

Easy Linux tips project

Since 2009 this website is a complete quick guide for Linux, both for beginners and for advanced users!



Linux Mint and Ubuntu:
Linux at its easiest.

G+1

10

Most popular

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10 things to do first in Linux Mint 17.3 Mate

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Congratulations, you have installed a brand new Linux Mint 17.3 Rosa, with the Mate desktop! What's best for you to do, first of all?

I've made a list of the things to do, which I've divided into three categories:

- 10 absolutely essential ones (part 1);
- the recommended ones (not essential, part 2);
- the maybe useful (part 3).

It's quite a list, but it'll give you a polished, nearly maintenance-free operating system that you'll be able to enjoy for years to come! Plus it's also a crash course in the use of Linux Mint.

Note: you'll find only relatively safe tips and tweaks here, because I think that the stability and reliability of your operating

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Part 2

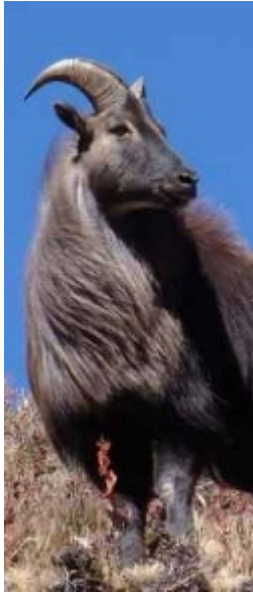
SEVEN RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (NOT ESSENTIAL):

Remove Mono and Orca

2.1. By default, Mono is installed. This package is a security risk, because it offers Windows applications a limited opportunity to run in Linux. Unfortunately also malicious Windows software, like viruses and such.

It's only a limited risk, but a risk nevertheless. So it's better to remove Mono. You can achieve that as follows:

This is the mountain goat (tahr), after which Ubuntu 14.04 Trusty Tahr has been named....



Ubuntu 14.04 is a lot better than Ubuntu 15.10: [read here why](#).
For your own free copy, [click here!](#)

A star of the Ubuntu family: Xubuntu!



In for a pleasant surprise? Experience the elegant simplicity of [Xubuntu!](#)

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138

days until
Ubuntu 16.04 LTS

system should never be endangered. This website is serious about Linux Mint, so my approach is conservative.

I try to mention it whenever some risk is unavoidable, so that you can always make a balanced decision.

Note: this web page is only meant for Linux Mint 17.3 with the Mate desktop environment; the [page for the Cinnamon desktop is here](#) and the [page for the Xfce desktop is here](#).

Contents

1 TEN ESSENTIAL ACTIONS:

- 1.1 Apply all available updates
- 1.2 Better settings for the terminal, Update Manager and the mechanism for installing software
 - 1.2.1 Improve a terminal setting
 - 1.2.2 Consider improving the settings of Update Manager
 - 1.2.3 Improve the settings of the mechanism for installing software
- 1.3 Install missing drivers
 - 1.3.1 Preferred order for the non-free video drivers
- 1.4 Decrease the swap use (important)
- 1.5 Solve 16 known bugs
- 1.6 Avoid 10 fatal mistakes!
- 1.7 Turn on the firewall
- 1.8 Optimize your Solid State Drive (SSD)
- 1.9 Install a better Flash Player and some useful tools for system management
- 1.10 Improve multimedia support

2 SEVEN RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (NOT ESSENTIAL):

- 2.1 Remove Mono and Orca

Menu - Terminal

Type (use copy/paste to transport this magical incantation to the terminal):

```
sudo apt-get remove
mono-runtime-common
```

Press Enter. When prompted, type your password. Your password will remain entirely invisible, not even dots will show, this is normal.

Press Enter again.

This removal will also delete two Mono based applications, namely media player Banshee and notepad Tomboy. With the following terminal command you can install fine alternatives for them, that don't depend on Mono:

```
sudo apt-get install gnome-
mplayer xpad
```

Press Enter.

Furthermore, Linux Mint 17.3 Rosa contains screen reader Orca by default. Nifty, when you're visually handicapped. But useless when you're not. And it's rather disconcerting when, after pressing the wrong key combination, your computer suddenly starts addressing you with a heavy bass voice....

