

The Best Linux Software and Apps

By Bertel King

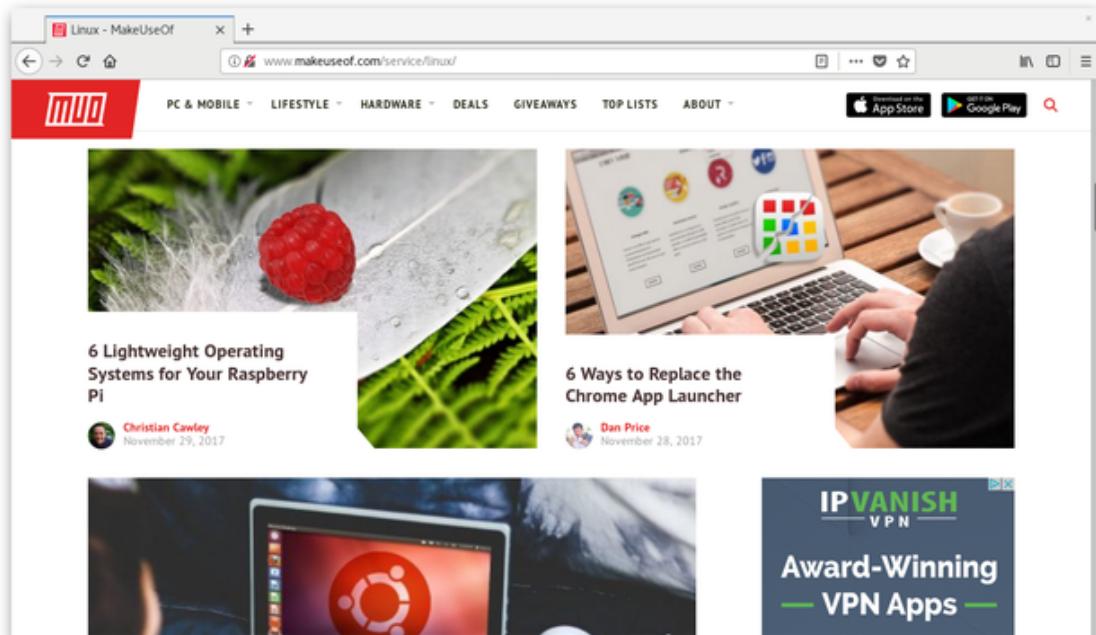
You've made the switch from Windows or Mac. You've [picked a Linux distro, settled on a Linux desktop environment](#), and [learned the basic Linux commands](#). Now you're looking for applications to install. Or maybe you're a long-time Linux user who's keeping an eye out for what's new. Well, you've come to the right place.

Most of the software below is free and open source, and the vast majority can be found in [Linux package managers](#) (such as Ubuntu Software, GNOME Software, or YaST). However, a few of the apps are proprietary, and one even costs a good deal of money.

Jump Ahead: [Browsers](#) | [Email](#) | [Finances](#) | [Instant Messaging](#) | [Maintenance](#) | [Media Editors](#) | [Media Players](#) | [Office](#) | [Photo Managers](#) | [Programming](#) | [Terminals](#) | [Text Editors](#) | [Virtualization](#)

Browsers

Firefox



With the new Quantum update, Mozilla has given people reason to check out Firefox again. Linux users in particular may be happy to see support for client-side decorations, which makes Firefox feel more at home in desktop environments such as GNOME and Elementary OS Pantheon. Mozilla bakes in privacy options that don't come with Chrome, one of [several reasons to consider using Firefox instead](#).

Not only is Firefox open source, we also consider it to be [the best browser for Linux](#).

Download: [Firefox](#) (Free)

Chrome/Chromium

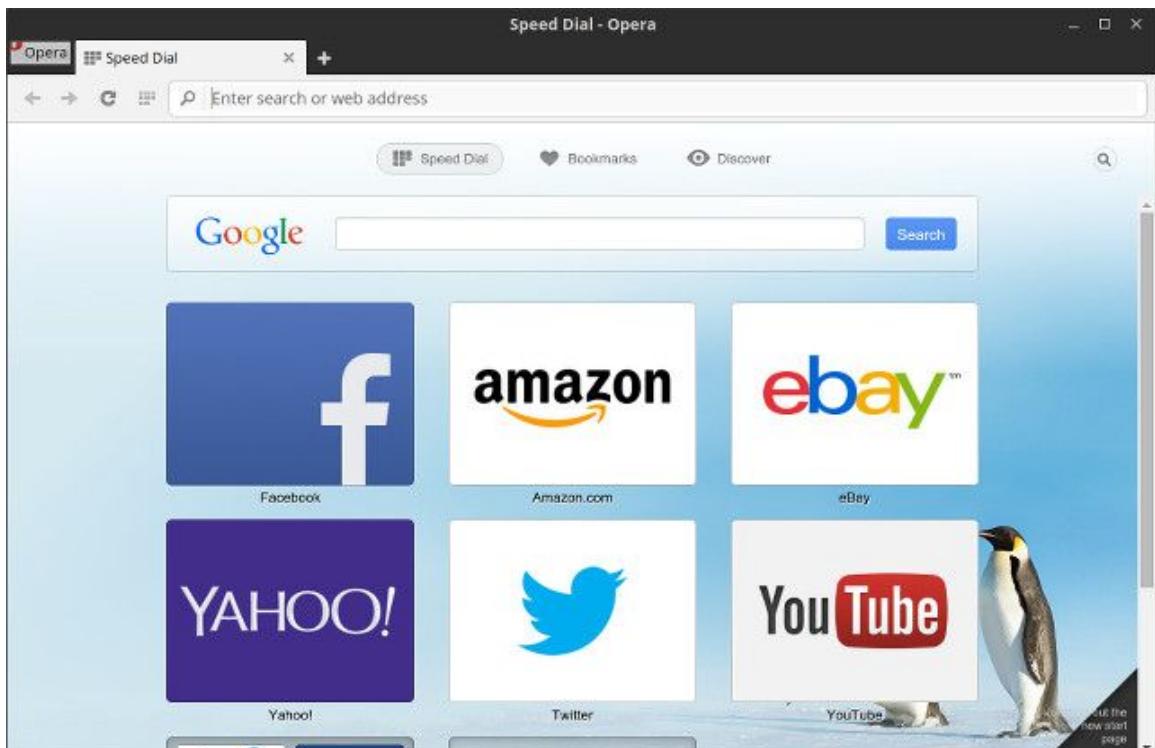
The screenshot shows a Google Chrome window with the address bar displaying "www.makeuseof.com". The main content area features a large image of a mountain range at sunset. A red banner across the image reads "MAC". Below the banner, the title "The Best Mac Apps" is displayed. A bio for Tim Brookes follows, along with his profile picture. To the right of the main content, there are three sidebar articles: "25 Unique Chrome Apps That Are Unusually Useful" by Sandy Stachowiak (September 26, 2016), "16 Incredible Uses of Google Maps You Should See and..." by Briallyn Smith (September 26, 2016), and "How to Find Out If Google Has Been Listening to..." by Christian Cawley (September 23, 2016). The sidebar also includes a "BROWSERS" section header.

By some measures, Chrome is now the king of the hill. The browser has become so powerful that you can buy a Chromebook and do most of your computing without needing another app. All of this functionality is available on Linux. You need to download Chrome from Google's website, but you can download Chromium directly from many Linux repos.

Download: [Chrome](#) (Free)

Download: [Chromium](#) (Free)

Opera

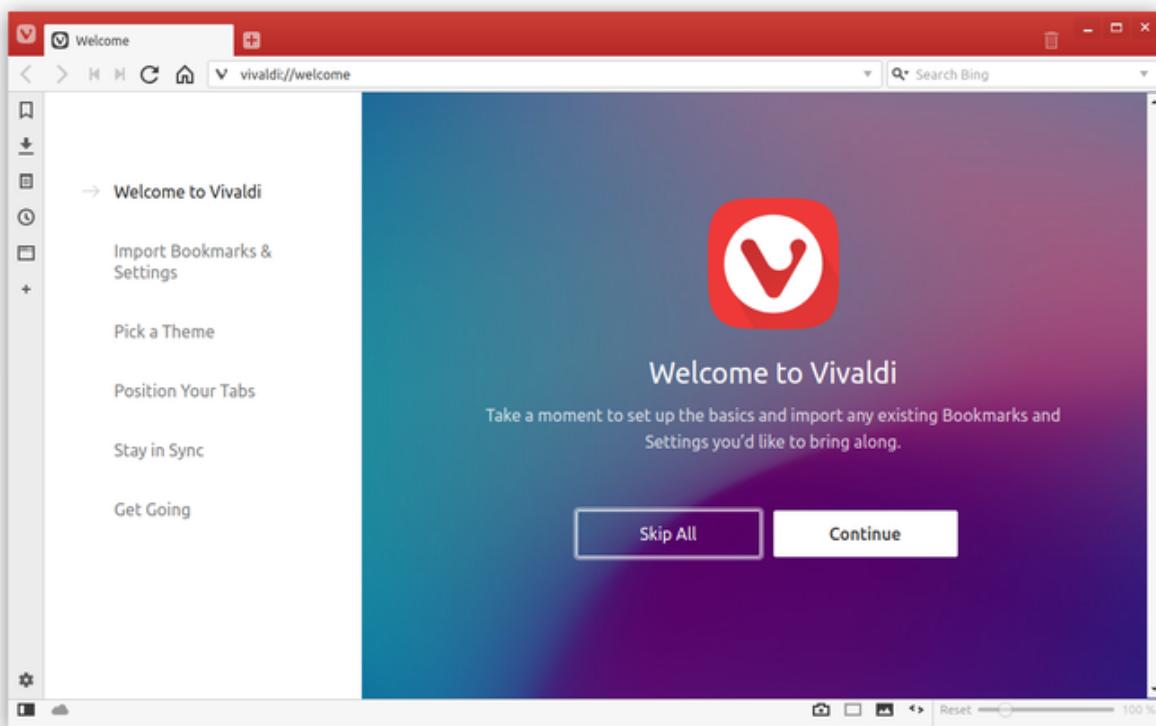


Opera isn't open source, but it *is* free. You won't find the web browser in your distro's repos,

but the website offers DEBs and RPMs for Linux. Opera isn't nearly as popular as Chrome or Firefox, but it's the third most mainstream browser you can install on your Linux desktop. And since Opera continues to need ways to differentiate itself, the latest version contains a built-in ad blocker and a VPN (also check out these [free VPN solutions for Linux](#)).

Download: [Opera](#) (Free)

Vivaldi



Vivaldi, like Google Chrome and Opera, is a proprietary web browser based on Chromium. It comes from an Opera Software co-founder who was displeased when Opera switched from its own Presto web engine to Chromium. Vivaldi tries to revive some of the features lost in that transition. It is a tool intended for power users and comes with more customization options than your typical browser.

Download: [Vivaldi](#) (Free)

Web (Epiphany) Browser

The screenshot shows the MakeUseOf website's Linux section. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for PC & MOBILE, LIFESTYLE, HARDWARE, DEALS, GIVEAWAYS, and TOP LISTS. Below the navigation is a secondary menu with categories like WINDOWS, MAC OS X, LINUX, ANDROID, IPHONE AND IPAD, INTERNET, SECURITY, and TECHNOLOGY NEWS. A "VIEW ALL" link is also present. The main content area features several articles with thumbnails and titles. One article, "How to Set Bing's 'Image of the Day' as Wallpaper on Linux" by Ben Stegner, is highlighted. Another article, "Why Linux Is Free: How the Open Source World Makes Money" by Bertel King, Jr., is also visible. On the right side, there's a sidebar with more articles and a section titled "The Best Mac Apps".

There aren't many browsers developed explicitly for Linux. GNOME Web browser, also still as Epiphany, is one of the older ones around. Later versions offer the best integration you will find with GNOME Shell. It lacks the add-ons found in mainstream browsers, but some users will like the minimalism, the speed, and the tab isolation that prevents one misbehaving site from crashing the entire browser.

Download: [GNOME Web \(Free\)](#)

Falkon

The screenshot shows the Falkon browser window displaying a news article from MakeUseOf. The article is titled "The Linux Commands Reference Cheat Sheet" by Bertel King, Jr., updated on January 21, 2019. The browser interface includes a toolbar with links for PC & MOBILE, LIFESTYLE, HARDWARE, and FREE EBOOKS. To the right of the main content, there's a sidebar with other news articles: "How to Run Android Apps and Games on Linux" by Christian Cawley (April 18, 2018), "The 7 Best Free Linux Anti-Virus Programs" by Moe Long (December 15, 2016), "6 Awesome DIY Security Camera Clients for Linux" by Moe Long (November 21, 2016), and "5 Lightweight Linux Distros Ideal for an Intel Atom Processor..." by Moe Long (October 10, 2016).

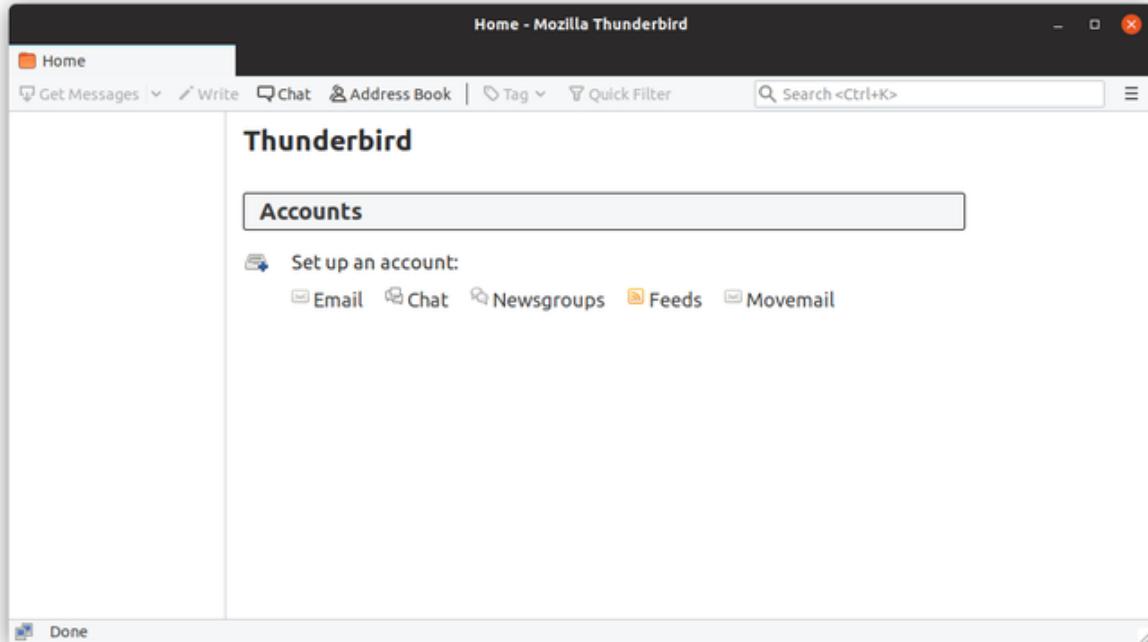
None of the above browsers look quite at home on the KDE Plasma desktop. If visual integration is important to you, then I would suggest Falkon (formerly QupZilla). Support may not be as solid as the above browsers, but it will get you across most of the web. With so few Qt-based KDE browsers to choose from, it's enough to see that Falkon remains under

development.

