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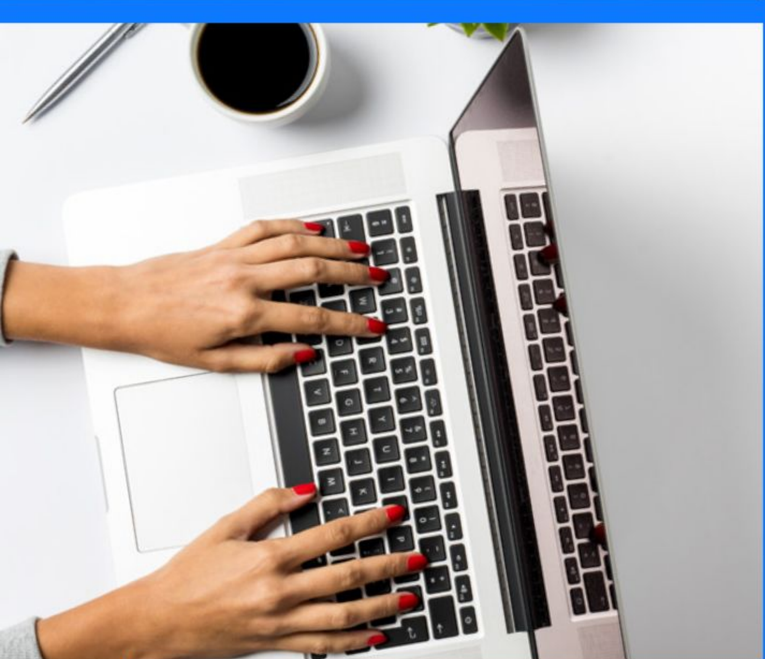
LINUX MINT

FOR BEGINNERS



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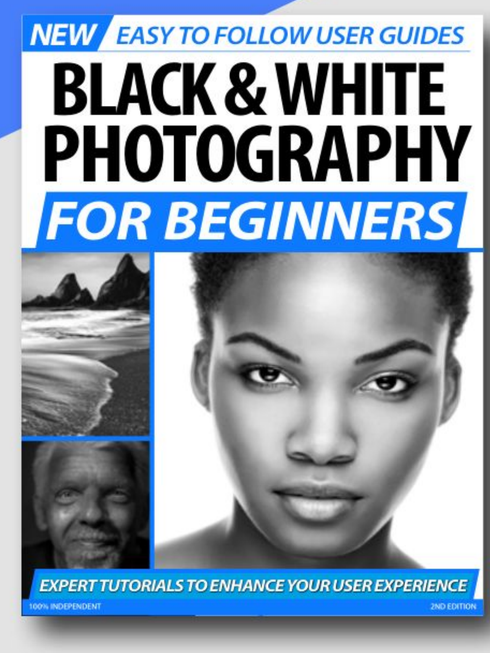