Remove it like this:

```
sudo apt-get remove gnome-orca
```

Release schedule of Ubuntu 16.04 Xenial Xerus

<https://wiki.ubuntu.com/XenialXerus/ReleaseSchedule>

A fine replacement for Windows XP



Linux Mint 13 Xfce is a fine replacement for Windows XP! [Read here why.](#)

2.2 Check whether the screen saver is configured correctly

2.3 Optimize Firefox

2.4 Tweak Libre Office

2.5 Disable hibernation (suspend-to-disk)

2.5.1 How to undo

2.6 Install an extra web browser

2.7 Speed up your Mate

3 NINE NEUTRAL TWEAKS (MAYBE USEFUL):

3.1 Add a weather report to the panel

3.2 Change the wallpaper of Mint

3.3 Access your network disk (NAS) with Gigolo

3.4 Migrate your e-mail from Outlook (Express) in Windows, to Linux Mint

3.5 Install a better DVD burning application

3.6 Install some simple games

3.7 Turn NumLock on automatically

3.8 Make the Grub boot menu pretty

3.9 Make available updates more prominent

4 Want more tips?

5 Get help

Press Enter.

Check whether the screen saver is configured correctly

2.2. The screen saver is enabled by default. But there's some resource hogging stuff among the screensavers, that may freeze your computer.

Set the screensaver therefore at "blank screen":

Menu - Preferences - Screensaver: choose **Blank screen**.

Optimize Firefox

2.3. With a couple of changes in the settings, you can improve the performance of Firefox in Linux Mint. [These tweaks](#) will make this fine web browser leaner and cleaner.

Tweak Libre Office

2.4. The default office suite is the fine Libre Office. In order to improve it, you can [tweak the settings of Libre Office](#).

Disable hibernation (suspend-to-disk)

2.5. Unfortunately, "hibernate" (suspend-to-disk) is enabled by default in Linux Mint. Which is

Tip: you can download [a checklist here](#), which you can print on paper. Then you can strike the items that you've done.

Are you unsure what Linux Mint version you have? The version number on the default wallpaper should give you an indication, but you can also check that as follows:

*Launch a terminal window:
Menu - Terminal*

Type (use copy/paste in order to avoid typing errors):

[*lsb_release -a*](#)

Press Enter.

Part 1

TEN ESSENTIAL ACTIONS:

Apply all available updates

1.1. First the updates, then the rest...

Click on Menu - Administration - Update Manager

Let Update Manager check for available updates and apply them all.

Note: during the updates you might be asked whether you want to replace a configuration file. Don't replace it: although replacing is generally safe, it's usually unnecessary.

Afterwards reboot your computer (not always necessary after updates, but in this case, do it just to make sure).

Better settings for the terminal, Update Manager and the mechanism for installing software

1.2. The terminal (terminal window), Update Manager and

rather surprising, because in Ubuntu it's disabled by default...

This aggressive sleep mode often leads to problems, because most manufacturers of BIOS and UEFI don't stick to the standards for implementing power saving. So your computer may experience malfunctions after waking up, or even enter a coma from which it can't awake at all.

It's therefore best to disable hibernation.

Note: the sleep mode "suspend" (suspend-to-ram) is much less aggressive and therefore far less likely to cause problems.

You can disable hibernation (suspend-to-disk) like this:

a. Menu - Terminal

b. Copy the following command line and paste it into the terminal, in order to avoid typing errors (this is one line):

```
sudo mv -v /etc/polkit-1/localauthority/50-local.d/com.ubuntu.enable-hibernate.pkla /
```

Press Enter and submit your password. Please note that the password will remain invisible, not even asterisks will show, which is normal.

With that, you've moved the settings file that enables hibernation, to the main directory

the mechanism for installing software are three very important tools. That's why it's important that their settings are optimal. You can achieve that as follows:

Improve a terminal setting

1.2.1. You're probably going to use the terminal from time to time, because it's the mighty "Swiss Army knife" of Linux. But the default appearance of the terminal window can be made more practical. You can do that like this:

The terminal window is **semi-transparent**. Beautiful, but impractical. Improve it as follows:

Menu bar of the terminal: Edit - Profile Preferences (or: right-click with the mouse in the black space of the terminal - Profiles - Profile Preferences).

Tab Background: select **Solid color**.

Consider improving the settings of Update Manager

1.2.2. The default settings of Update Manager are very cautious; that's a characteristic of Linux Mint. Stability first and foremost.