Download: [Falkon](#) (Free)

Email

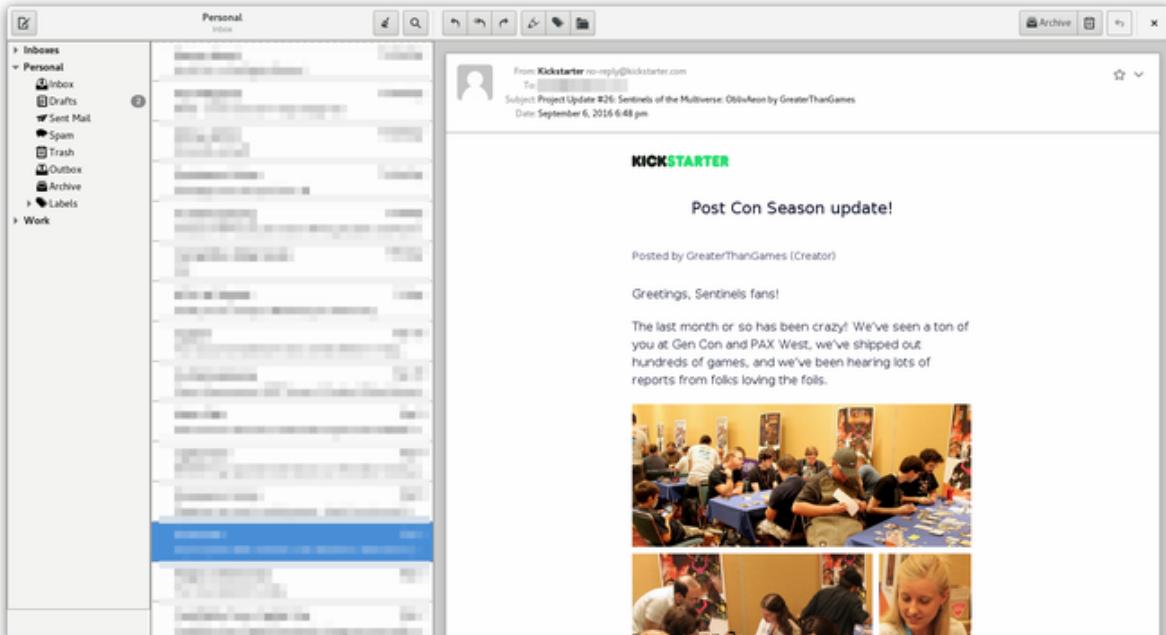
Thunderbird



Thunderbird is the email client from Mozilla. While it doesn't have quite the name recognition as Firefox, it is perhaps second only to Outlook in the world of dedicated email clients. This cross-platform tool operates the same on Linux as it does elsewhere, so there's a decent chance new Linux users will find it familiar.

Download: [Thunderbird](#) (Free)

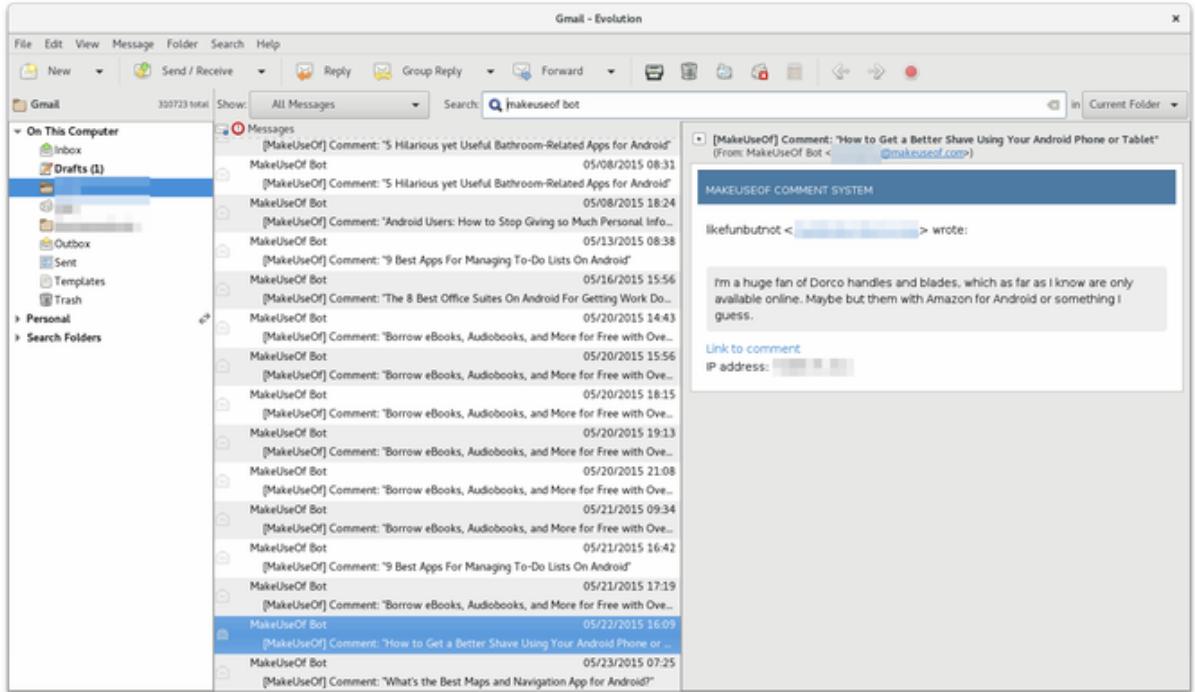
Geary



Geary isn't the default GNOME email client, but it looks the part. This app comes from Yorba, a now defunct developer of open source apps that also brought us the Shotwell photo manager. The Elementary Project has since forked Geary and changed the name to Pantheon Mail, but it promises future updates will remain compatible with other distros.

Download: [Geary](#) (Free)

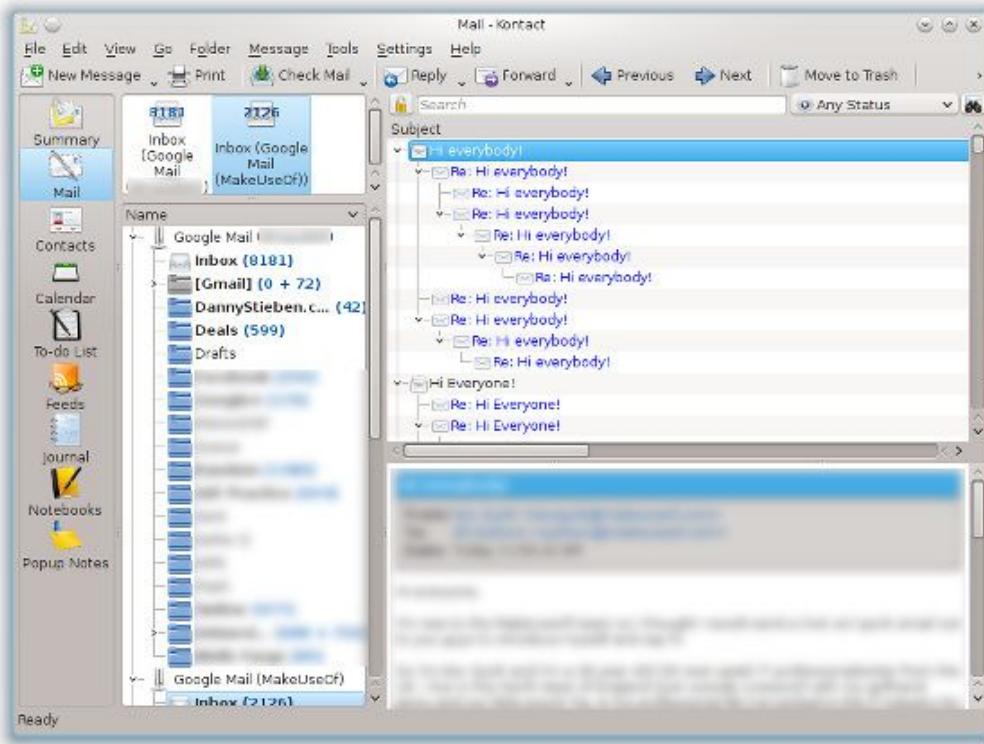
Evolution



Evolution is the official email client of the GNOME project. It has grown long in the tooth, but in terms of features and stability, Geary doesn't quite compare. Plus Evolution comes with a built-in calendar, address book, and to-do list.

Download: [Evolution](#) (Free)

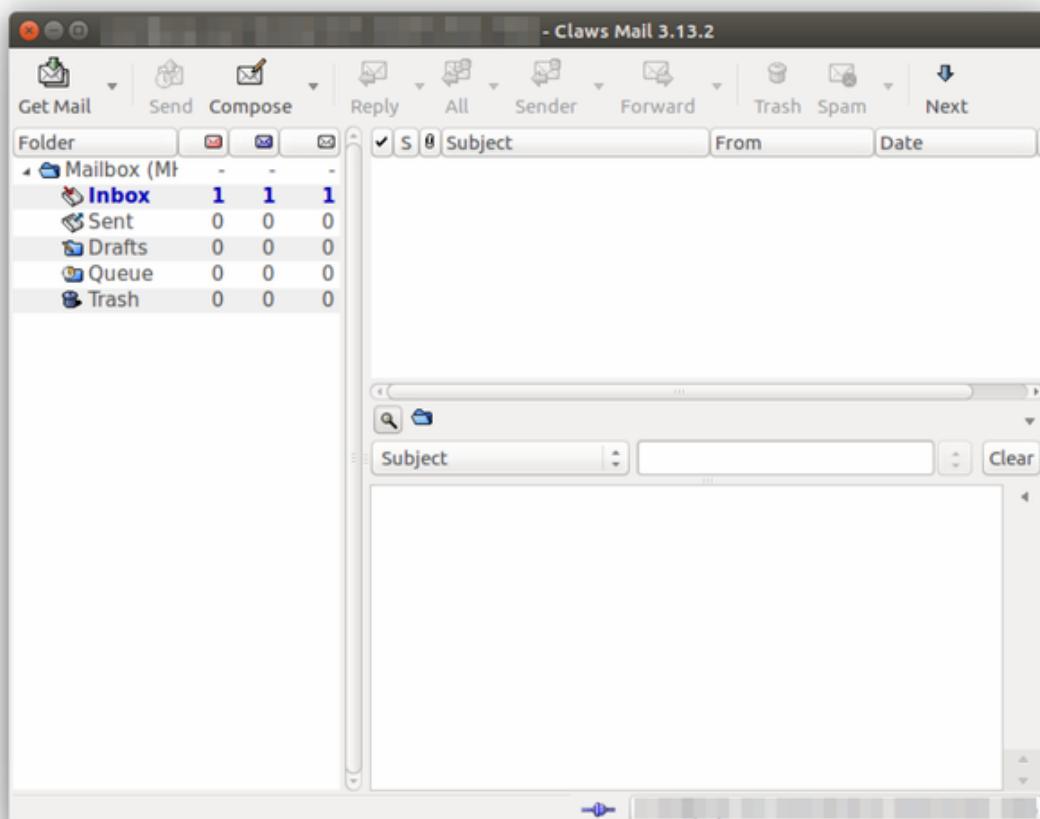
KMail



Want a client that feels at home on the KDE desktop? This is the one. KMail is [part of the larger Kontact suite](#), but you can use the application independently for a more lightweight experience.

Download: Kmail [Broken URL Removed] (Free)

Claws Mail



Claws Mail is a great choice for a lightweight app that doesn't have the heavy dependencies required by most of the alternatives. This makes it a good fit on lean desktops such as XFCE and LXDE. With a lengthy list of features, you get to keep most of the functionality you expect.

Download: [Claws Mail](#) (Free)

We consider Thunderbird [the best email client for Linux](#), but it has many more contenders than the ones mentioned above.

Finances

GnuCash

As the name would suggest, GnuCash is part of the GNU Project. It's a free and open source alternative to Intuit Quicken. The app can handle personal or small business accounting, with the ability to import a number of formats, keep track of your stocks, and present your information in reports and graphs.

Download: [GnuCash](#) (Free)

KMyMoney

If you prefer the Plasma desktop, GnuCash won't quite feel at home. In that case, check out KMyMoney. It's a well-established app that similarly packed with features. The layout even brings a bit more color into what can be a very dry task.

Download: KMyMoney (Free)

Skrooge

Skrooge is an alternative option for KDE fans. If KMyMoney doesn't import your existing files or you don't like the way it presents information, give Skrooge a look. It may just be what you're looking for.

Download: [Skrooge](#) (Free)

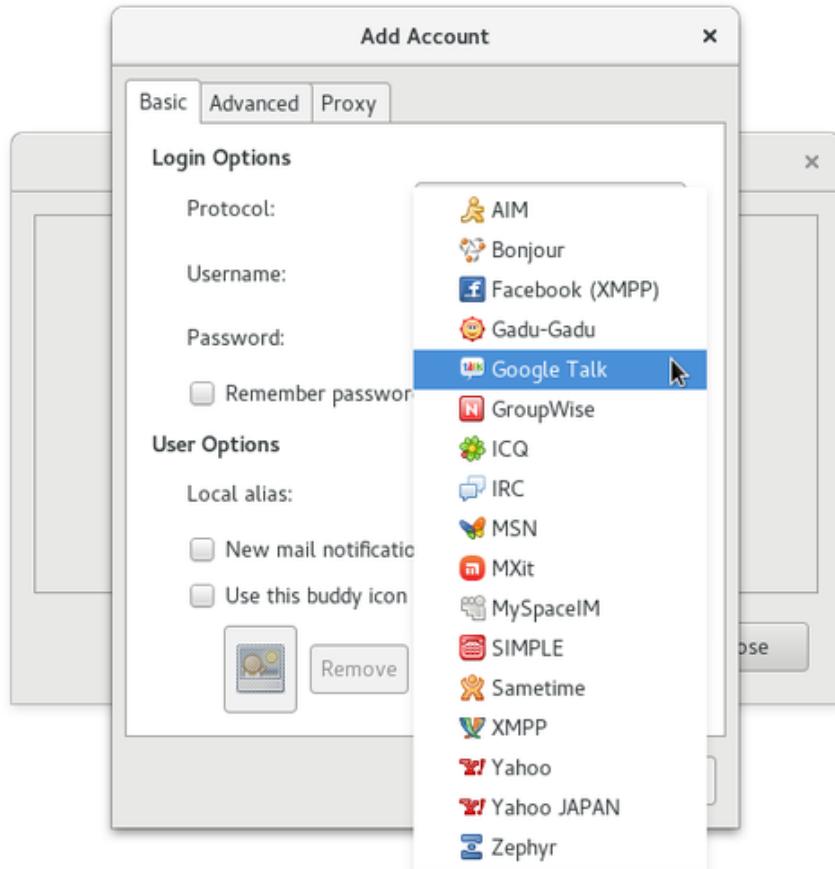
HomeBank

HomeBank is a GTK-based tool that wasn't designed with any particular desktop environment in mind. It offers perhaps the simplest presentation of any accounting app on this list. It's also available on whichever operating system you want, so if you hop back and forth between PCs and MacBooks, this may be the way to go.