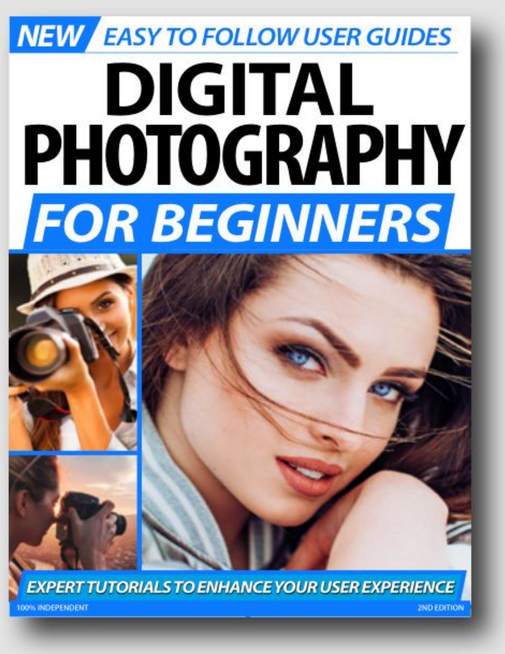

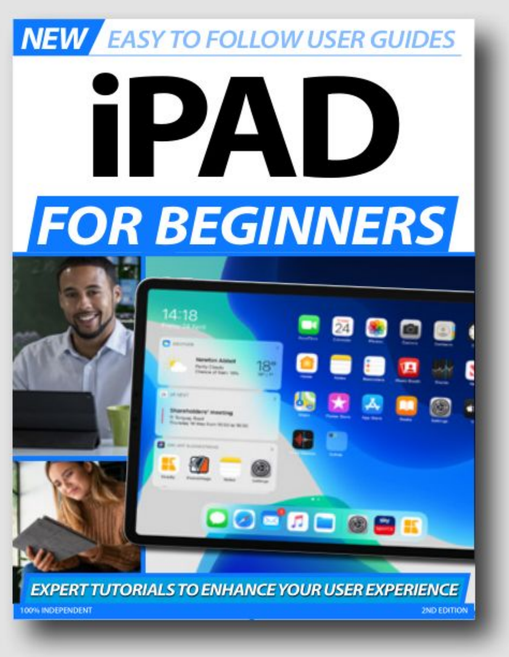

LINUX MINT

FOR BEGINNERS

Starting something new can be daunting. Learning a skill or mastering a new piece of hardware is tough. Even tougher if you have no-one at hand to help. Conversely as the complexity of our consumer technology increases, the size of the requisite instruction manual decreases or in some cases it simply disappears. At numerous times in our lives we have all been "beginners", there is no shame in that fact and rightly so. How many times have you asked aloud, "What does this button do?". "Why doesn't that work?". "What do you mean it doesn't do that?". "HELP!". At the start of any new journey or adventure we are all beginners but fortunately for you we are here to stand beside you at every stage.

Over this extensive series of titles we will be looking in great depth at the latest consumer electronics, software, hobbies and trends out of the box! We will guide you step-by-step through using all aspects of the technology that you may have been previously apprehensive at attempting. Let our expert guide help you build your technology understanding and skills, taking you from a novice to a confident and experienced user.

Over the page our journey begins. We would wish you luck but we're sure with our support you won't need it.

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"...everything you need to master Linux Mint..."

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Introduction to Linux Mint

For years now, Linux has proved to be the last bastion of freedom in an ever increasing world of wall-gardened operating systems. With Linux, you are at liberty to change the way it looks, have the scope to change the way it works and the free reign to decide what programs, apps and tools are installed. Perhaps now then is a good time to take back your digital freedom; and what better place to start, than with Linux Mint.

Linux Mint is a hugely popular distribution that's based on Ubuntu. The team behind it have cleverly wrought a near perfect example of how good, user-friendly and stable Linux is. With Linux Mint you're able to surf the Internet, watch videos, listen to all types of music files, view and edit images and protect yourself against the nefarious side of the digital world. All of this can be done out of the box, without the need to install countless other programs; and, Linux Mint is free to download, install and use.

So let's get started with Linux Mint and freshen up your computer.

What is Linux Mint?

Linux Mint is one of the most popular Linux distributions available. Since it was first developed it has gone from strength to strength; and behind it is an active and helpful community. What is Linux Mint though?

FROM FREEDOM CAME ELEGANCE

The old adage of 'if a thing is worth doing, it's worth doing well' can certainly be applied to many different distributions of Linux but there's one distro that time and time again comes out shining above the others: Linux Mint.

The short answer to 'What is Linux Mint' is simply that Linux Mint is a distribution of the Linux Kernel and its libraries. It comes with several different desktop environments, each offering the user something slightly different in terms of looks and how they work; and it comes bundled with a selection of productivity, video and graphical apps. However, from the user's perspective, there's a lot more behind this rather exceptional Linux distro.

For many, Linux Mint is the last bastion of non-commercialised Linux. An environment whereby they can still enjoy the pleasures of the desktop, without having to follow the trend of living in a tablet driven world. For others, Linux Mint has become the very best example of what a Linux desktop should be: fast, easy, pleasing to the eye, useful and productive. Others still see Linux Mint as the ideal desktop for Windows refugees or those who are trying out Linux for the first time and want an operating system that essentially works 'out of the box' and that plays any number of media files from a variety of sources. Whatever the reason, we can be sure that Linux Mint has evolved into something more than just another Linux distribution and that its popularity has fuelled its own style and usefulness.