In itself that's good, although Ubuntu (on which Mint is built)

/ (root). Thus rendering it ineffective. The new location is a safe storage, from which you can retrieve it again, should you ever wish to restore hibernation.

c. Reboot your computer. Hibernation should now no longer be one of the options in the shutdown menu.

(with thanks to riffbiker from the Linux Mint forum)

d. On a laptop, it's advisable to check the power manager settings: you'll have to select alternatives for hibernation now, for actions like closing the lid...

e. The troublesome hibernation shouldn't be enabled by default at all... So please help to improve Linux Mint, by supporting this idea of mine: <http://community.linuxmint.com/idea/view/5482>

How to undo

2.5.1. Do you want hibernation back? The above hack is easily reversible. Undoing it is very simple:

a. Menu - Terminal

b. Copy/paste the following line into the terminal (it's one line):

```
sudo mv -v /com.ubuntu.enable-
hibernate.pkla /etc/polkit-
1/localauthority/50-local.d
```

is less cautious with updates. And Ubuntu is also stable and reliable.

It might be worthwhile to make Mints Update Manager a little less cautious: that gives you the advantage of extra bug fixes and extra security updates.

Note: if you're an absolute beginner with Linux, then maybe you'd rather change nothing in Update Manager. That's OK, too. Without any changes you still have a secure system. Much more secure than Windows, for example....

It's therefore not strictly necessary to change things. But it is important that you understand these aspects of Update Manager. That's why this is listed among the essential things to do.

If you don't want to change the settings of Update Manager (yet), you can simply skip this.

You can change the settings of Update Manager [like this](#) (*Click*).

Improve the settings of the mechanism for installing software

1.2.3. Mint deviates from the Ubuntu way, where the so-called "recommended"

Press Enter and submit your password. Please note that the password will remain invisible, not even asterisks will show, which is normal.

Reboot your computer. The hibernate option should be back now.

Install an extra web browser

2.6. It's useful to have an extra web browser available. Firefox is a fine application, but now and then (especially when you've installed too many extensions or add-ons in Firefox), it doesn't function entirely well.

An excellent alternative to Firefox, is web browser Google Chrome. Unfortunately it's not in the software sources of Linux Mint, but you can download its installer on [the download page of Chrome](#). That web page should automatically recognize that you're running Linux Mint: it should offer you a preselected installer for Debian/Ubuntu, because that's what you need in Mint.

Watch out for mistakes: unfortunately this web page regularly offers you a preselected 32 bit installer when your system is 64 bit! Are you unsure whether your system is 64 bit or 32 bit? You can check it with the terminal command [arch](#) When the output is : [i686](#), then

packages are concerned. When you install software yourself, Ubuntu installs the recommended packages by default, but Mint does not.

This has two important disadvantages: in Mint, the features of the applications that you install yourself, can be needlessly crippled. And some how-to's for Ubuntu, don't work in Mint. All this for the sake of saving some disk space...

You can make things right in the following way:

Launch a terminal window:
Menu - Terminal

Type (use copy/paste):
`sudo mv -v /etc/apt/apt.conf.d /00recommends /`

Press Enter. When prompted, type your password. Your password will remain entirely invisible, not even dots will show, this is normal. Press Enter again.

Hereby you've moved the settings file that prevents "recommended" packages from being installed, to the root folder, which disables it.

Should you ever wish to undo this (but why?) then you can do the following:

`sudo mv -v /00recommends /etc/apt/apt.conf.d`

your system is 32 bit. When the output is [x86_64](#), then your system is 64 bit.

Double-click the installer, which has the extension .deb, as if it were a .exe installer in Windows. Then it'll install itself automatically. Furthermore, it'll add the software source for Chrome to your software sources list, so that Update Manager will automatically offer you updates for Google Chrome as soon as they become available.

Note: most plug-ins that you've installed for Firefox (not the add-ons and extensions, but things like Java) work automatically in Chrome as well. No need for further action for that. Not even for Adobe Flash Player, because Chrome already contains it by default.

You can find tips and tweaks for Chrome [here](#).

Speed up your Mate

2.7. You can improve graphical performance of your Linux Mint Mate like this:

Menu button - Control Center - Windows

Deselect: [Enable software compositing manager](#)

Furthermore, you can probably speed up your Linux Mint noticeably, by applying [these safe speed tweaks](#).

