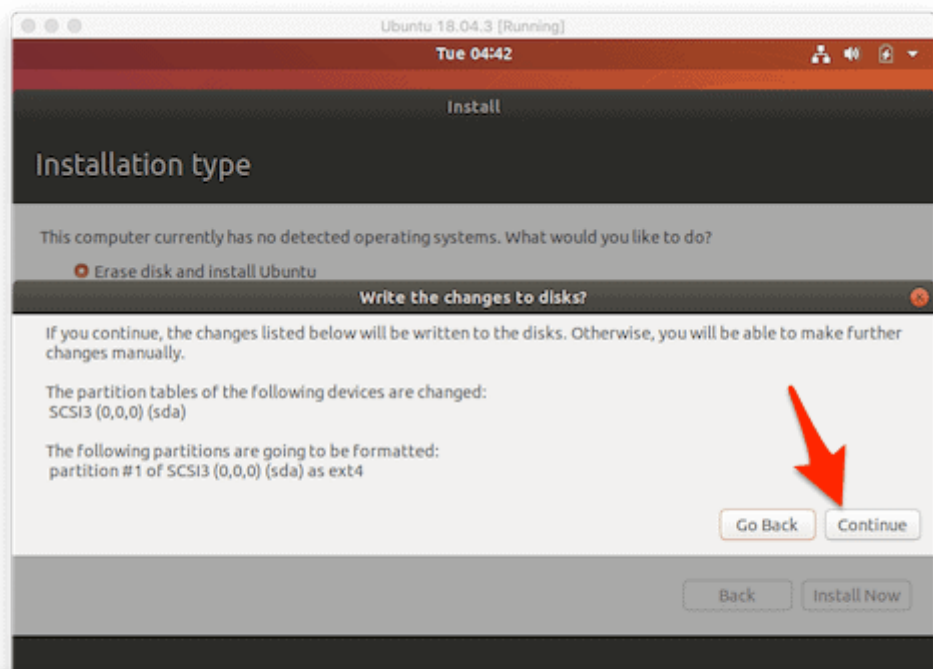
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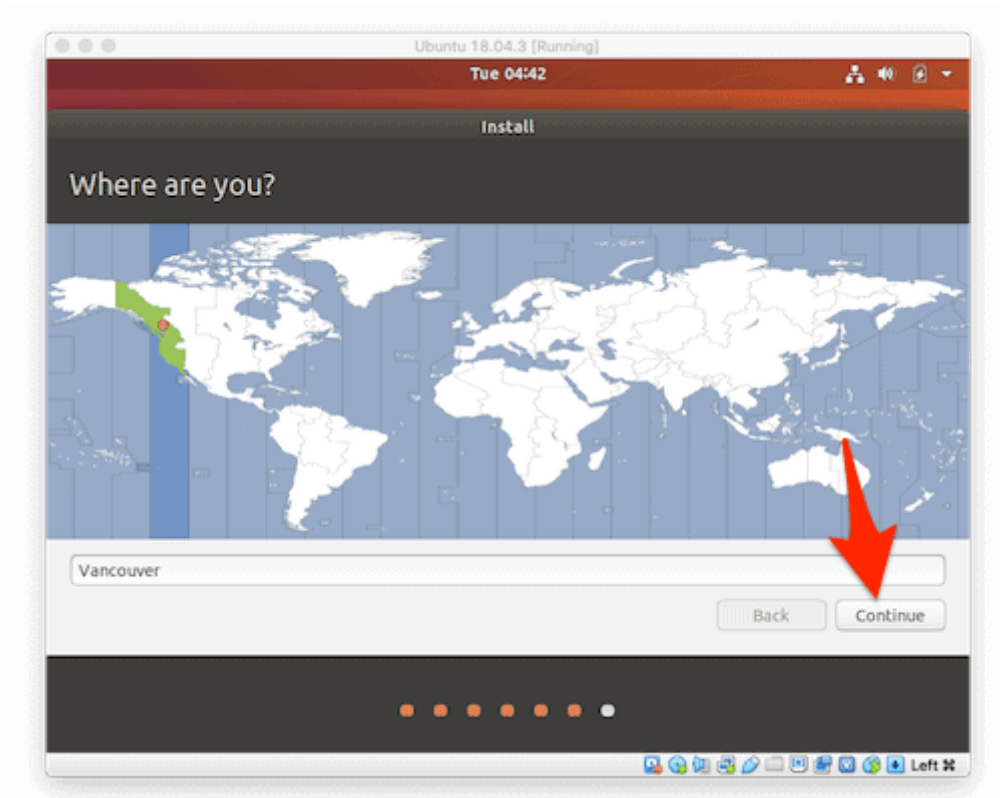
23. Click **Continue**