To quote the Linux Mint ethos, the reasons for this distro's success can be pinned down to:

- It works out of the box, with full multimedia support and is extremely easy to use.
- It's free to obtain and open source.
- It's community-driven. Users are encouraged to send feedback to the project so that their ideas can be used to improve Linux Mint.
- Based on Debian and Ubuntu, it provides about 30,000 packages and one of the best software managers.
- It's safe and reliable. Thanks to a conservative approach to software updates, a unique Update Manager and the robustness of its Linux architecture, Linux Mint requires very little maintenance; there's no regressions, no antivirus, no anti-spyware etc.

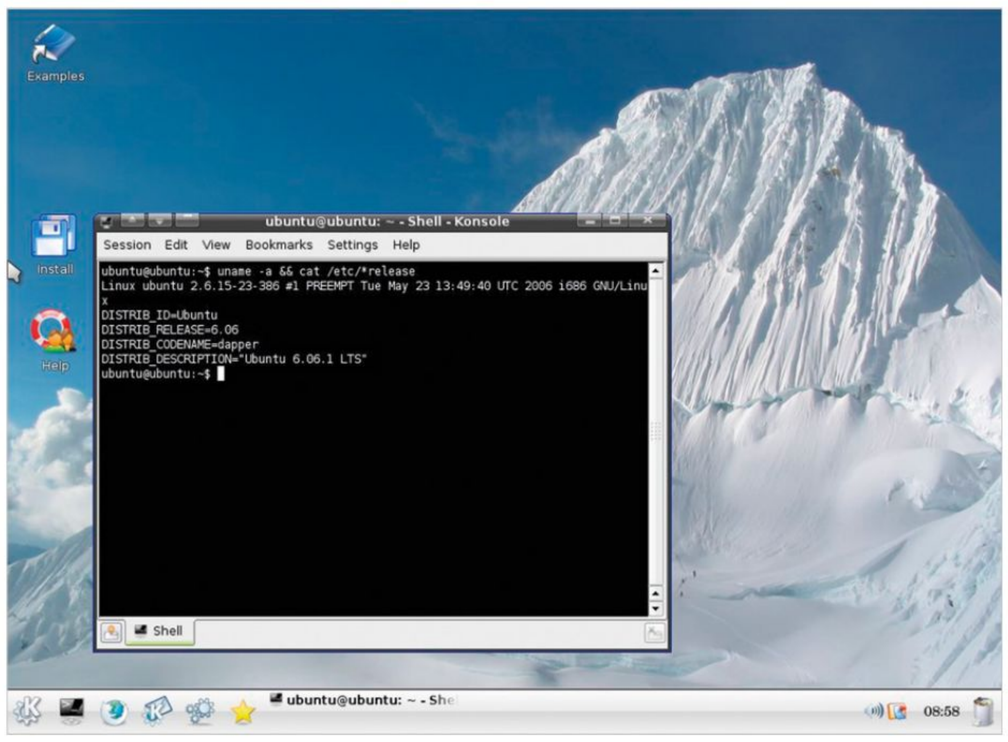
History of Linux Mint

Although quite young in the world of Linux, Linux Mint has an impressive history. By reviewing it, you can see how the distro has evolved over time and how it's continually improving itself thanks to the contributions from the community.