Install missing drivers

1.3. Installing drivers is usually not necessary, because they are already present in the Linux kernel. Exceptions are the proprietary restricted drivers for (among others) Nvidia and AMD/ATI graphics cards.

a. Install your printer and scanner [in this way \(*Click*\)](#).

b. For optimal performance of your Nvidia or AMD/ATI video card, or your Broadcom wireless chipset, you'll want to install the closed source restricted driver (the proprietary driver). Like this:

Menu - Administration - Driver Manager

When available for your system, this tool will present you with one or more installable non-free drivers. Select them.

The required drivers are then automatically downloaded from the internet, from the software repositories of Mint, and (also automatically) installed. Afterwards you'll have to do a full reboot of your computer.

Note: sometimes you're being offered several versions of the restricted driver for your video card. The order of preference is as follows:

Part 3

NINE NEUTRAL TWEAKS (MAYBE USEFUL):

Add a weather report to the panel

3.1. Always nice: a weather report in the panel.

Add it like this:

Right-click mouse on an empty space on the panel - Add to Panel... - click Weather Report - click Add

Click Close.

Then: right-click mouse on 0°F - Preferences - tab Location: click your country - from the list, pick the town nearest to your own. Alternatively, you might try a search on town name, but that might be less successful.

Click close.

Change the wallpaper of Mint

3.2. Mint looks nice out of the box, but maybe you want to change the wallpaper anyway....

You can change your wallpaper in almost the same way as in Windows, but there's one important difference.

So: select a picture that you want

Preferred order for the non-free video drivers

1.3.1. The preferred order for the non-free restricted drivers for your video card, is this:

NVIDIA:

1. nvidia-(from highest number to lowest number)
2. nvidia-(from highest number to lowest number)-updates
3. nvidia-experimental

AMD/ATI:

1. fglrx
2. fglrx-updates

Only choose from the versions that you're being offered, because only those support your video card! Start with the preferred number one, and only work your way down when it doesn't perform well.

Do you have a brand-new graphics card from Nvidia or AMD/ATI? Then it might be too new for the version of the proprietary restricted driver in the software repositories of Mint. In that case you won't be offered any proprietary driver by Driver Manager.

If this happens, then you can look for [another solution for your Nvidia card on this page](#). For an AMD/ATI card, it's better to stick with the default open source driver for the time being and wait until the next Mint release, which will probably provide a newer proprietary

for wallpaper. Double-click the picture file.

Now the picture is being shown in the image viewer Eye of Mate (formerly Eye of Gnome). Then, in the panel of that application: click Image - Set as Desktop background. You're done.

However, the important difference with Windows is this: Mint only creates a *shortcut* to the picture that you've set as wallpaper. When you move or delete the picture afterwards, then your wallpaper disappears also!

So don't throw away the picture, but put it permanently in your home folder. For example in the folder Images. And only then set it as wallpaper.

Access your network disk (NAS) with Gigolo

3.3. You can [use Gigolo to access your network disk \(NAS\)](#).

Migrate your e-mail from Outlook (Express) in Windows, to Linux Mint

3.4. It's easy to migrate your e-mails and e-mail settings from Outlook (Express) in Windows, to Thunderbird in Linux Mint Mate. Simply [apply this how-to](#).

Install a better DVD burning

driver.

Decrease the swap use (important)

1.4. This is especially noticeable on computers with relatively low RAM memory (1 GB or less): they tend to be far too slow in Linux Mint, and Linux Mint accesses the hard disk too much. Luckily, this can be helped.

On the hard disk there's a separate partition for virtual memory, called the swap. When Mint uses the swap too much, the computer slows down a lot.

Mint's inclination to use the swap, is determined by a setting. The lower the setting number, the longer it takes before Mint starts using the swap. On a scale of 0-100, the default setting is 60. Which is much too high for normal desktop use, and only fit for servers.

A detailed explanation can be found [here](#) (link dead? Then download [this pdf file](#) with the same content).

Now the how-to:

a. Check your current swappiness setting:

Menu - Terminal
Type (use copy/paste to avoid errors):

application

3.5. The best DVD burning application is currently Xfburn, because the default burning app Brasero is rather unreliable and regularly spoils your DVD's. Xfburn on the other hand, is reliable, simple and easy. Install it like this:

Menu - Terminal

Type (use copy/paste to transport this magical incantation to the terminal):

`sudo apt-get install xfburn`

Press Enter. When prompted, type your password. Your password will remain entirely invisible, not even dots will show, this is normal.

Press Enter again.