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24. When prompted, select your Time Zone and then click **Continue**



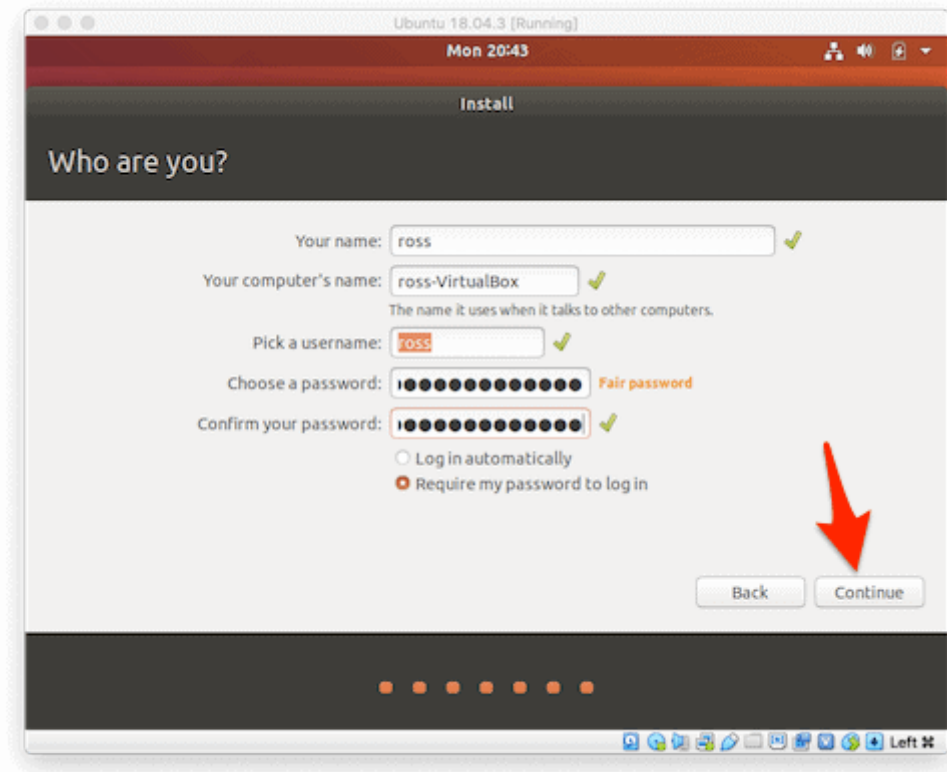
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25. Fill in each field with the required information. When you're done, **Continue**