Download: [HomeBank](#) (Free)

Instant Messaging

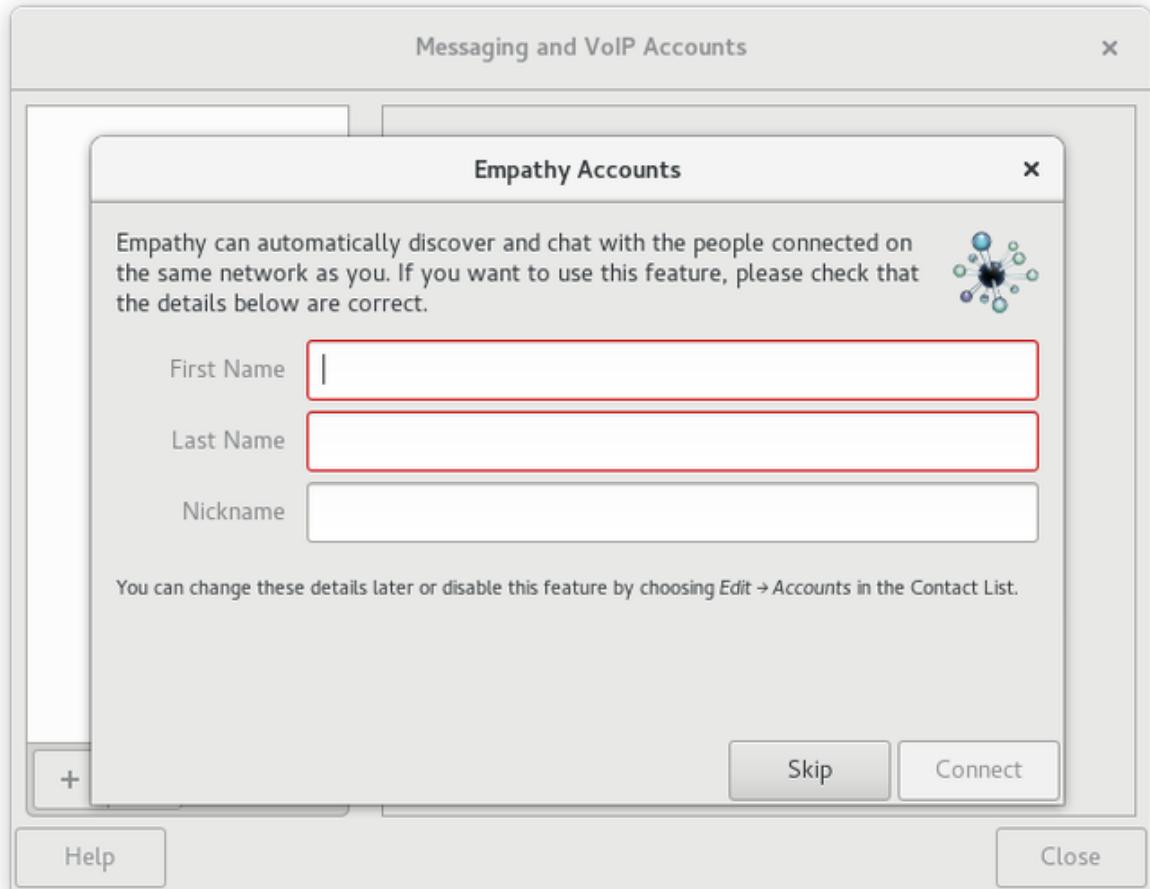
Pidgin



Pidgin is a cross-platform instant messenger that has been around for decades and attracted millions of users. The Electronic Frontier Foundation gave Pidgin a perfect score on its secure messaging scorecard in summer 2015, so you don't need to have friends spread across numerous messaging services to have this app installed.

Download: [Pidgin](#) (Free)

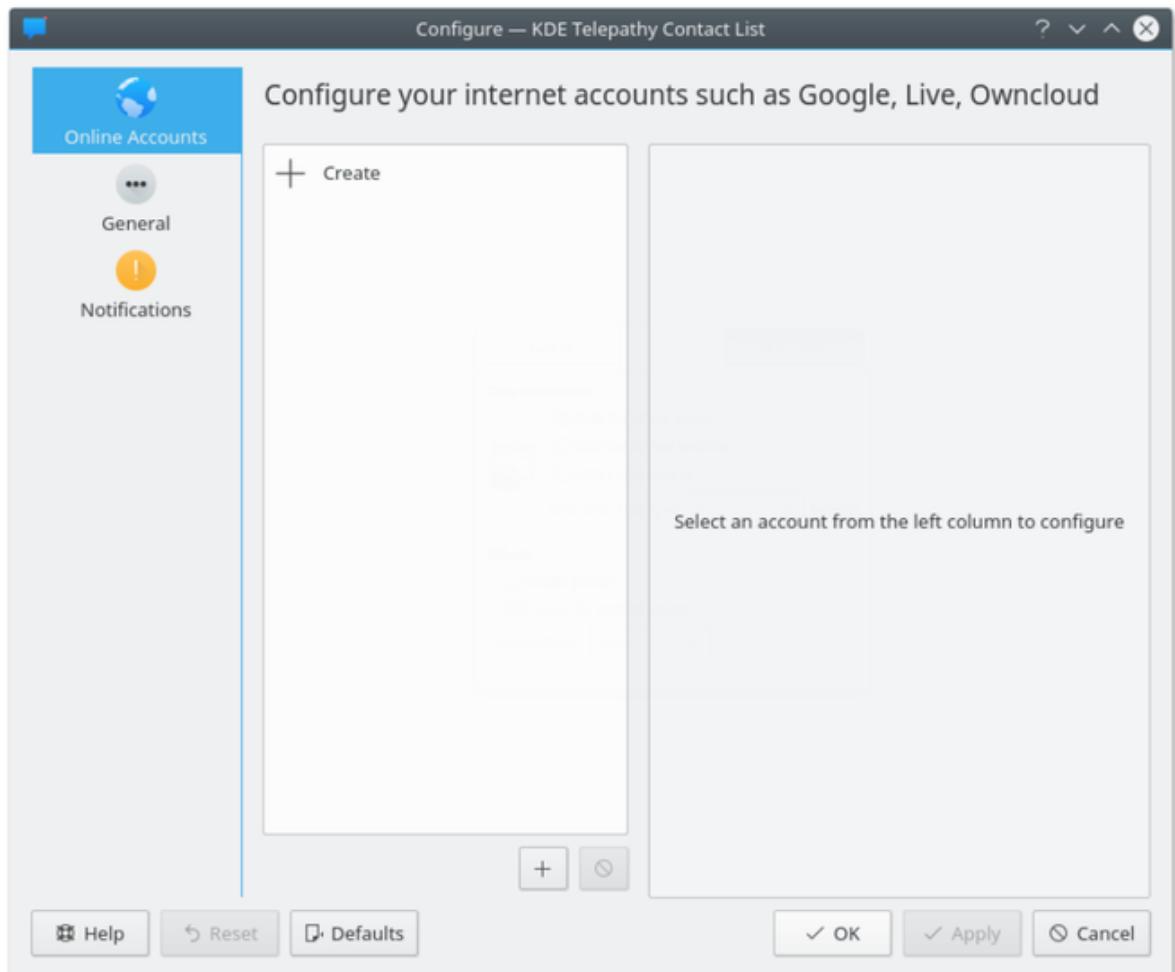
Empathy



Empathy is the default client for GNOME. As a result, it comes pre-installed on many distros that utilize that desktop environment. In addition to text, you can communicate using audio and video on protocols supported by the Telepathy framework.

Download: [Empathy](#) (Free)

[KDE Telepathy](#)

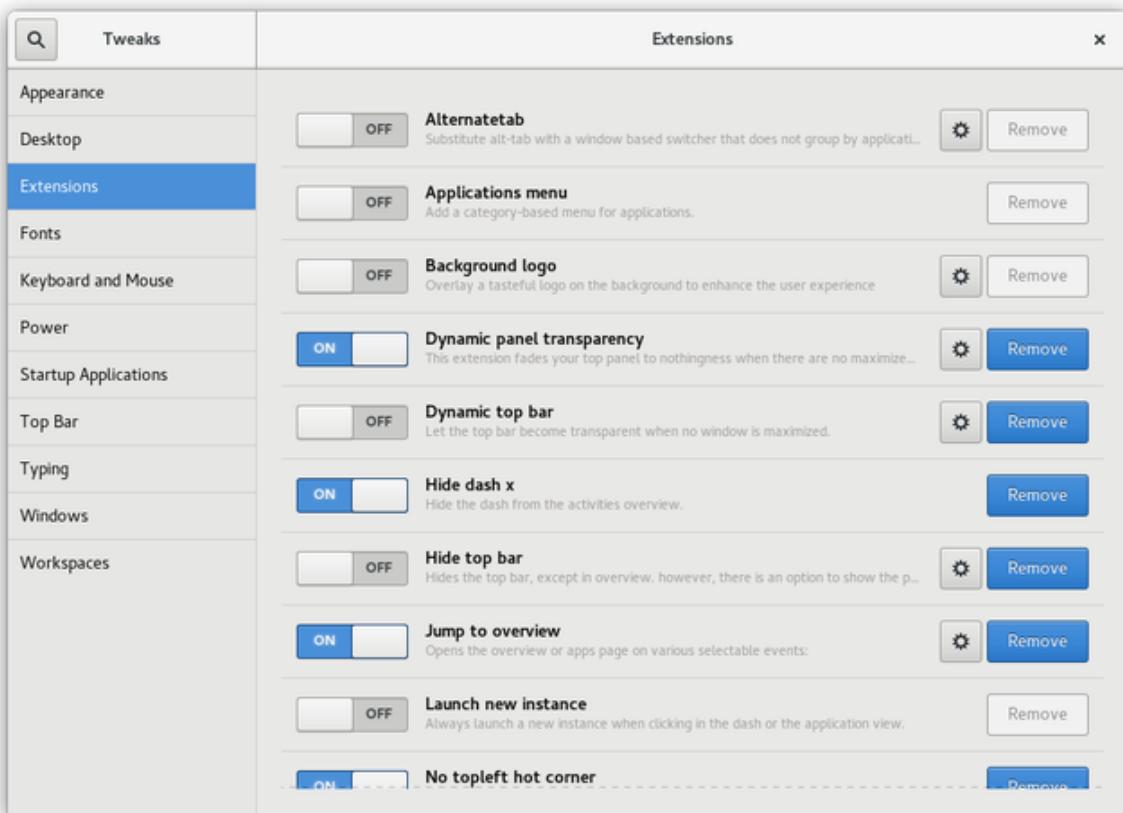


This is the KDE community's new approach to instant messaging. Compared to other options, KDE Telepathy offers better integration with the Plasma desktop. It replaces Kopete, KDE's previous default instant messenger for many years.

Download: [KDE Telepathy](#) (Free)

Maintenance

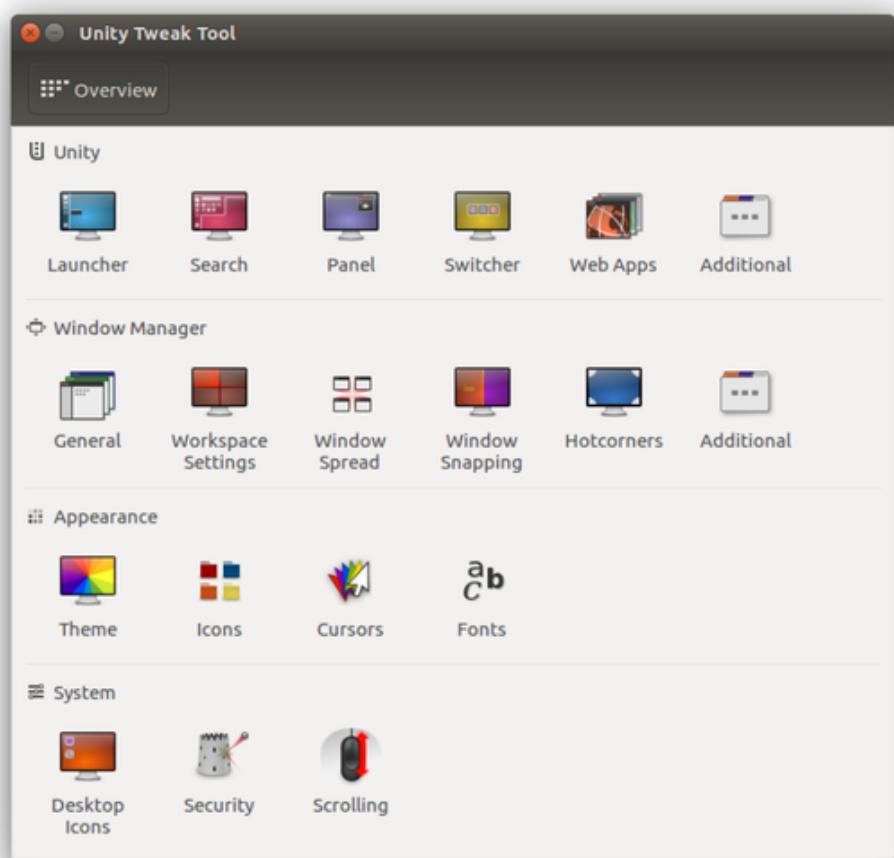
GNOME Tweak Tool



Despite GNOME's focus on simplicity, the desktop is very customizable. With the [right combination of extensions](#) and a few extra apps, you can change many aspects of your computer's interface. GNOME Tweak Tool is one of those extra apps. Want to change fonts or toggle the extensions you've installed? This is the place to be.