Now you can launch Xfburn like this:

Menu button - Sound & Video - Xfburn

Install some simple games

3.6. Always fun: install some simple games.

Menu - Terminal

Copy/paste the following terminal command:

`sudo apt-get install aisleriot
gnome-cards-data gnome
quadrapassel gnome-sudoku`

`cat /proc/sys/vm/swappiness`

Press Enter.

The result will probably be 60.

b. Make sure that you have installed the applications `gksu` and `leafpad`:

Menu - Terminal

Type (use copy/paste to transport this magical incantation to the terminal):
`sudo apt-get install gksu leafpad`

Press Enter. When prompted, type your password. Your password will remain entirely invisible, not even dots will show, this is normal. Press Enter again.

c. To change the swappiness into a more sensible setting, type in the terminal (use copy/paste):
`gksudo leafpad /etc/sysctl.conf`

Press Enter.

Scroll to the bottom of the text file and add your swappiness parameter to override the default. Copy/paste the following blue lines:
`# Decrease swap usage to a more reasonable level
vm.swappiness=10`

d. Save and close the text file. Then reboot your computer.

Press Enter. Type your password when prompted; your password will remain entirely invisible, not even dots will show, this is normal.

After the installation you can find them like this: Menu - Games.

Turn NumLock on automatically

3.7. **Note:** this instruction is only meant for desktops and laptops that have a separate numeric keypad, as it's definitely not desirable to have the NumLock on by default on a laptop that has no such separate keypad.

In some cases it's useful for NumLock to be switched on automatically when you start Linux Mint. You can achieve that as follows:

a. Menu - Terminal
Copy/paste the following command into the terminal:

`sudo apt-get install numlockx`

Reboot your computer. The numeric keypad should turn on automatically after you log into your user account.

Note: it's possible that during login, Mint will turn NumLock off again (sigh). If that happens, you can counteract that irritating behaviour as follows:

e. After the reboot, check the new swappiness value:

Menu - Terminal

Type (use copy/paste):

[cat /proc/sys/vm/swappiness](#)

Press Enter.

Now it should be [10](#).

Note: your machine might benefit from an even bigger decrease in swappiness. A useful rule of thumb might be this:

1 GB RAM or more: set swappiness to 10

Less than 1 GB RAM: set swappiness to 5

Solve 16 known bugs

1.5. If you have a problem: look at the [solutions for 16 bugs](#).

Don't skip this! There's a 90 % chance that you'll benefit from at least one of the workarounds presented at that page.....

Written for Ubuntu, but applicable in Mint as well.

Also relevant: [the release notes of Linux Mint 17.3 Mate](#).

Avoid 10 fatal mistakes!

1.6. There are [10 mistakes that you definitely want to avoid](#), for the sake of the health of your system. Written for Ubuntu, but applicable in Mint as well.

Menu - Preferences - Startup Applications

Click Add

Give the new addition the name Numlockx and the command:

[sleep 20 && numlockx on](#)

Click Add.

This will turn NumLock on, 20 seconds after login. This delay is necessary, because you have to make sure it happens **after** Mint has turned NumLock off.

Note: user preference: repeat this in each user account.

Make the Grub boot menu pretty

3.8. The Grub menu, from which you choose what operating system to boot on a dual boot computer, is practical but ugly.

Luckily, it's easy to make it prettier: [*Click*](#).

Make available updates more prominent

3.9. Some people have difficulty noticing the blue icon in the system tray, that signifies that new updates are available.... In that case you can make available updates more prominent like this:

First download [this shell script](#).

Turn on the firewall

1.7. The firewall is disabled by default, but usually it's better to turn it on. Especially on mobile devices like laptops, which sometimes connect to other networks than your own.

The firewall is called Uncomplicated Firewall (ufw), and can be operated from the terminal.

Menu - Terminal

Type (use copy/paste):
`sudo ufw enable`

Press Enter. Type your password when prompted; this will remain entirely invisible, not even asterisks will show, which is normal.

Uncomplicated Firewall (ufw) has a sensible set of default settings (profile), which are fine for the vast majority of home users. So unless you have special wishes: you're done!

You can check the status of the firewall with this command:
`sudo ufw status verbose`

Press Enter.

When enabled, the output should be like this:

```
pjotr@netbook:~$ sudo ufw
status verbose
[sudo] password for pjotr:
Status: active
```

Then move it from the folder Downloads to the folder Documents, for example like this:

Menu - Terminal

Copy/paste the following terminal command:

```
mv -v ~/Downloads
/check_for_updates-2.sh
~/Documents
```

Press Enter.