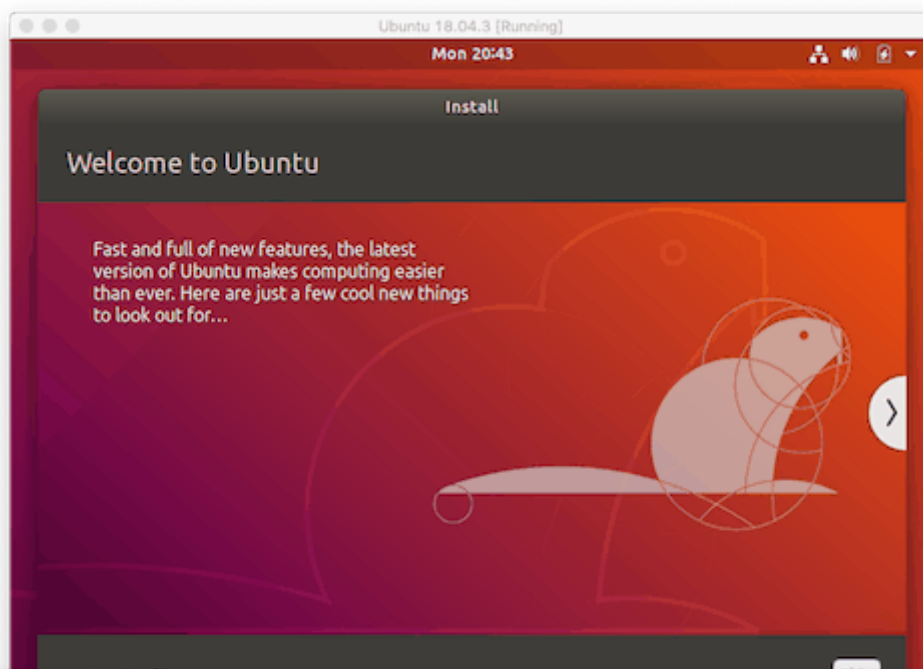
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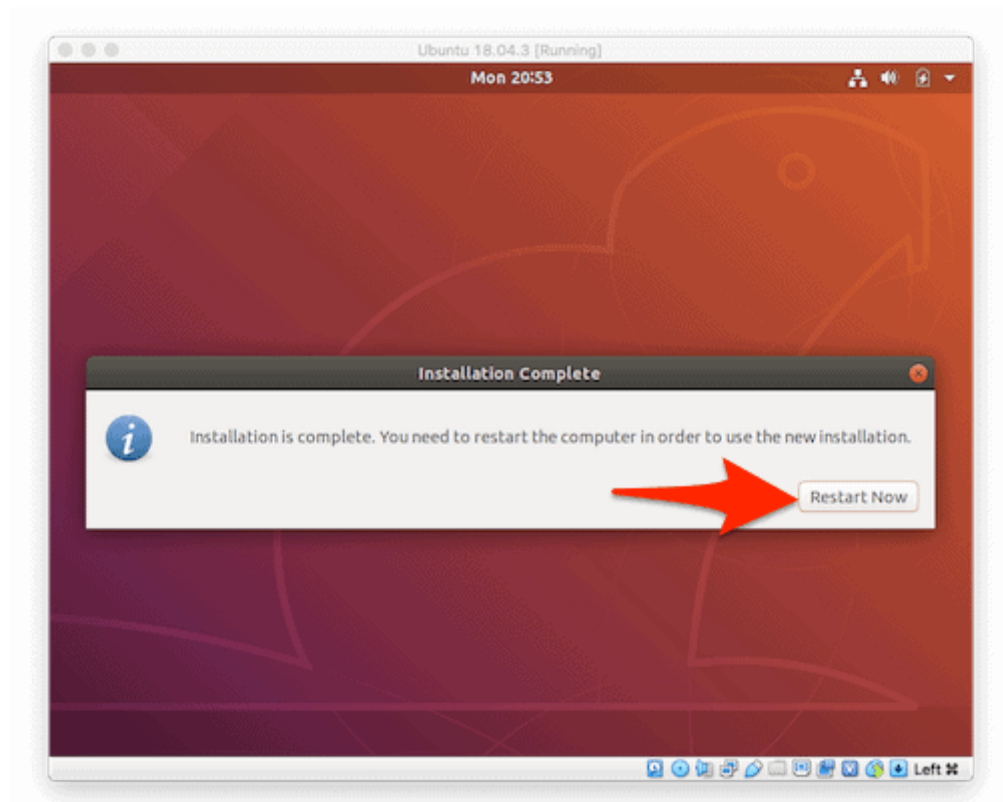
26. Now it's time to sit back and relax with that cup of coffee or tea. This may take a bit.



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27. Yay! It's done! Click **Restart Now**