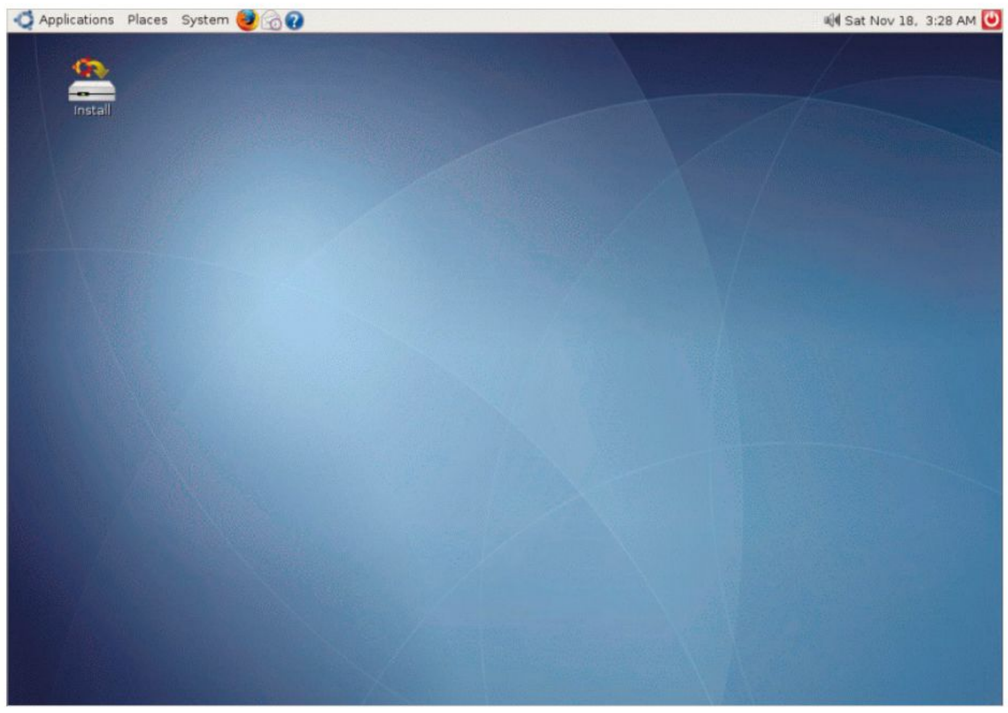
A TOUCH OF MINT

Before we begin to get to grips with Linux Mint, it's worth spending a few moments looking over how this distro started off and how it's changed over its eleven year history.

2006 Born in 2006, Linux Mint is the brainchild of Clement Lefebvre, a French developer who at the time was writing reviews and tutorials for various Linux sites. After a time, he began to get a flavour for what the community wanted out of a distro and as a result, Linux Mint 1.0 "Ada" was released in August of 2006.



2006 Based on Kubuntu Dapper, Linux Mint 1.0 "Ada", wasn't the most stable distro of the time. However, mere months later, in November 2006, Clem had finished development of Linux Mint 2.0, codenamed "Barbara". 2.0 was based on Ubuntu 6.10 Edgy Eft, was more stable and offered the user many improvements over Canonical's Ubuntu distributions.



2007 From 2006 to 2007 Linux Mint 2.1 and 2.2 were released, building on the growing user base and continually improving. One of Mint's endearing factors was that it came shipped with a full set of multimedia codecs that greatly improved its reputation. In 2007 Linux Mint 3.0 "Cassandra" was released, the first version to display the Mint logo.

2010 Fast forward a few years, through versions 3.1, 4, 5 and 6 and we come to Mint 8 "Helena". Linux Mint had already attracted many former Windows users, primarily due to the launch of Windows Vista a few years earlier. Although Windows 7 was a vast improvement over its predecessor, the Windows mutineers were already finding Mint a better choice.

2011 Linux Mint 12 "Lisa" was a significant release, as it was the first version to sport the Desktop Environment MATE. MATE, pronounced ma-tay and named after the South American beverage Maté, is a fork from the popular GNOME 2 desktop that became popular due to controversy over GNOME 3's new design and operation.

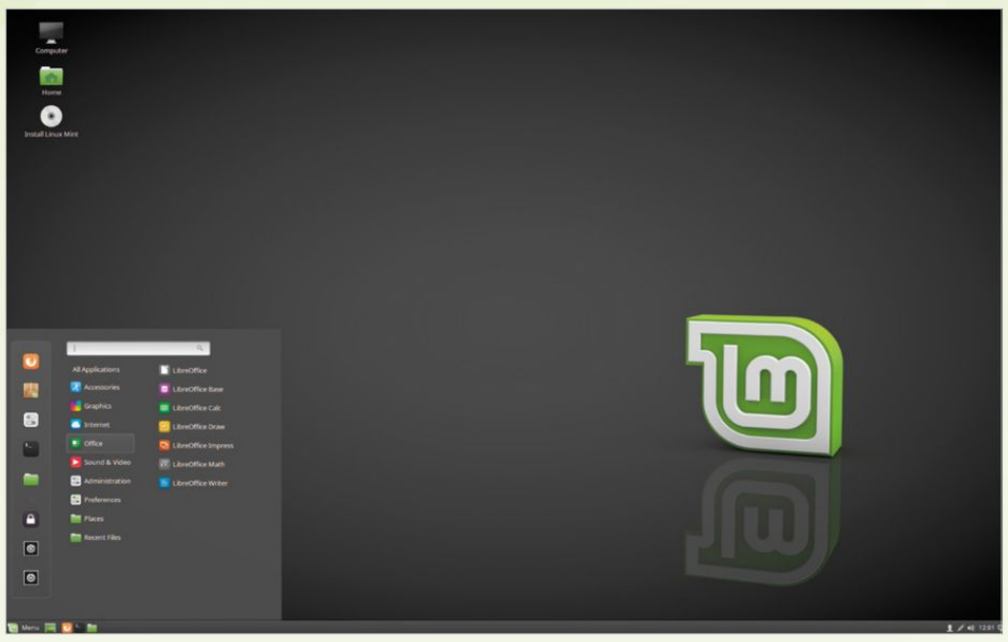
2012 Hot on the heels of Mint 12 came Mint 13 "Maya", an LTS (Long Term Support) version that's still supported to April 2017. Maya was a significant release due to the launch of the Cinnamon Desktop Environment. Although MATE was now the default DE, Cinnamon was developed specifically for and by, Linux Mint.