Then make it executable with this terminal command:

```
chmod 755 ~/Documents
/check_for_updates-2.sh
```

Press Enter.

Then: Menu button - Preferences - Startup Applications

Click [Add](#)

Name: [Update check](#)

Command: press the Browse button near that entry field and click your way through to [check_for_updates-2.sh](#) in your Documents folder.

Click [Add](#)

From now on you should be presented with a reminder to update, 99 seconds after you log in. Clicking the reminder launches Update Manager. You can't overlook it: it's "in your face".

Logging: on (low)
**Default: *deny (incoming)*,
allow (outgoing)**
New profiles: skip
pjotr@netbook:~\$

I've printed the most important message in red: this output basically means that all incoming is denied and all outgoing is allowed.

There are sensible exceptions in the default settings: for example, with the default profile the use of Samba should be no problem. Also downloading torrents (fetch) should be possible; but seeding torrents (serve), might require a temporal disabling of ufw.

It's easy to disable the firewall (should you wish to do so) with this command:
sudo ufw disable

Press Enter.

If you're interested in the full set of rules, see the output of:
sudo ufw show raw
You can also read the rules files in /etc/ufw (the files whose names end with **.rules**).

A further explanation about the firewall and security in general, [can be found here](#).

Optimize your Solid State Drive (SSD)

1.8. Do you have a Solid State

The disadvantage is, that you also get to see it when there are no updates at all. But that's better than overlooking updates that need to be installed....

Want more tips?

4. Do you want more tips and tweaks for Linux Mint? There's [a lot more of them](#) on this website! Like these:

[Security in Linux Mint](#)

[Four popular myths and 11 tips about wireless security \(for wifi\)](#)

[How to clean Linux Mint](#)

[How to create a strong password that's easy to remember \(the answer might surprise you!\)](#)

Get help

4. You can get quick and friendly help on the [official Linux Mint forum](#).

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[Back to the home page](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

Drive (SSD) instead of a conventional hard disk? Then [optimize it for Linux Mint](#).

Install a better Flash Player and some useful tools for system management

1.9. a. By default, Adobe Flash Player is present in your system. Which is fine, because you need that for viewing flash videos. But the source it stems from is often not updated quickly enough, which makes your system vulnerable.

So it's best to replace that source by another one, which does deliver security updates quickly. This is how:

Menu - Terminal

Type (use copy/paste to transport this magical incantation to the terminal):

[sudo apt-get install flashplugin-installer](#)

Press Enter. When prompted, type your password. Your password will remain entirely invisible, not even dots will show, this is normal. Press Enter again.

Note: installing this new package will remove two existing packages, namely [adobe-flashplugin](#) (which is what you want) and [mint-meta-codecs](#) (which is a useless

remnant list file, so safe to remove).

b. For file management with root authority, it's best to use a stand-alone simple file manager that's not embedded in your operating system. Because otherwise you run the risk of messing up the file permissions in your home directory. Such a simple stand-alone file manager is GNOME Commander.

For the same reason it's best to use a simple stand-alone text editor, for editing system-wide configuration files with root authority. Such as Leafpad.

Finally, a very useful tool for sound management is pavucontrol.

Install them all like this:

Menu - Terminal

Type (use copy/paste to transport this magical incantation to the terminal):

```
sudo apt-get install gnome-  
commander libgnomevfs2-extra  
leafpad pavucontrol
```

Press Enter. When prompted, type your password. Your password will remain entirely invisible, not even dots will show, this is normal. Press Enter again.

Improve multimedia support

1.10. The multimedia and font support can use some improvements.

a. Use Software Manager or Synaptic Package Manager for installing some extra fonts.

Menu - Administration - Software Manager

- Query: [microsoft](#)

- Double-click [ttf-mscorefonts-installer](#) for installation and press the Install button.

Funny detail: during the installation of the Microsoft fonts, which you'll definitely want to have, you'll be asked to check a box stating that you accept a license agreement of.... Microsoft.

Note: sometimes it may look like the installation has stalled. This is only seemingly so: simply wait. After a while (several minutes!) the installation will finish neatly.

b. You may want to [install Oracle \(Sun\) Java](#) (if you need it, which is rare nowadays).

(continued in the column on the right)

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