Download: [GNOME Tweak Tool](#) (Free)

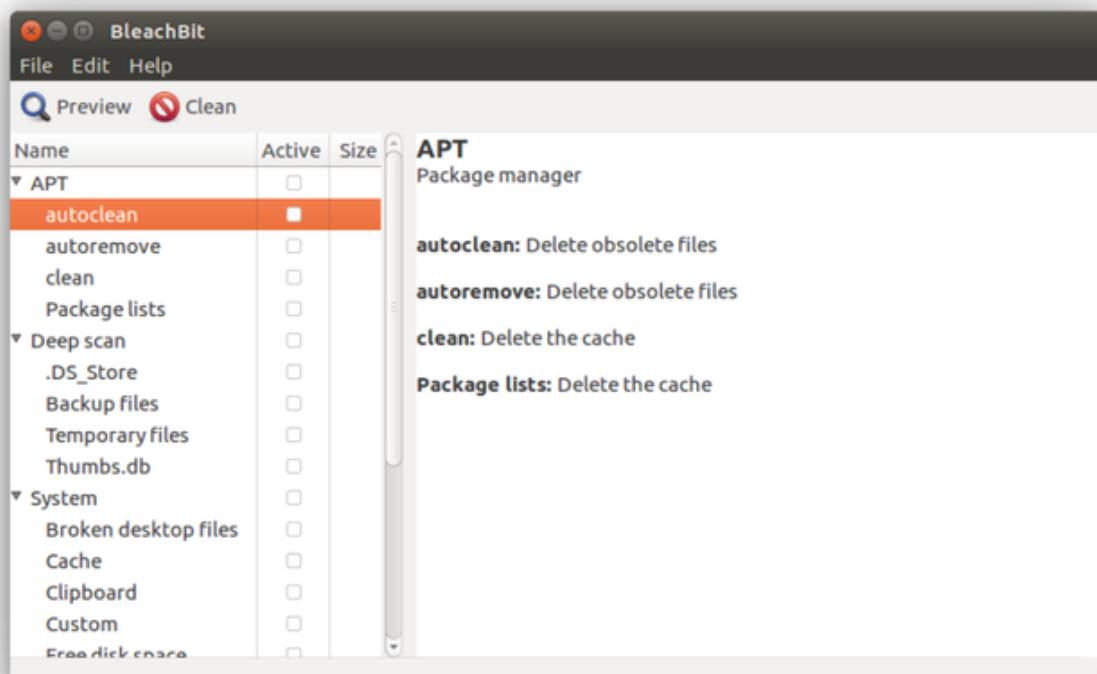
Unity Tweak Tool



Unity Tweak Tool is a similar app, but it's designed with Ubuntu's Unity interface in mind. The core concept is the same. Download this app to edit virtual desktops, adjust animations, and tweak other aspects that Ubuntu doesn't let you do by default.

Download: [Unity Tweak Tool](#) (Free)

BleachBit



Linux doesn't need the kind of regular system maintenance that Windows requires, but there are times when we might want to give parts of our machines a powerwash. BleachBit can do that. This tool securely deletes files and "cleans" a large list of applications.

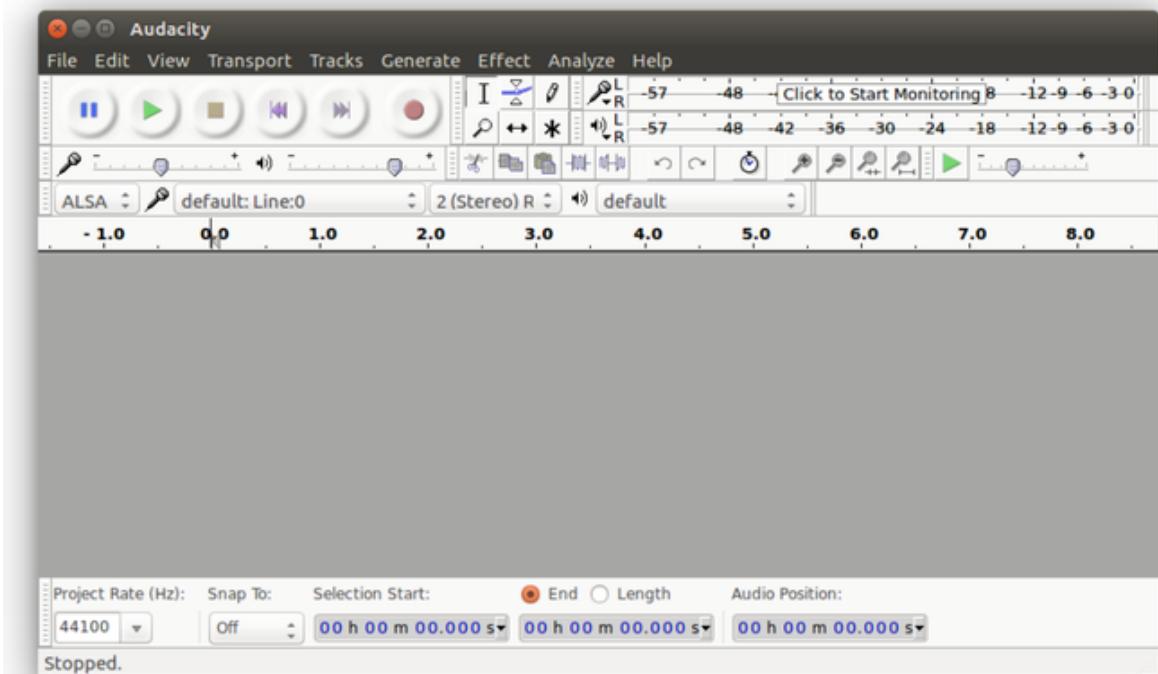
Download: [BleachBit](#) (Free)

Ardour

Audacity is a great place to start, but if audio is your bread and butter, you may want to step up to Ardour. This is a full-blown digital audio workstation intended for professional use. Ardour isn't the only tool of its kind for Linux, but it does happen to be the foundation other tools such as [Mixbus](#) are based on.

Download: [Ardour](#) (Free)

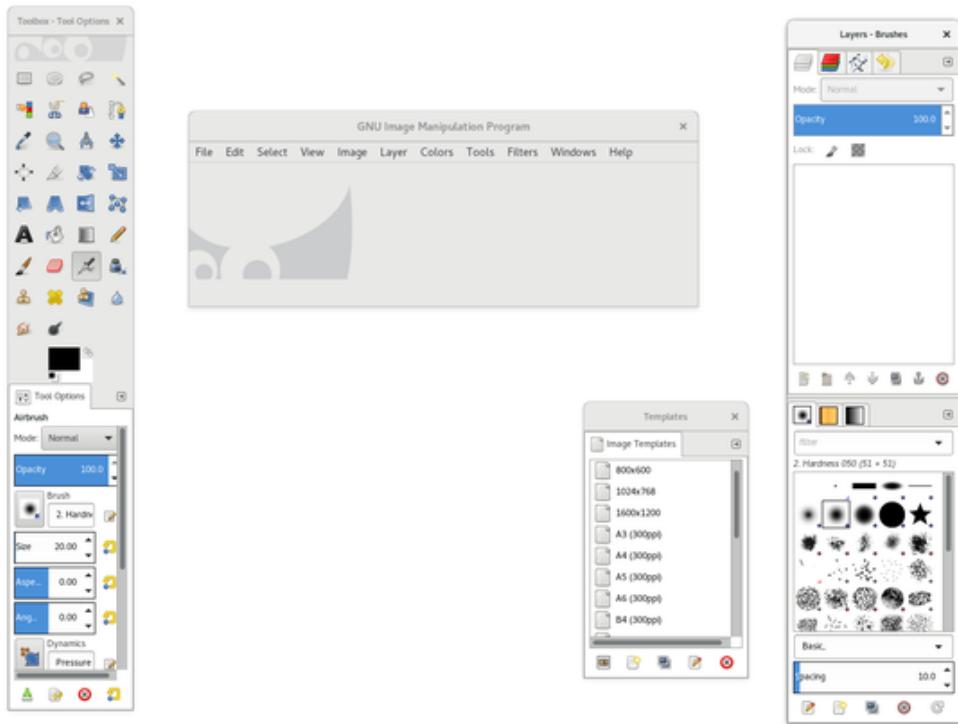
Audacity



Audacity is a popular tool for recording and editing audio. Want to record an album or make your own podcast? Audacity is an easy recommendation across Linux, Windows, and Mac OS X alike.

Download: [Audacity](#) (Free)

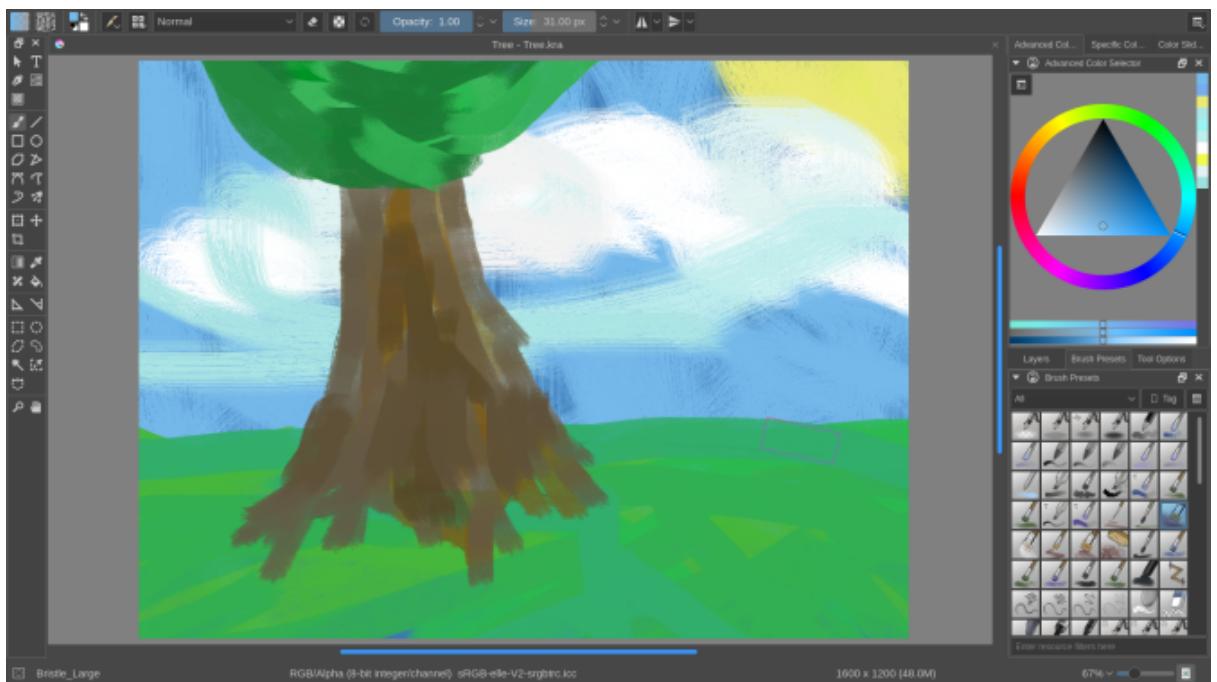
GIMP



GIMP is the most mature and feature-rich image editor available for any open source desktop. It's also the best free application of its kind across any operating system. GIMP is an alternative to PhotoShop, and more than capable of holding its own. Some people may prefer the Adobe interface, but with the addition of a single window view several years back, GIMP may feel more familiar than you think.

Download: [GIMP](#) (Free)

Krita



If you're an artist who's comfortable with a stylus, Krita is the best digital painting app for Linux. While this program is technically capable of editing images, it's better suited for helping you turn a blank canvas into a work of art. There are plenty of brush styles to work with, and you have the freedom to tweak them or add your own. Despite all the functionality packed inside, the interface is easy to dive into and use on a regular basis.

Download: [Krita](#) (Free)

OpenShot

OpenShot is a great video editor for creating a home video to preparing a recording for YouTube. It first launched in 2008, but it became much better after version 2.0. While this isn't the kind of tool you will find in production studios, with 3D animation, compositing, audio mixing, and more, there are plenty of advanced features at hand.

Download: [OpenShot](#) (Free)

PiTivi

Just want the basics, such as the ability to trim clips, insert transitions, and add a few effects? PiTiVi has you covered. It's not very advanced, but for home use, it's a capable tool.

Download: [PiTiVi](#) (Free)

Kdenlive

Again, the KDE project has an option of its own. Kdenlive is more powerful than PiTiVi, making it a great alternative to OpenShot. Start here if you use a QT-based desktop, though you may still want to try it even if you aren't.

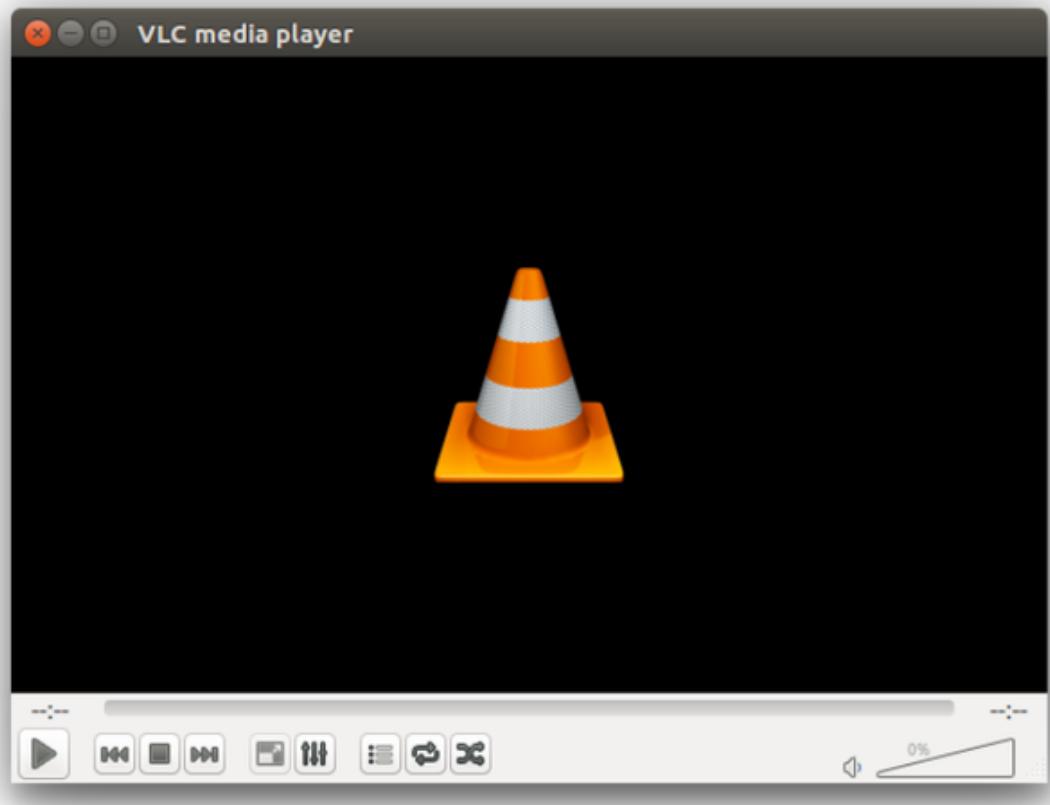
Download: [Kdenlive](#) (Free)

Lightworks

Ready to get serious? Lightworks is arguably the best video editor on the Linux desktop. It's good enough that several Hollywood productions have used this app to produce feature films. But there's a cost -- a big one. The pro version of Lightworks will cost you hundreds of dollars. Fortunately the free version gives you all of the same tools, as long as you're fine with exporting to MPEG-4 at 720p.