2013 Linux Mint 15 "Olivia" arrived in 2013, based on Ubuntu 13.04 and sporting a choice of Desktop Environments. Cinnamon and MATE were the defaults, MATE designed for older systems, while Cinnamon for more powerful, modern computers. KDE and Xfce were also available, covering a wealth of user preferences.

2013 Still in 2013, toward the end of the year, Linux Mint 16 "Petra" was released, built on Ubuntu 13.10. Petra was considered by some reviewers at the time as the perfect example of a Linux distro. The blend of Desktop Environments, stability, features and extras all combined to form a solid and dependable OS.

2014 Linux Mint 17 "Quiana" was released in May 2014. An LTS version, with support to April 2019 and built on Ubuntu 14.04. Version 17 saw several releases over the next couple of years, with Mint 17.1 "Rebecca" and 17.2 "Rafaela" in 2015 and 17.3 "Rosa" in 2016. Incidentally, Ars Technica described 17.3 as "…the best Linux desktop distro yet".

2017 Towards the end of 2016 Linux Mint 18 "Sarah" was released, an LTS version with support to April 2021 and built from the Ubuntu 16.04 base. Following on from Sarah, which brings us up to date, we have Linux Mint 18.1 "Serena", another excellent version and the one we'll be working on for the rest of this book.



What Makes Mint Different?

There are countless distributions of Linux available, catering for a vast range of different user types, so why use Linux Mint over another distro? The competition for your attention is quite fierce when it comes to Linux but thankfully Mint has plenty of value worth considering.

FAVOURING MINT

Ubuntu, for all its Linux for Human Beings ethos, decided some time ago to opt for a totally, and radical at the time, Desktop Environment. Of course, we are referring to the much maligned, Unity. It's quite remarkable really, just how much animosity can be generated toward the visual interpretation of a few lines of code. In a community that tolerates almost any eccentricity, Unity achieved such notoriety throughout the Linux population and was hated as much as any offering from Microsoft. The other versions from and related to Ubuntu, Kubuntu, Xubuntu and so on, have kept their theme, and as a result have managed to retain their fan base. However, it was the core Ubuntu direction and its alleged flagrant disregard for heeding the views and opinions of those using the software that forced a number of stalwarts to jump ship.

Many of the refugees of Ubuntu found solace in the form of Linux Mint, which at the time was still operating with a classic GNOME 2 desktop environment; but the world was changing and the GNOME development team were taking things in one direction, whilst Ubuntu were taking its in

