**Linux vs. Windows:**

**Teaching Grandma to install a program**

There is a prevailing idea that Linux OS’s have a steep learning curve. That they are more difficult to learn. That it is more complicated to solve simple computing problems in a Linux based OS than it is in Windows or Mac. When I asked if people were using Linux and why/not? Some people answered that it was too complicated. Some claimed that they had simple needs and didn’t want to dedicate themselves to learning the more challenging option. I understand that learning something new can be a challenge. I think there is a myth hiding here though. I think that people are confusing the challenge of something different with added complexity. I think that people don’t know how it works and therefore assume that it is more complicated. I also think that they are wrong.

Now I don’t want this to be an opinion piece. I want to lay out some solid guidelines. I want to set a logical framework. Some intuitive criteria that would sensibly determine which OS is more, or less, complicated to use. The number of clicks to accomplish a task seems relevant. Teaching a computer novice to accomplish a task on both systems. These two factors together could make a fair and solid determination of actual ease of use. Plus things like repeatability and maintenance.

As you’ve, no doubt, guessed from the title, our novice will be any loveable grandmother with an interest in learning to use the computer. She needs to obviously check her googles, her email, and maybe some solitaire. We can ignore the solitaire because any OS we’d set granny up with will come preinstalled with it. I want to set the stage. Granny Annie is learning to use Windows 10. While Granny Brie is learning to use Ubuntu LTS. (Pick one)

Now, of course, the Granny’s are going to need a browser. We don’t need them using any explorers or foxes. We’ll stick with the shiny chrome colored browser. In Ubuntu we would show Granny Brie the Software Center. Type Chrome into the search bar. Click install, enter password. Done. Windows 10 doesn’t have a built in way to find these things. There’s a store but it’s not going to have useful things in it. You’ll have to use Edge or whatever pre-installed browser to go to google. Look up Chrome. Find the download button. Wait. Find the exe file. Run it. Click next until you’re blue in the face. Possibly download other random unwanted but included things if it weren’t Chrome. Not nearly as easy as Linux made it.

How about keeping everything up to date? Let me first assure you that Linux will never delay you while turning on or off your computer. It’ll never say nope. Wait. Don’t disconnect me. It will however update everything when it updates. So you won’t be left closing down sixteen windows of different programs asking to update every time you turn on the computer. Even if you have to leave the common repositories to acquire some software as long as you went about adding the repositories in the correct way it will update with the rest.

The way Linux updates, installs, and stays secure is the reason I would never put a family member on any other OS. Ever. I don’t have to worry about it taking 20 minutes to start up because every program on it needs to start at start up just to inform of a needed update. I don’t have to worry about Granny Brie installing any virus loaded bloat because I wouldn’t give her sudo access. If she needs something installed and it’s not available in the Software Center I could easily ssh in and do it or let her copy and paste a short command in. Done. Let’s think about this though. What on Earth would Grandma Brie need that’s not represented in the Software Store? My guess? Nothing.

Try accomplishing all of this without going to Grandma Abbie’s. Try walking her through a third party install over the phone or email on Windows 10. . . Try just letting Windows update all the programs itself. It won’t. The kind of shape my parents computer was always in after I was away to college for awhile or elsewhere. It almost wouldn’t work at all anymore. I felt like it was touch and go every time I worked to rejuvenate them. Like I almost lost the machine that time. It needs to watch its intake. I never have that problem now with Linux. My parents can’t even tell me if their internet is working if I ask. I’ve asked if a computer was powered on once and they could not tell me with certainty one way or the other.