Download: [Lightworks](#) (Free)

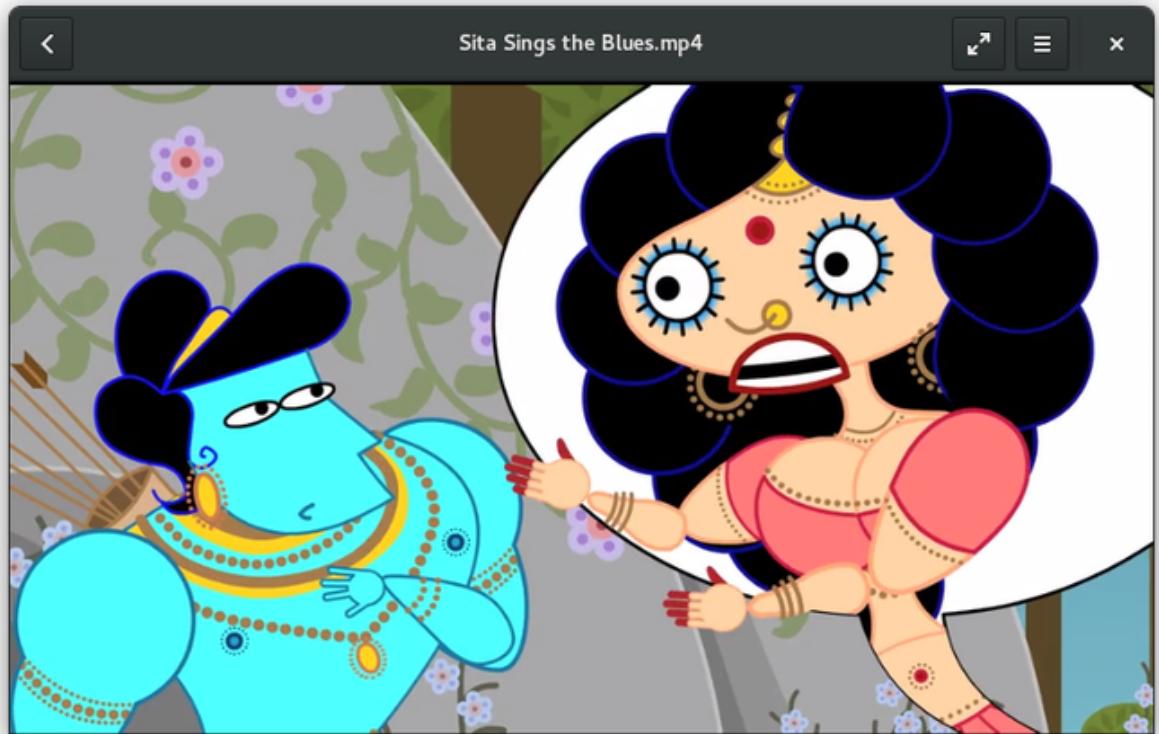
VLC



If VLC can't play the file you want to watch, there's a good chance it can't be played. This app is so good at its job that it's one of the first installs you see on many Windows machines. The interface can feel cluttered or outdated, but you won't be disappointed by the functionality.

Download: [VLC](#) (Free)

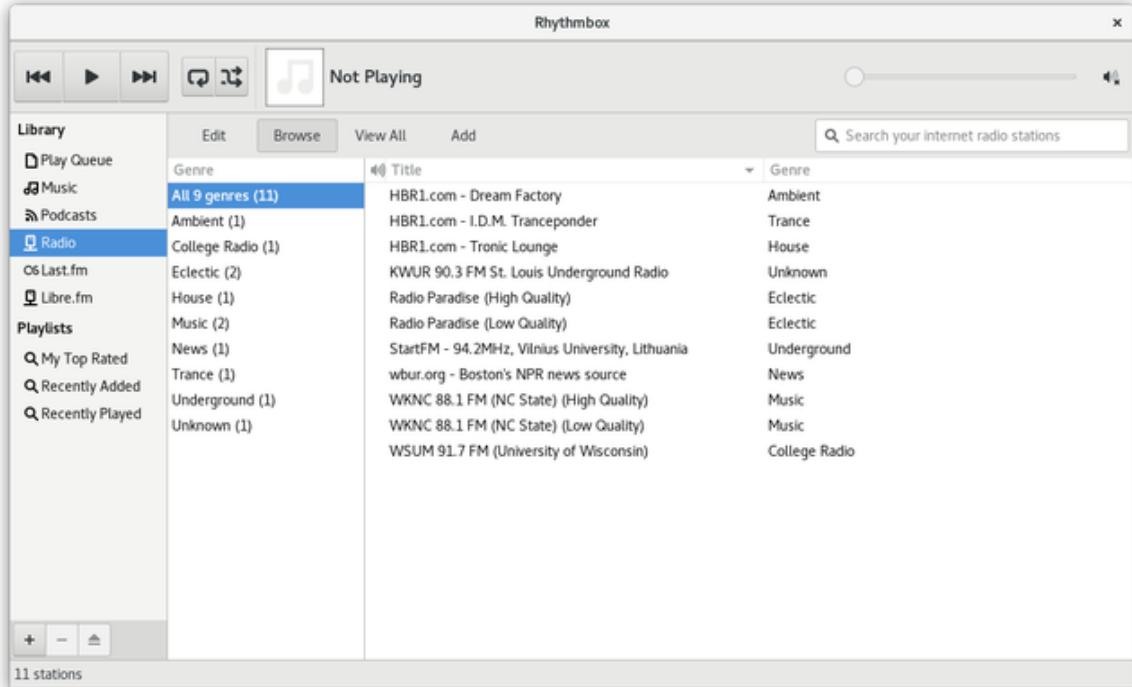
GNOME Videos (Totem)



The default video editor for the GNOME desktop is simple by design. It plays any media formats supported by GStreamer. The options aren't the most thorough, but it does a great job of staying out of the way so you can focus on what you're watching.

Download: [GNOME Videos](#) (Free)

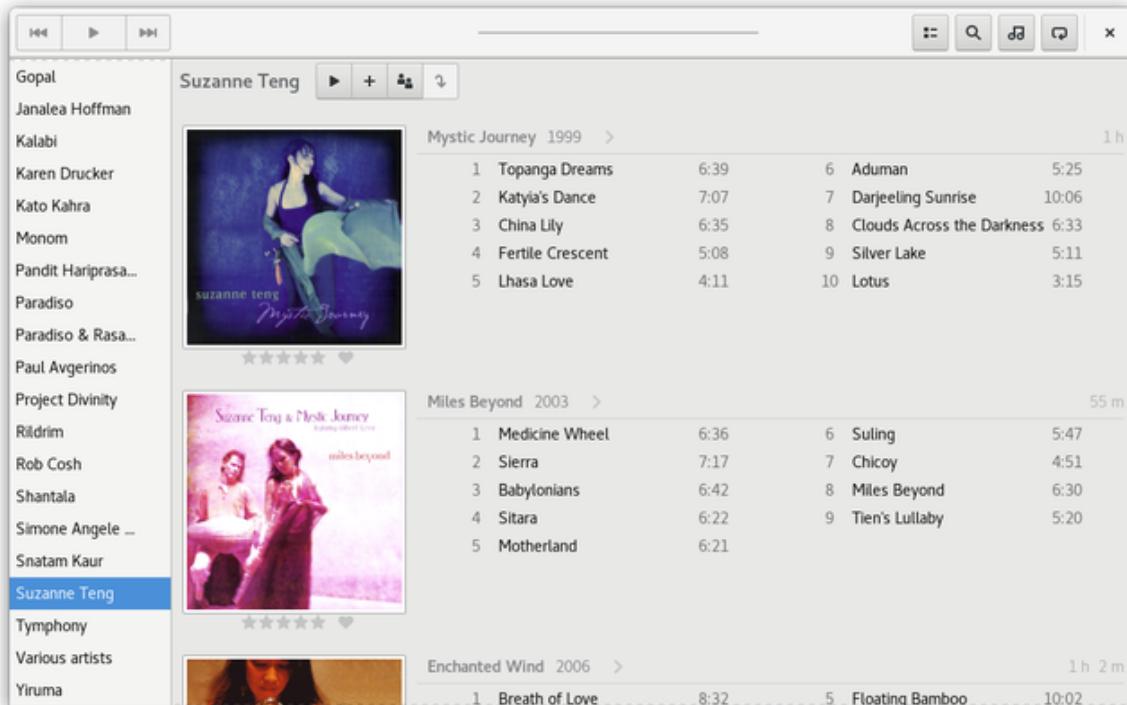
Rhythmbox



Rhythmbox is a classic. If you've used iTunes, you know how to navigate your way around this one-stop-shop of a music player. Access your library, listen to podcasts, and download new music from Creative Commons online stores. The app hasn't changed much in the past decade, but it consistently gets the job done.

Download: [Rhythmbox](#) (Free)

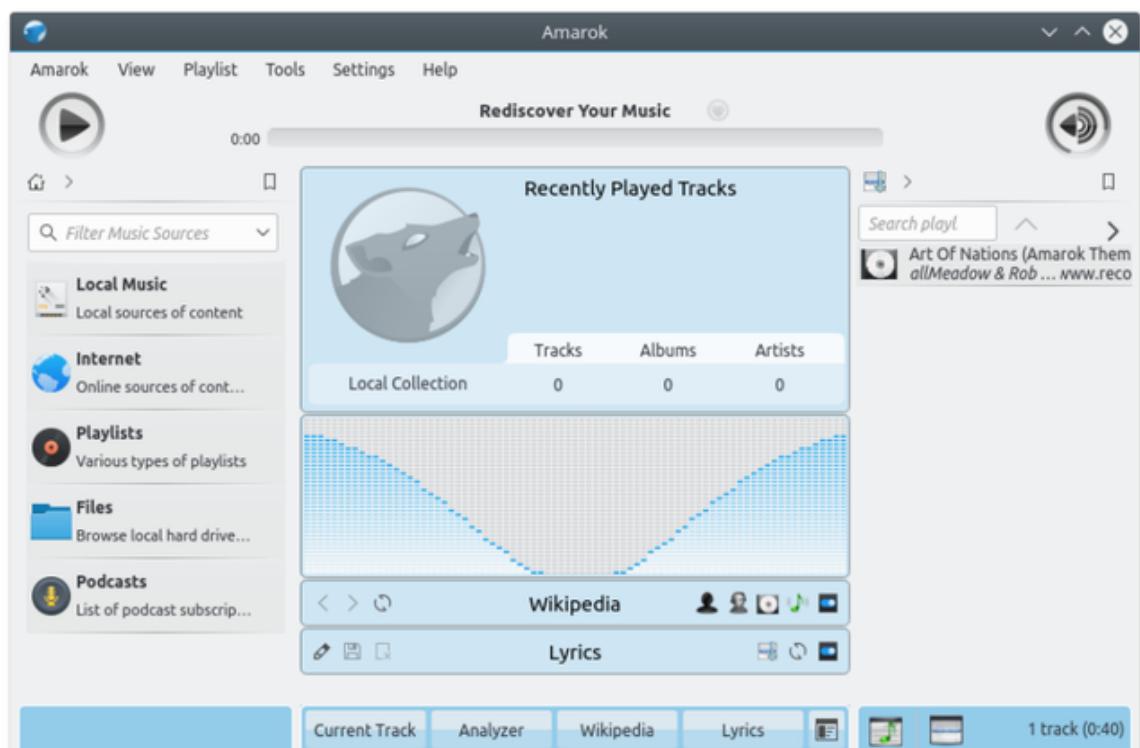
Lollypop



While Rhythmbox looks out of place on a default GNOME desktop, Lollypop feels right at home. It takes design cues from the simple [GNOME Music](#) player, but it doesn't skimp on features -- showing that following GNOME guidelines doesn't require an app to be basic.

Download: [Lollypop](#) (Free)

Amarok



Amarok is the juggernaut of the KDE music scene. It also manages to pack the same features of Rhythmbox (and more) without looking like an iTunes clone. You can thoroughly tweak the interface and add plugins to make Amarok fit your tastes. If I could

only recommend one music app on the Linux desktop, this would be it.

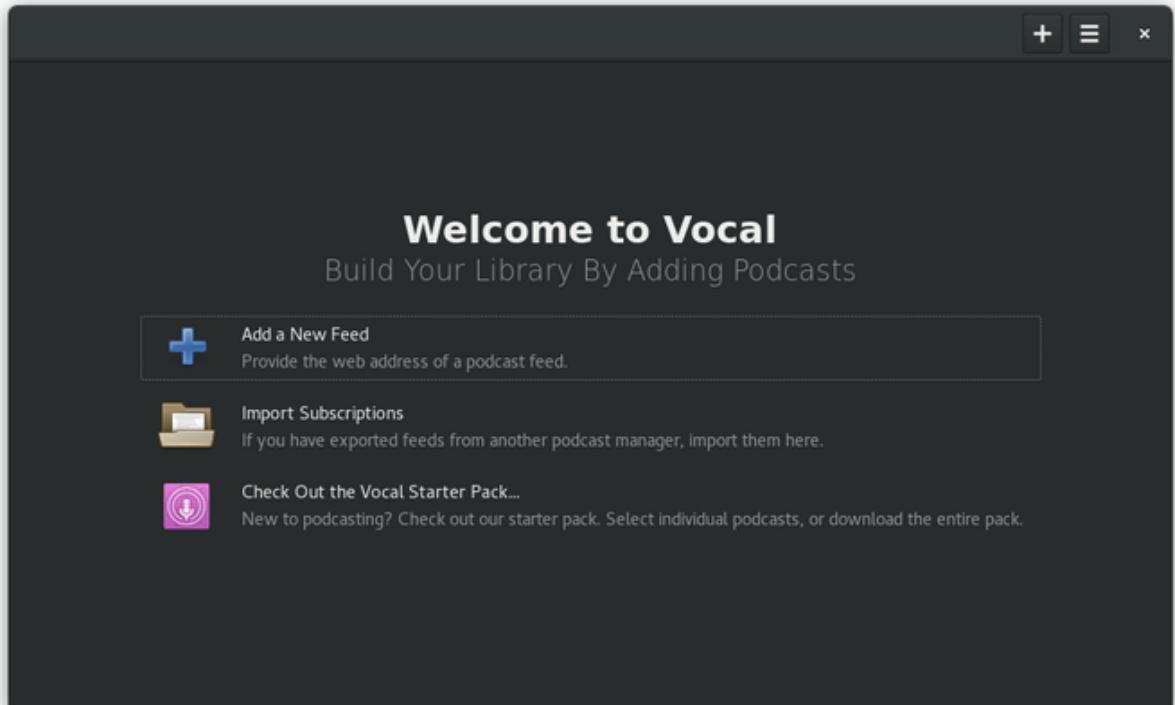
Download: [Amarok](#) (Free)

Clementine

Clementine takes its inspiration from the Amarok of old. In the many years since its debut, the app has grown into its own. These days you can stream music from a number of online sources and control the player using the [Clementine Android app](#).

