

The Official Ubuntu Book

a review by Al Brown

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*authors: Benjamin Mako Hill and Jono Bacon, Corey Burger, Jonathan Jesse, Ivan Krstić
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This book does a reasonably good job of covering the very broad topic of Ubuntu Linux. Everything from the philosophy of Ubuntu, through installation, configuration and applications, to becoming part of the Ubuntu community is covered in this book. The included DVD makes this a nice package for someone wanting to check out Ubuntu Linux.

The book has a very friendly and supportive tone to it. And a good effort is made to provide either an explanation of how to do something or to direct the reader to a source of information about the subject. The only area which stood out as a bit of a problem was the lack of any explanation of libdvdcss for viewing commercial dvds. This is not so much a fault of the book as it is of Ubuntu itself, which tries to be both the simple, complete system for everyone to use for everything, but also tries to insist on being completely free of non-free software and thereby limits system capability in areas such as dvd playback.

There are a few areas where the proofreaders could have done a better job, such as in the section about shutting down your system at the bottom of p.64. The first sentence makes no sense as written, but I expect that most people will not be tripped up by this. There are also a number of areas that tend to be rather redundant. Sometimes consecutive paragraphs will repeat the same idea, other times a topic will be repeated in another section of the book. This may be a result of the large number of authors of this book.

This book covers not only the different flavors of Ubuntu; Ubuntu, Kubuntu, Xubuntu, etc., but also covers the various aspects of desktop and server versions of Ubuntu. It is not particularly deep in any given area, but does provide sufficient insight into many important topics. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone with an interest in Ubuntu specifically or Linux in general.