

Containers

Linux Kernel and Docker

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What follows is heavily based on specific features of the Linux kernel.
Compatibility with different platforms cannot be guaranteed.

Roadmap

- 1 Containers
- 2 Docker
- 3 Docker Compose

Roadmap

1 Containers

2 Docker

3 Docker Compose

Why Containers?

Example: Packaging Applications

Suppose you are ready to distribute your new application:

- you need to be sure that it is compatible with all the **platforms** you chose to support;
- you need to figure out a way to deal with **dependencies**;
- you want to publish some kind of self-contained, easily-identifiable **package**.

Why Containers?

Example: Isolating Applications

Suppose you are deploying applications on a server:

- you want to define **resource quotas** and **permissions** for each;
- you want to be sure that each module has what it needs to operate, but **nothing more**;
- you want to **isolate** each module for security reasons, in case something goes wrong.

Why Containers?

Example: Replicating Environments

Suppose you are developing applications for a specific system (maybe with a different architecture):

- you want to have a **local copy** of such system without carrying one with you;
- you want to have all **libraries** and **dependencies** installed without tainting your own system;
- you would like to **deploy** the entire installation with just a few commands, without running any script but simply copying data.

Why Containers?

A possible solution to many of the previous situations could be a set of **virtual machines**.

However, virtual machines are **slow**, hypervisors take up **system resources** and guest kernels must always be **tweaked**.

In each of the above scenarios something simpler would be enough, especially since **the OS is not involved**, only applications are.

This is what a **container** is.



Figure 1: FreeBSD jail logo

Containers in the Linux kernel

Support for containers was added to the Linux kernel with a set of **features** starting from kernel 2.6 (2003), mainly:

- **control groups** (cgroups): defining different resource usage policies for groups of processes;
- **namespaces**: isolating processes and users in different "realms", both hardware (e.g. network stack) and software (e.g. PIDs);
- **capabilities**: defining what a process can do, with both hardware and software resources.

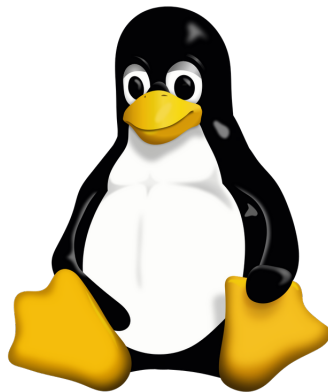


Figure 2: Tux

Containers in the Linux kernel

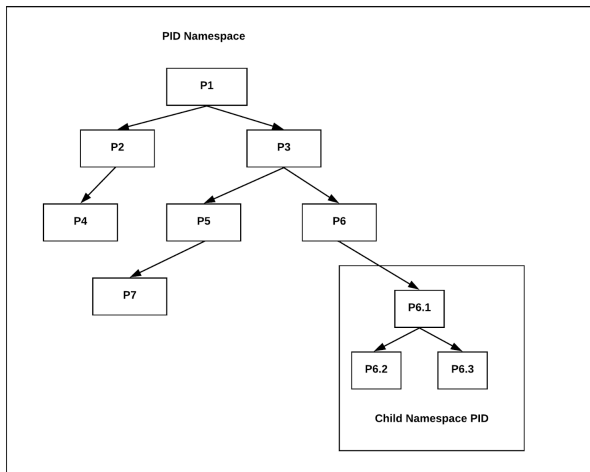


Figure 3: Nested PID namespaces

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Docker is the currently de-facto standard for building, managing and distributing **multiplatform** containers.

It is an engine (i.e. a collection of **daemons**) that automates the management of the kernel subsystems in order to set up, store and run containers.

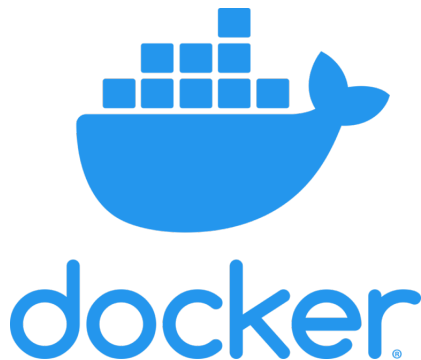


Figure 4: Docker logo

Docker Engine

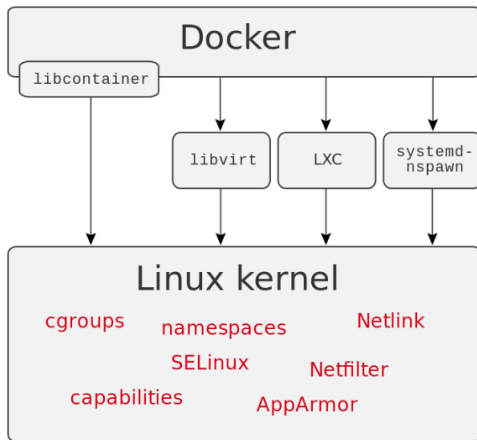


Figure 5: Docker Engine scheme

Containers in Robotics

Containers can be of help in some classic scenarios:

- **deploying** applications or whole control architectures, solving issues like **dependencies** and **configurations**;
- configuring and distributing **development environments**;
- expanding the capabilities of **(partially) closed-source** hardware solutions (e.g. Nvidia Jetson...).

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