Download: [Clementine](#) (Free)

Vocal

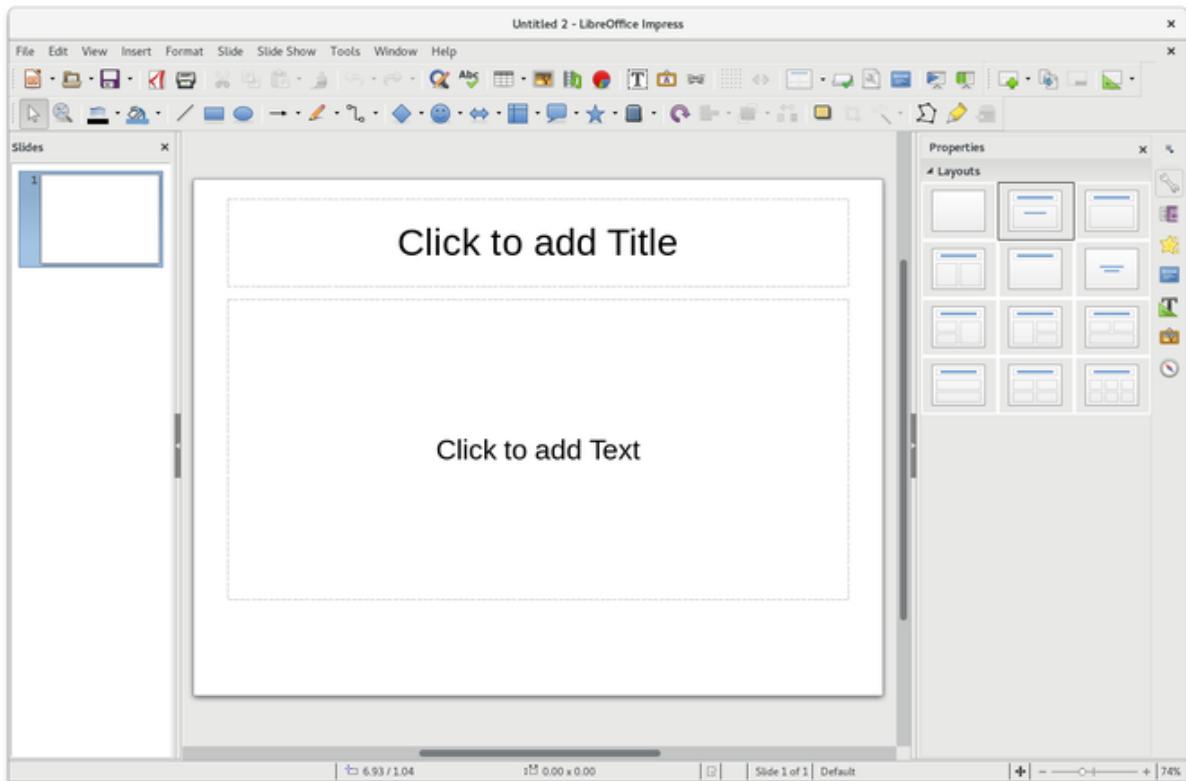


Vocal is a podcast client developed for Elementary OS. That means it comes with all the simplicity and style common to that distro's apps. The software is in an early stage, but this is one of the more exciting podcast-related developments Linux has seen since Miro, which hasn't seen an update in three years.

Download: [Vocal](#) (Free)

Office

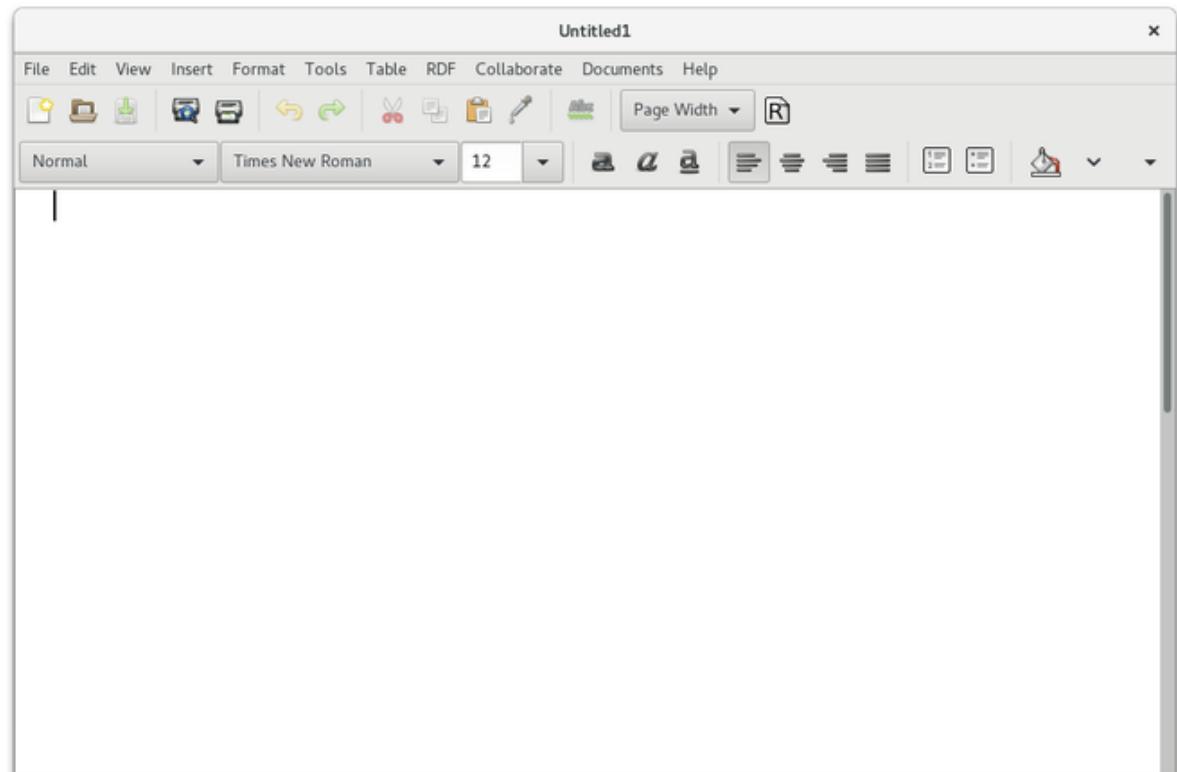
LibreOffice



LibreOffice is the best office suite you can find on Linux. It's so [capable of taking on Microsoft Office](#) that millions of people install it on Windows. Without spending a buck, you get most of the features you could want and great compatibility with Microsoft Office's document formats.

Download: [LibreOffice](#) (Free)

GNOME Office

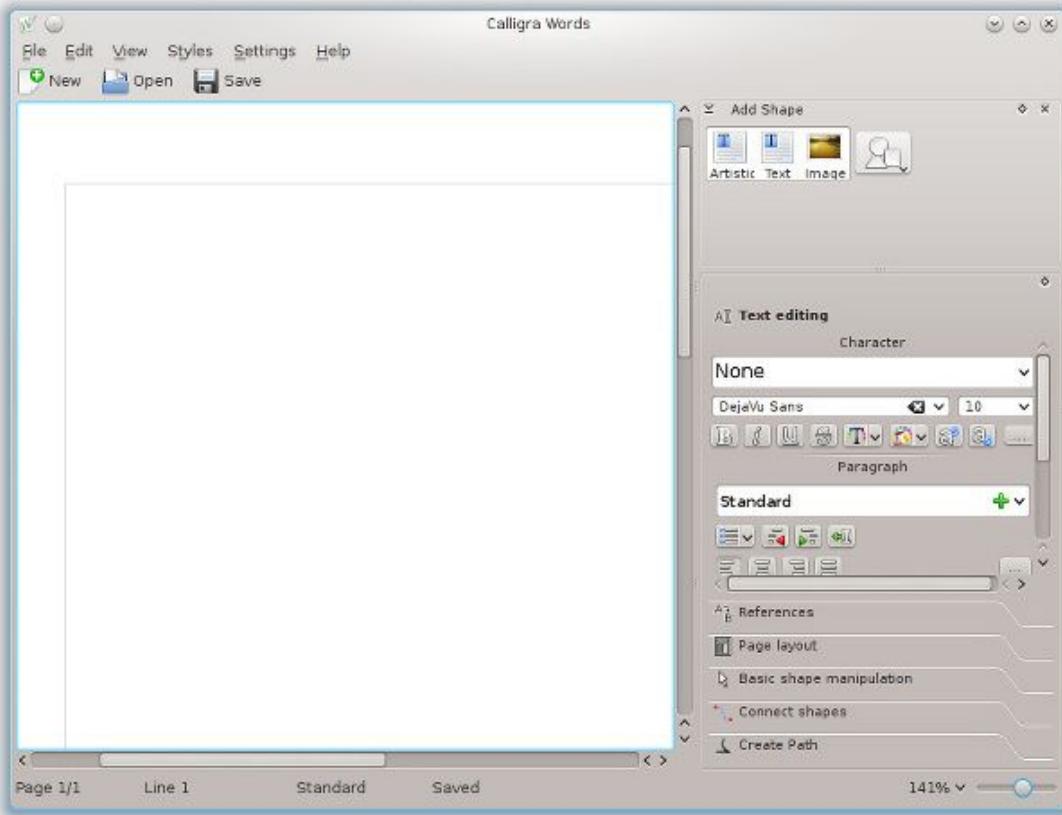


LibreOffice is a massive suite, so it can feel heavy at times. GNOME offers [a range of applications built explicitly for free desktops](#), and they take up fewer system resources. If

you don't need quite as many features and aren't as concerned about maintaining compatibility with Microsoft Office, you may find you prefer AbiWord and Gnumeric to LibreOffice Writer and Calc.

Download: GNOME Office [Broken URL Removed] (Free)

Calligra Suite



Calligra is an office suite that feels at home on KDE. The interface is designed with wide-screen monitors in mind, and like the Plasma desktop as a whole, it's very customizable. Calligra isn't as mature as LibreOffice or GNOME Office, but it's worth using if you prefer to stick with QT applications.

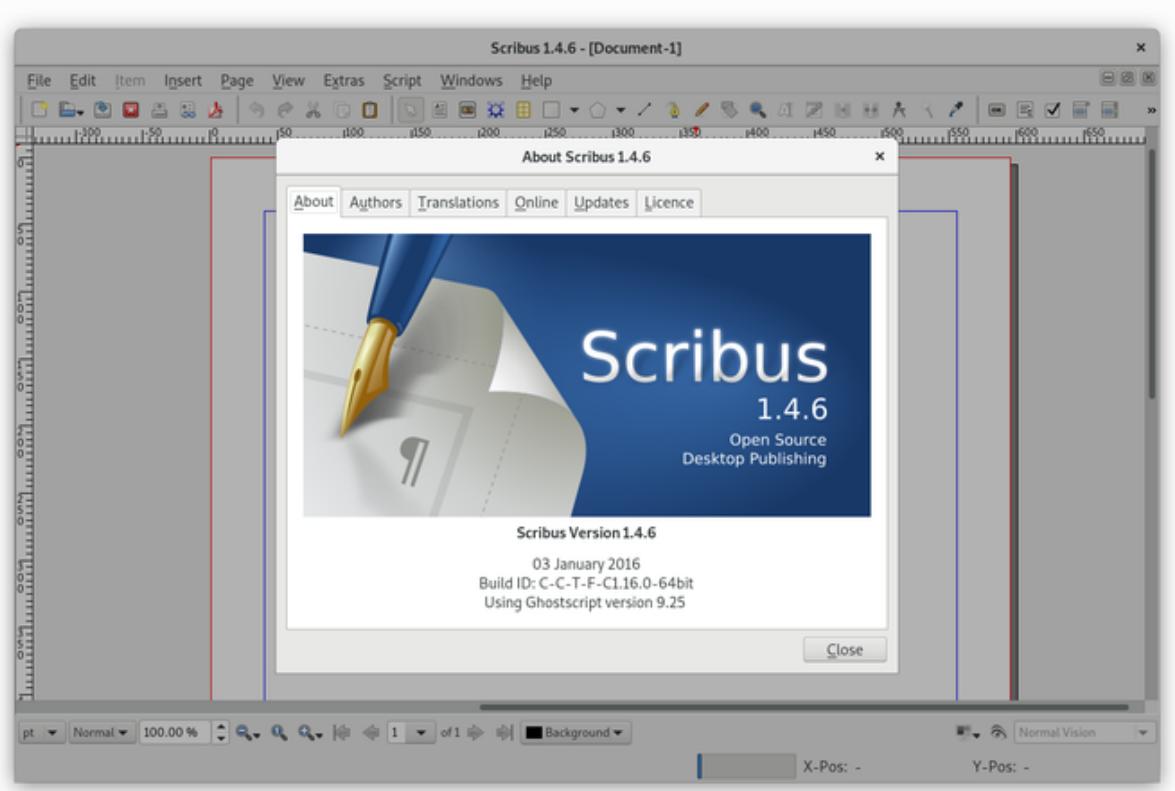
Download: [Calligra Suite](#) (Free)

WPS Office

Maybe you simply want something that [looks and feels like Microsoft Office](#). WPS Office does, and it's available for Linux. This isn't open source software, but for many Linux users, that isn't always a priority.

Download: [WPS Office](#) (Free)

Scribus



When it comes to desktop publishing, two pieces of software come to mind: Microsoft Publisher and Adobe InDesign. Scribus is a free and open source alternative. While I wouldn't consider Scribe as intuitive as Publisher or InDesign, it's fully featured and gets the job done. If you take the time to learn the Scribus way of doing things, you have a dependable piece of software for creating newsletters, pamphlets, magazines, and more.