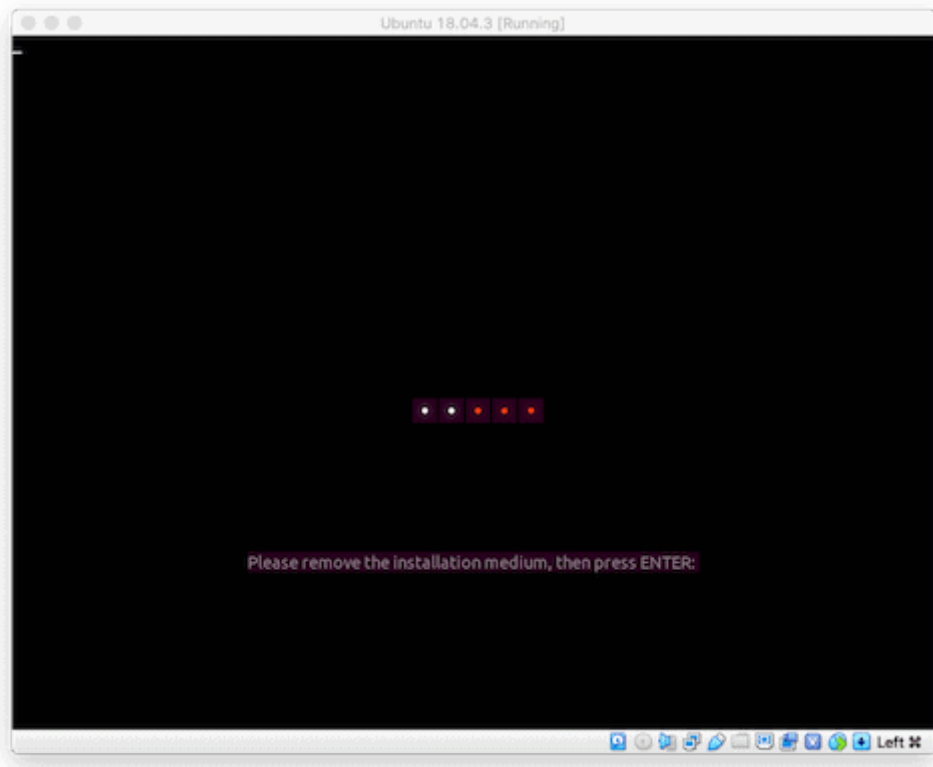
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28. Hit **Enter** (the 'return' key on your keyboard) when prompted.



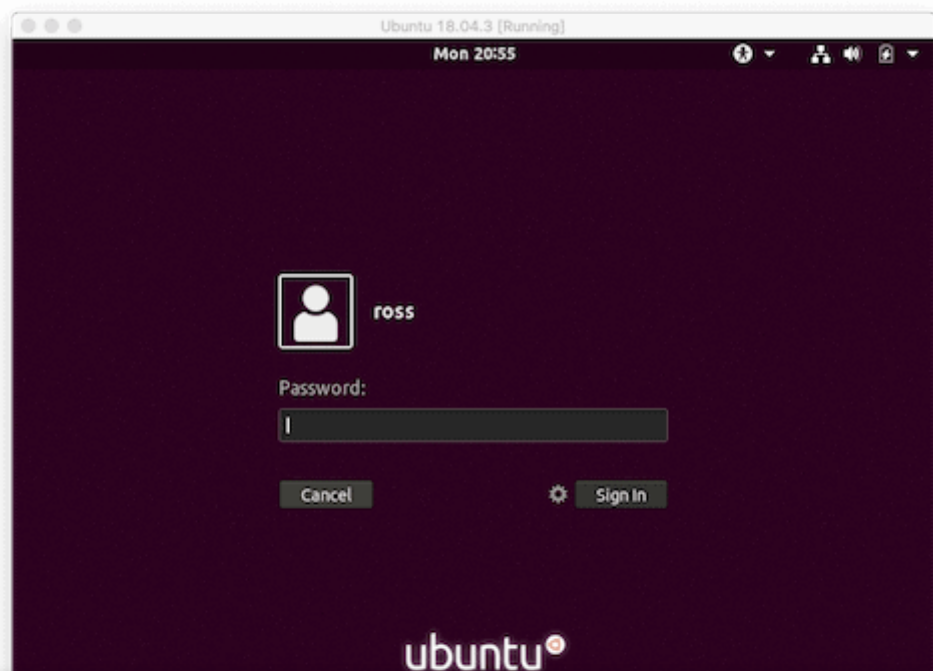
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29. And you'll boot into Ubuntu! Enter your password when prompted.



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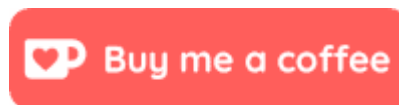
30. Welcome to the Ubuntu Desktop! At this point you should be connected to the Internet and completely ready to go – have fun!



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30 thoughts on “How to Install Ubuntu on Your Mac Using VirtualBox”

AUBRILYN

MAY 1, 2021 AT 8:12 PM

This was extraordinarily helpful. Very clear.

GRANT ASH

NOVEMBER 28, 2020 AT 8:10 AM

Nice work, everything was perfect as you mentioned in your tutorial.



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JULIAN

FEBRUARY 19, 2020 AT 2:01 PM

Worked exactly as laid out in the tutorial for setting up Ubuntu 18.04.4. Thank you!

STEVE

NOVEMBER 6, 2019 AT 11:48 PM

thanks, ross, you systematically points helped me a lot.