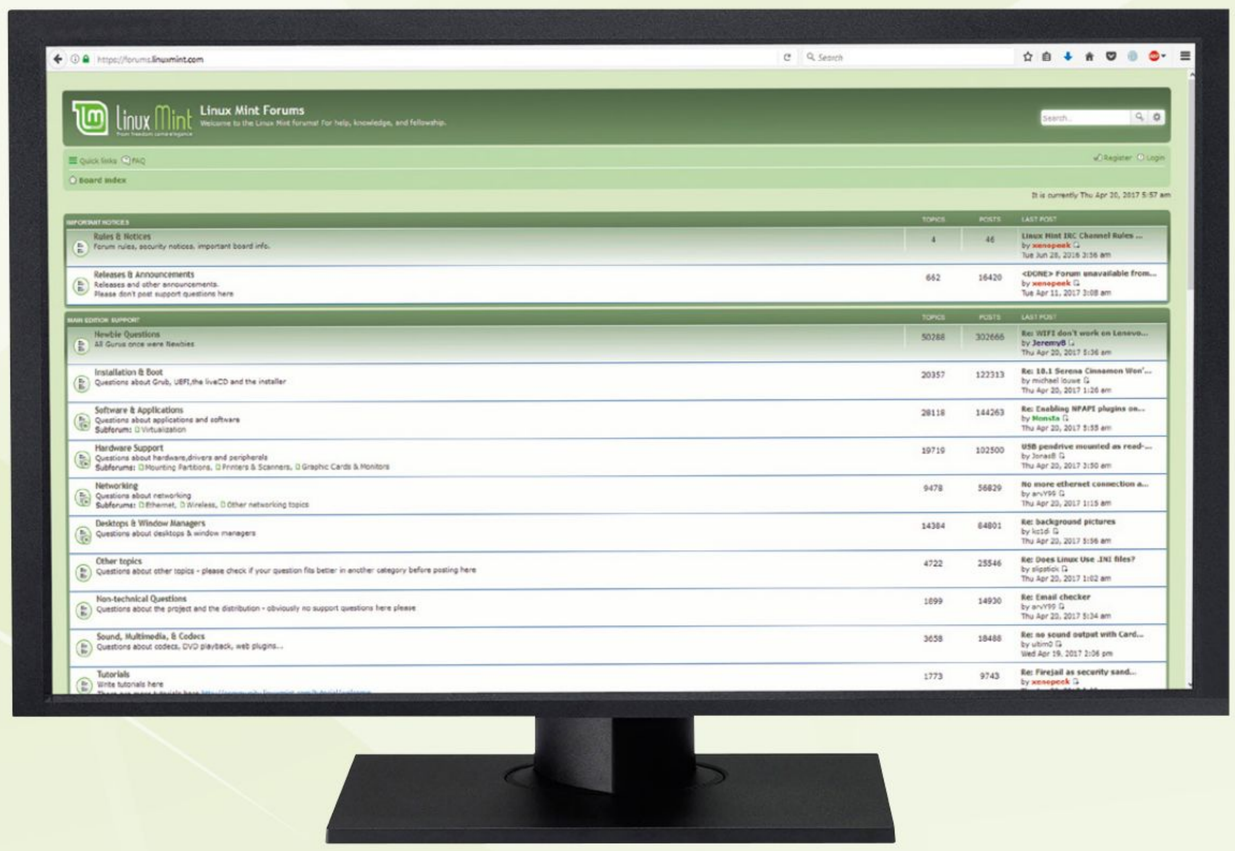
another. Mint, finding itself between a rock and hard place, were loath to adopt either the true form of the newly released Gnome 3, an environment that caused just as much controversy as Unity had, or the Ubuntu implemented Unity. Instead the team employed an eclectic mix of desktops, a learned choice of environments for the user to opt for during installation. The Mint team were listening to the views and comments of those in the community and as a result they could offer the user a compromise.

Looking at the previous releases of Linux Mint, from Linux Mint 12 "Lisa", based on Ubuntu Oneiric; to Mint 13 "Maya", based on the Precise Pangolin, we see a Linux distribution that offers the advanced and casual user alike an experience that retains the classic look and feel of the desktop; without the commercialisation or look-alike branding that appears to have become the norm these days. In particular, we got to enjoy the pleasures of MATE and Cinnamon – considered as the true Linux users' desktop environments.

However, it's not just the choice of Desktop Environment that makes Mint different. The layout of the Mint Menu for example, provides easy and logical access to the installed apps and administration of the system. It's intuitive and for those who want a modern approach, it also includes a search function.

The Mint developers have also included some specialised tools: Mint Install, Mint Update, Mint Backup and Mint Upload. All of these are designed to make tasks easier and create a better user experience.

Mint also includes media codecs out of the box, so you don't need to install them once the operating system is set up. You can also find Java runtime and Flash Player installed by default, along with productivity apps, media players such as VLC and even Gimp.

Overall though, it's the Linux Mint community that makes this such a stand out and different distro. Within the Mint forums you can find a helpful and dedicated set of users, from all walks of life and at differing levels of skill and knowledge, ready and willing to help a new user. Sign up at www.forums.linuxmint.com, introduce yourself and get involved.

It's these differences that make Linux Mint a great choice of Linux distro for beginners and advanced users too.