Download: [Scribus](#) (Free)

Photo Managers

digiKam

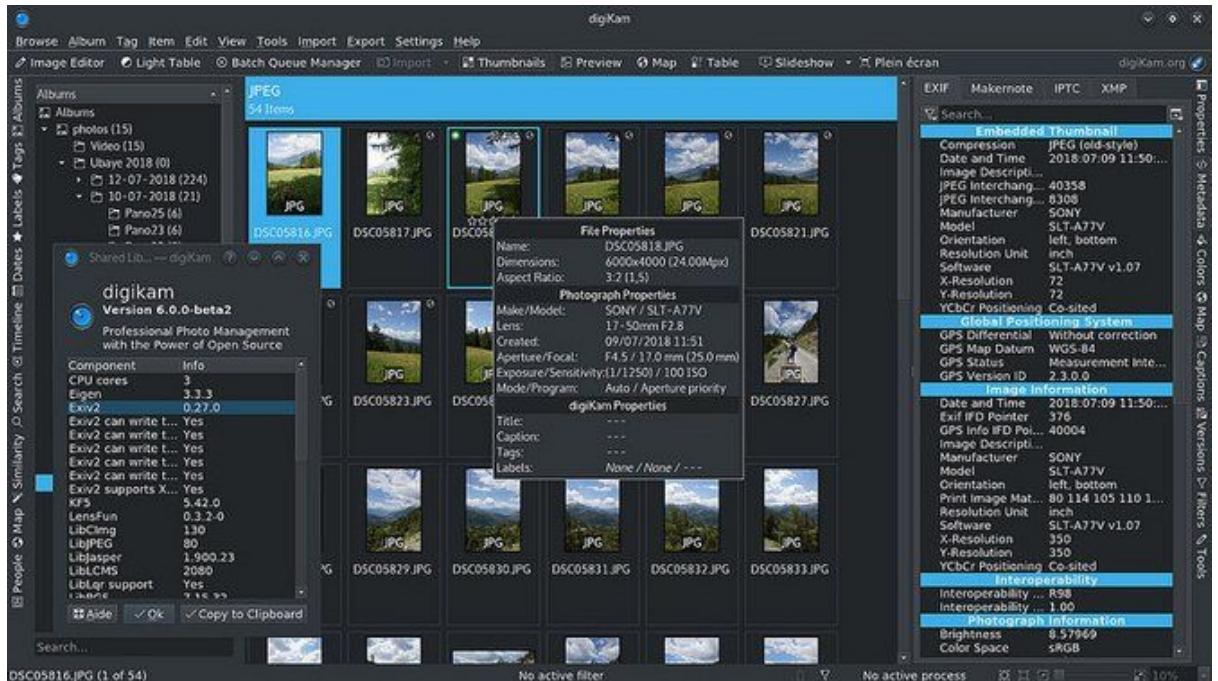


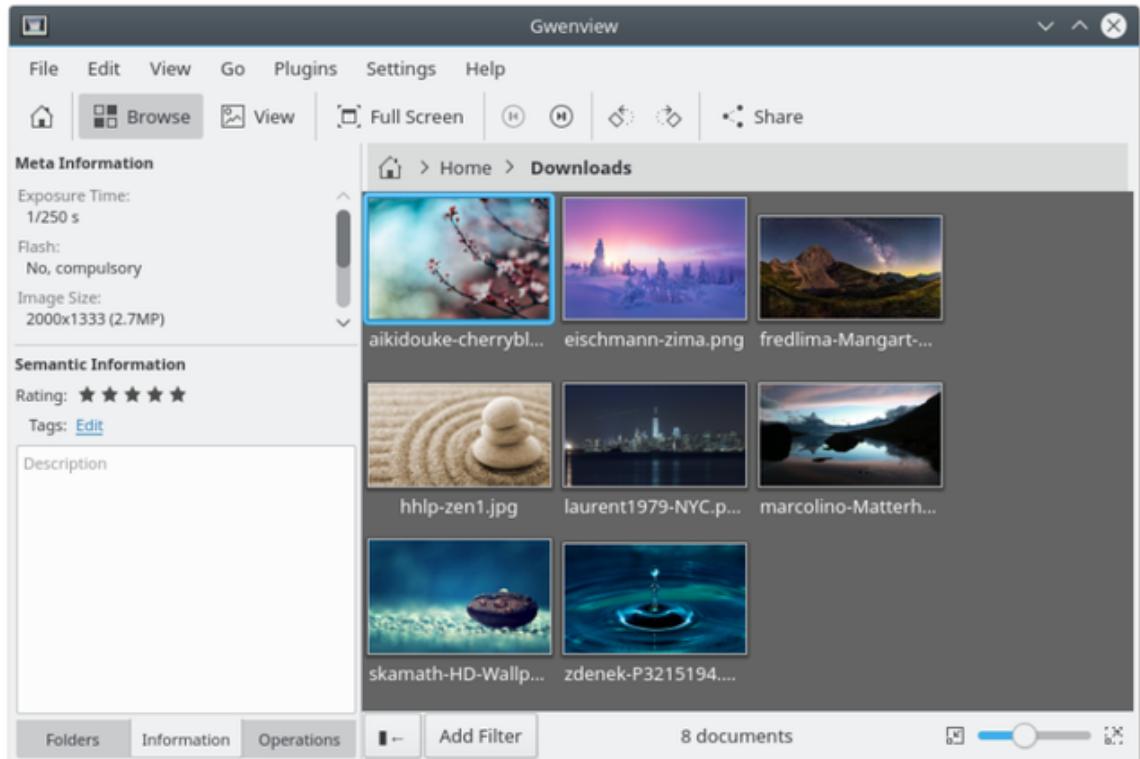
Image Credit: [digiKam](#)

Not only is digiKam the best photo management application available for Linux, you could

argue that it's the best option on any desktop operating system, period. If you're a professional photographer looking to switch to Linux, this is the place to start. DigiKam will import RAW files, manage metadata, apply tags, create labels, and turn your terabytes of photos into something manageable. All the while, it's simple enough for casual users to embrace, too.

Download: [digiKam](#) (Free)

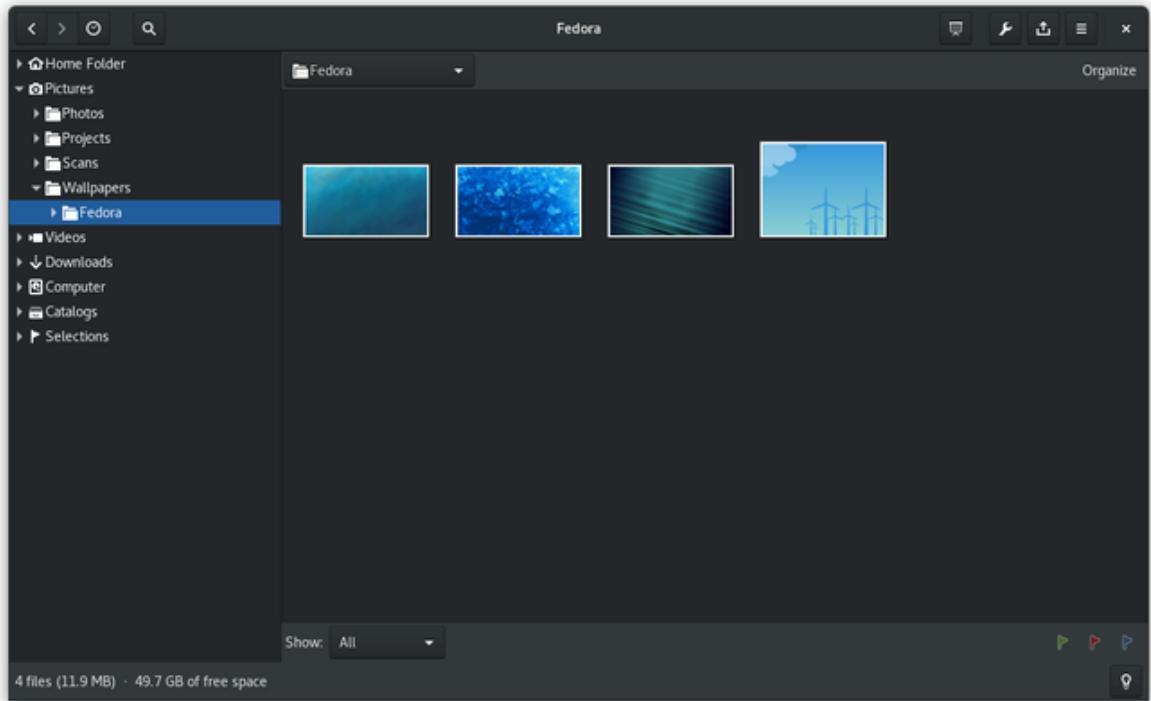
Gwenview



Gwenview is the default image viewer on a KDE Plasma desktop, but it also makes for a great photo manager. You can browser folders and make simple edits to files without having to install any extra software. Thanks to the wide range of plugins, that's hardly the limit to what you can do. Gwenview is compelling enough that you may want to use it even if you're not a fan of KDE.

Download: [Gwenview](#) (Free)

gThumb



Like Gwenview, gThumb is an image viewer that can double as a photo manager. It also happens to be the most feature-rich option that looks at home on the GNOME desktop. It offers an ideal blend of functionality and simplicity that make it great for casual use, but it's probably not the kind of software you'd want to build a business with.

Download: [gThumb](#) (Free)

Shotwell

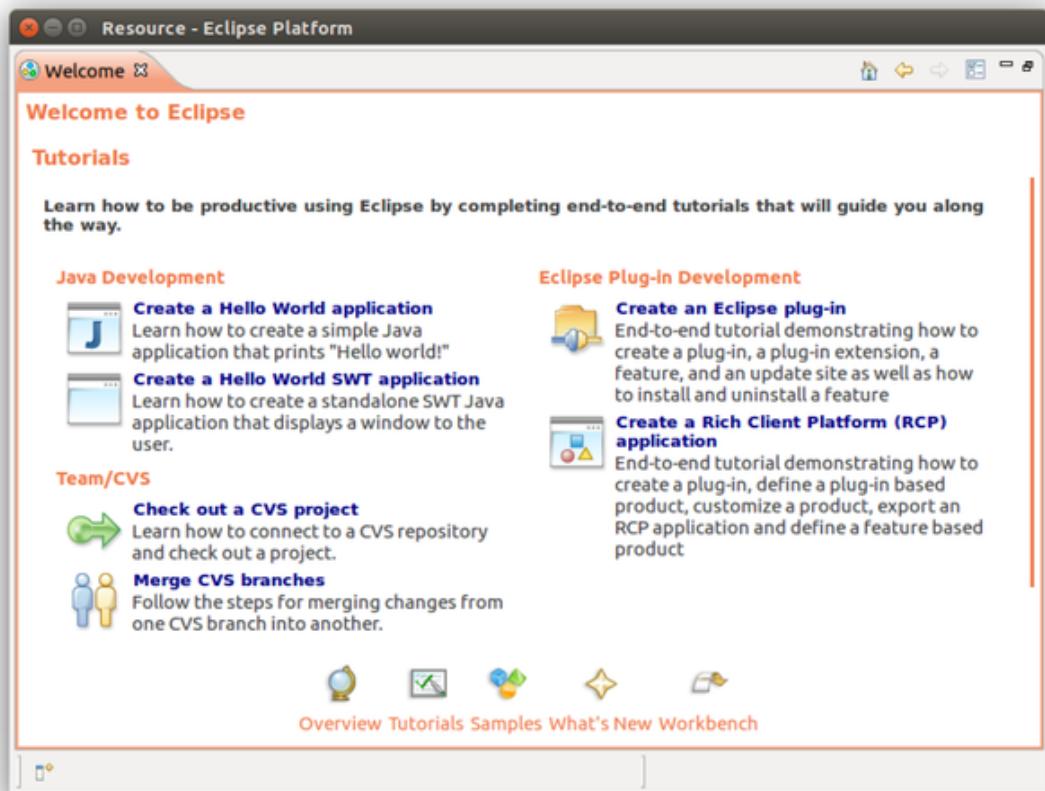
Shotwell is the most straightforward photo manager for GTK-based desktop environments. It imports your photos from a camera, gives you a number of ways to group them, can apply tags, open RAW files, and make edits. It loads more quickly than digiKam and provides much of the same core functionality.

Download: [Shotwell](#) (Free)

For more on [Linux photo management](#), check out our helpful guide.

Programming

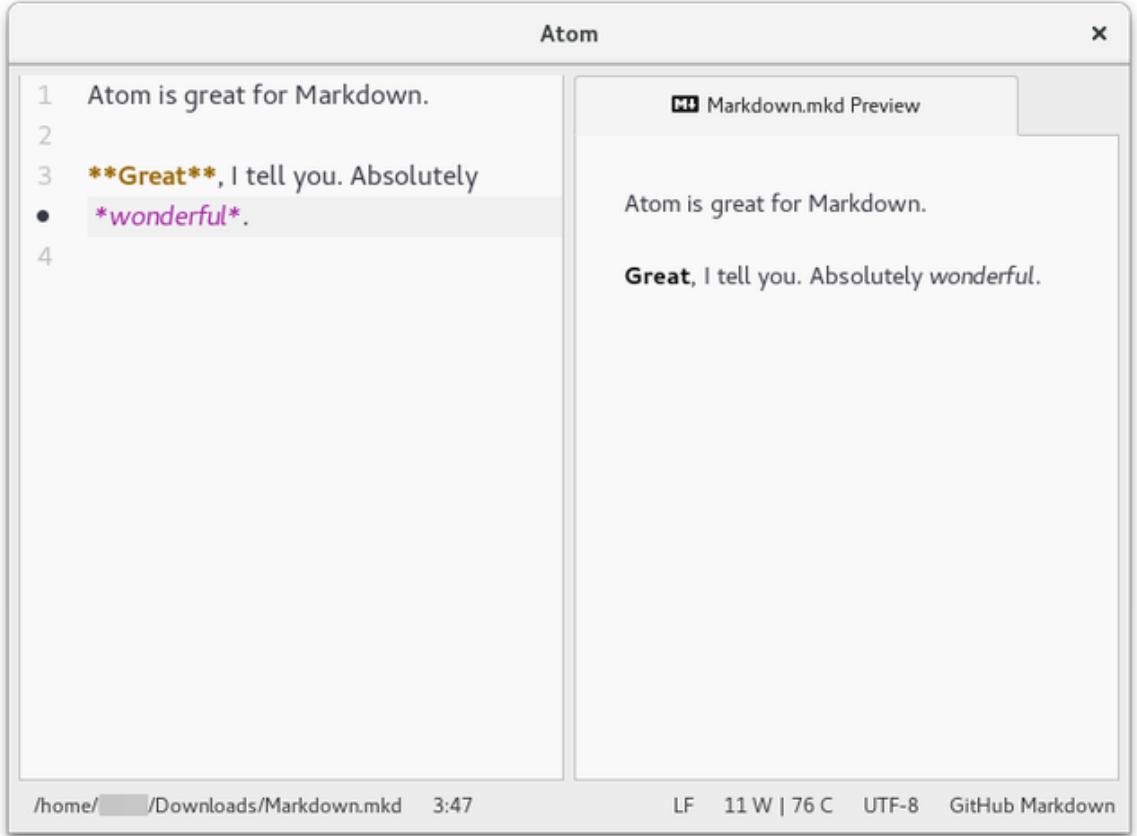
Eclipse



Eclipse is the go-to IDE on Linux, but it's widely used on other operating systems too. It has a large community and plenty of plugins. As a result, there's a good chance that Eclipse has the features you need.