K

APRIL 2, 2018 AT 4:45 PM

Thank you! Using mine now.

PAVLOSVOS

DECEMBER 10, 2017 AT 7:05 AM

Amazing dude, thanks a lot, worked like a charm

CLEARTHINKER

DECEMBER 5, 2017 AT 3:05 PM

This is probably the best installation instruction that I have seen. Thank you!

JAN

NOVEMBER 29, 2017 AT 9:21 AM

Thank you so much, this tutorial saved my day ! Worked beautifully !



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the tutorial helped me a lot. Thank you very much!

BHARATH SADASHI

OCTOBER 19, 2017 AT 3:25 PM

I tried installing on my MBP w touch bar... I couldn't get the keyboard working. Then came across this guide to install it virtually... not only did I get ubuntu working. I can quickly switch between my Mac tasks and ubuntu swiftly. Thanks. helped a lot. I personally think this is better than installing as a bootable media on the hard disk.

GRAHAM

JULY 24, 2017 AT 11:29 AM

Great guide! Worked perfectly on 17
Well done on providing such an accurate step by step.

JUDITH P. OPPENHEIM

JULY 18, 2017 AT 8:57 AM

VirtualBox 4.3.28 for OS X is no longer supported: What do I do?

PRABHU

JUNE 5, 2017 AT 9:20 AM

Hi Ross

Thanks for your step-by-step and detailed tutorial, it was very easy to follow. I was able to install it on my Mac mini with ease

RAFAŁ

✓ SEPTEMBER 12, 2017 AT 10:59 AM

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REGINALDO VIDAL CANOVA

DECEMBER 20, 2016 AT 9:24 PM

Thank you for the well described procedure. Unfortunately for me, after the installation and restart, it returns to step 15 – as if the Ubuntu was not installed after all. Is there any advice to solve this problem?

FLORENCE OKOSUN

NOVEMBER 24, 2016 AT 9:42 AM

wow thanks!

SANDEEP MOHAN

NOVEMBER 3, 2016 AT 1:28 PM

Thanks it worked for me. You made it very easy.

LEI

OCTOBER 23, 2016 AT 11:26 AM

Thank you!

ART HAEDIKE

SEPTEMBER 26, 2016 AT 3:12 AM

Beautiful. Easy. Thank you!

YONGLE

AUGUST 30, 2016 AT 10:21 PM

with great detail, excellent!



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ROSS MCKILLOP

APRIL 21, 2016 AT 1:50 PM

Heya – sorry for the delay in answering! Looks like you’re trying to install the AMD version of Ubuntu instead of the x64/Intel.

CHANDRASHEKAR M.M

APRIL 14, 2016 AT 1:22 AM

Hi Ross, I have downloaded – ubuntu-14.04.4-server-amd64.iso and VirtualBox-5.0.16-105871-OSX.dmg and installed Virtual box on my Mac os (v 10.11.3). After I tried to set up Ubuntu on virtual box and I am getting below error. Please help me. Thanks in advance.

uncompression error

Kernel Panic – not syncing: VFS: Unable to mount root fs on unknown-block(0,0)

.....

.....

Kernel offset : disabled

[end Kernel panic – not syncing: VFS: Unable to mount root fs on unknown-block(0,0)

ROSS MCKILLOP

APRIL 7, 2016 AT 11:26 AM

@disqus_S8P2MsGUoS:disqus – correct! Think of VirtualBox as any other program – when you’re not using it (and it’s closed) – it’s not using any RAM. When you uninstall it, you get all of your space back :)

JAYDEV

APRIL 7, 2016 AT 2:08 AM

Whenever I’m not using Ubuntu, will my OSX use full ram ?

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i have problem in step 14 because it appear screen that i should select language then another step that do not mention in his steps please any recommended solution?

ERIC

FEBRUARY 11, 2016 AT 11:44 AM

Great article. Got up and running in a jif.

STEVE FISTER

DECEMBER 11, 2015 AT 2:50 PM

If you have troubles installing Ubuntu on the VM where it crashes the installer with the message "Ubuntu error "Running post-installation trigger update-notifier-common"", recreate the VM and upon installation make sure you uncheck "Download updates while installing" (#16 in the instructions). This helped me get past the problem.

EVAN SITZES

OCTOBER 20, 2015 AT 9:35 PM

Awesome, easy to follow, and up to date!

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