Download: [Eclipse](#) (Free)

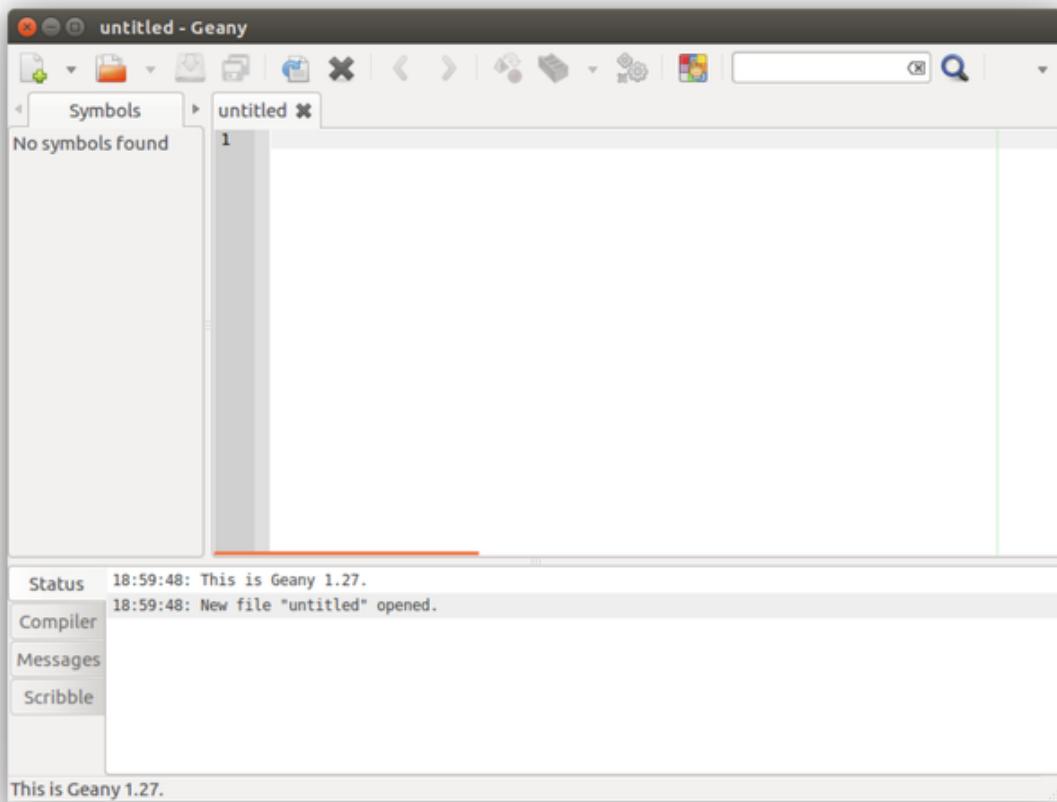
Atom



Atom is a text editor developed by GitHub. The goal was to design a hackable text editor for the 21st century. People have developed so many plugins that Atom makes for a great development tool. You can even use it as an IDE.

Download: [Atom](#) (Free)

Geany



Geany is neither a text editor nor a full-blown IDE; it's [a code editor](#). You can compile and run software, view a list of defined functions in the current file, and more.

Download: [Geany](#) (Free)

Terminals

GNOME Terminal

GNOME Terminal comes with the GNOME desktop, so it's the one you're going to first encounter on Ubuntu, Debian, and Fedora. Fortunately, it happens to be a good tool for the job. You can hide the menubar, adjust font and background colors (including make the window transparent), and rewrap text on resize.

Download: [GNOME Terminal](#) (Free)

Konsole

As the default terminal for KDE, Konsole makes an appearance in any KDE app that displays its own terminal window. This level of integration between apps is part of what makes the Plasma desktop so appealing. That also means there's less reason to install Konsole if you're *not* all that invested in the KDE ecosystem, though having split terminals is pretty nice.

Download: [Konsole](#) (Free)

Terminator

That said, if you really want to view multiple terminals in one window, you can do much better than two. Terminator can stick four terminals in a grid. If that's not enough to give you a headache, try doubling that number to eight. Terminator doesn't mind.

Download: [Terminator](#) (Free)

Guake

Don't want your terminal occupying its own window? Or does launching a separate app simply slow you down? Either way, you may prefer Guake, a terminal that drops down from the top of your screen. Assign it a keyboard shortcut and you will always have a terminal handy. As for the name? It's inspired by Quake, a video game that lets you access the terminal in this manner.

Download: [Guake](#) (Free)

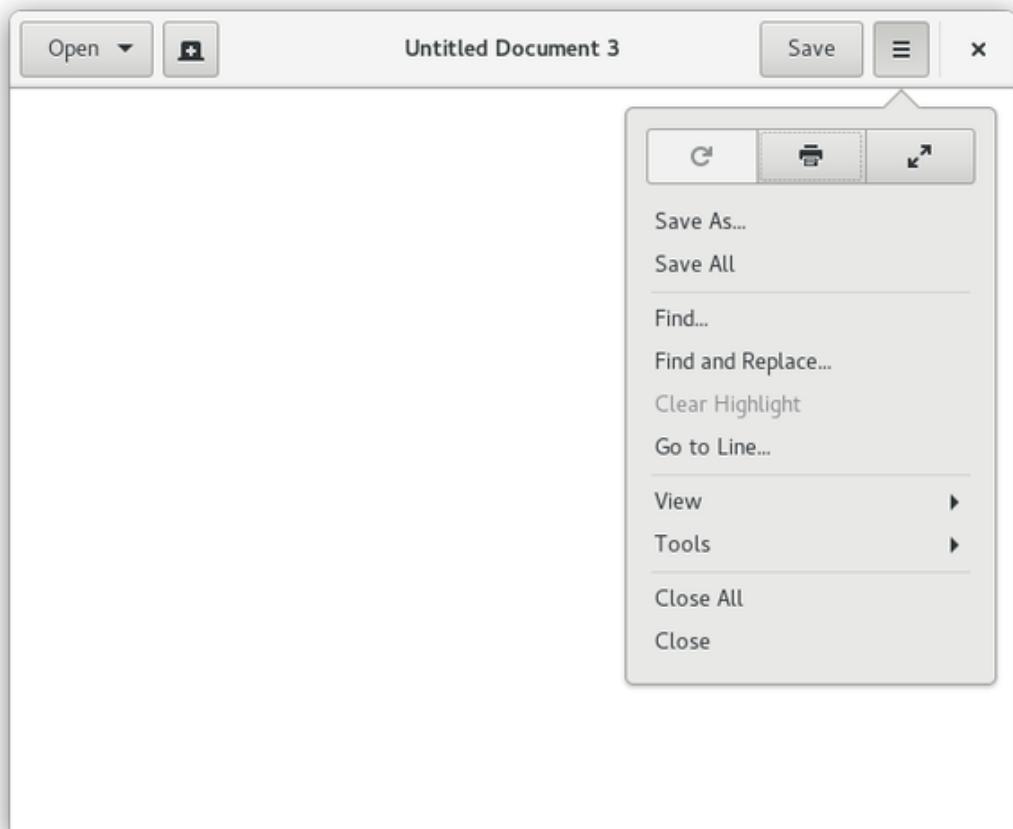
Yakuake

Yakuake does what Guake does, only for KDE. You know the drill by now. When you're not using a GTK-based desktop, it's nice to have an alternative option. Yakuake is a top-down terminal written in QT.

Download: Yakuake [Broken URL Removed] (Free)

Text Editors

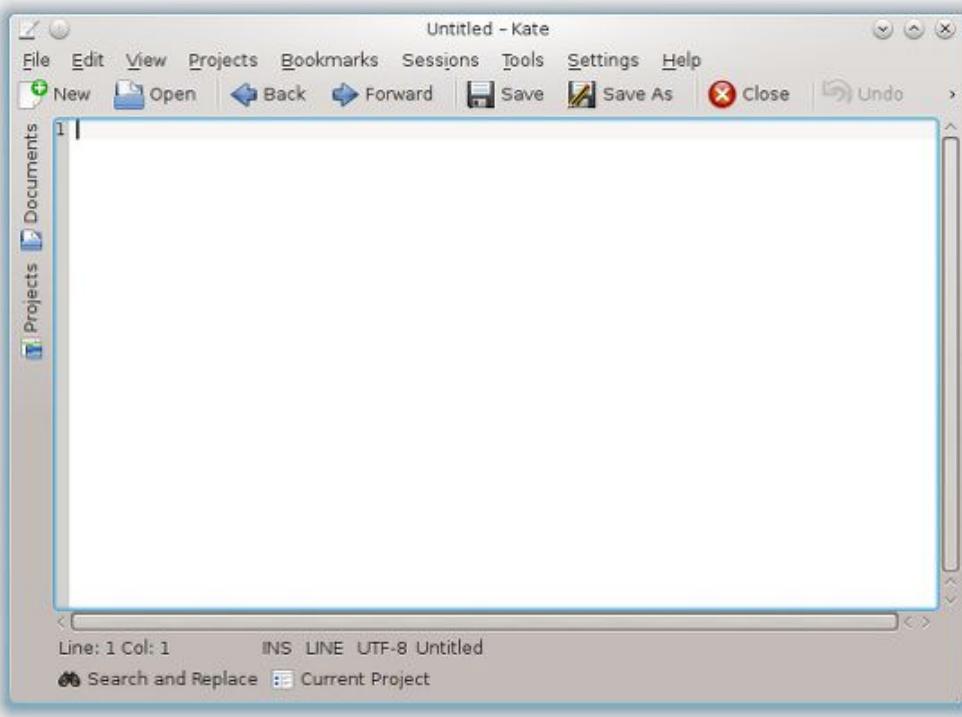
Gedit



GNOME's default text editor is one of the [most feature-packed text editors for Linux](#). It's also a great way to type up basic notes. However you want to use it, it gets our recommendation.

Download: [Gedit](#) (Free)

Kate



Kate is the default text editor for the KDE desktop environment, and it's no slouch either. Since this is KDE we're talking about, much of the advanced functionality is easy to find in the many application menus. Plus you can tweak the interface until your heart's content.

Download: [Kate](#) (Free)

Sublime Text

Not all Linux applications are open source, and Sublime Text is one example. This proprietary text editor is cross-platform, having gained plenty of users on Windows and macOS. Distraction-free writing, the ability to edit two files side by side, and an expansive set of shortcuts all make the Linux version as compelling as those on other operating systems. Plus there's a large pool of community-supported plug-ins that can make the experience your own.

Download: [Sublime Text](#)

Virtualization

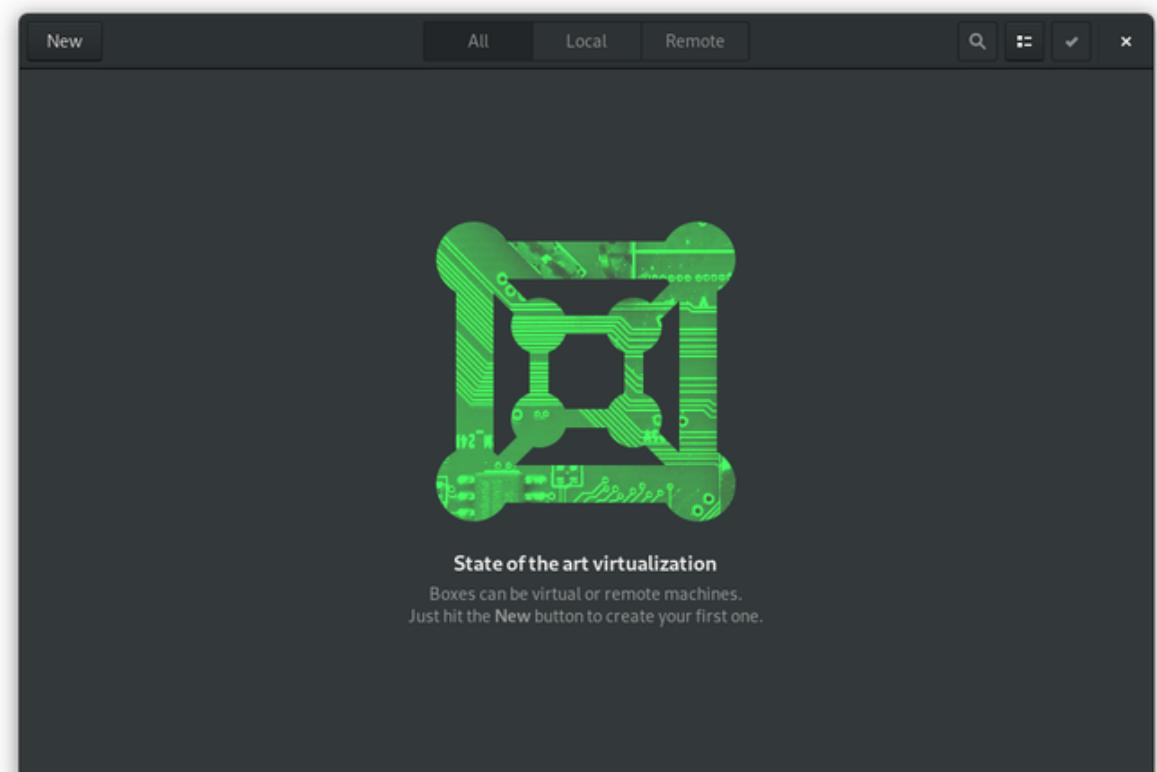
VirtualBox



If you need to fire up a virtual machine, Oracle VirtualBox is one of the first tools to come to mind. If you've encountered this program on Windows, know that it's available on Linux, too. It will also look and feel familiar regardless of which desktop environment you run. That makes VirtualBox an easy recommendation, even though there's a lot here that first-time users will likely find confusing.

Download: [VirtualBox](#) (Free)

GNOME Boxes



GNOME Boxes removes all of the confusion surrounding virtual machines. All you have to do is select which ISO file you want to load. The next thing you know, it's open in a window on your desktop. GNOME Boxes may not come with many options, but it makes up for that with speed, convenience, and sheer ease of use. This is my personal favorite tool for the job.

Download: [GNOME Boxes](#) (Free)

Where to Get Even More Linux Software and Apps

If you're looking for even more suggestions, check out these [popular Linux app launchers](#). We could add many more apps to this list, and we intend to do so in the future. Until then, why don't you shout out your favorites in the comments below?

Until then, there are plenty more apps where this came from. Just open up your [Linux app store of choice](#), or check out [Flathub or Snap Store](#), and have a look around.

[10 Reasons Why You Shouldn't Use Spotify](#)

[Read Next](#)

About The Author

Bertel King (356 Articles Published)

Bertel is a digital minimalist who works from a hand-me-down laptop running elementary OS and carries around a Light Phone II. He delights in helping others decide which tech to bring into their lives... and which tech to do without.

[More From Bertel King](#)

Subscribe to our newsletter

Join our newsletter for tech tips, reviews, free ebooks, and exclusive deals!

[Click here to subscribe](#)