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How To Tether Your Smartphone In Linux

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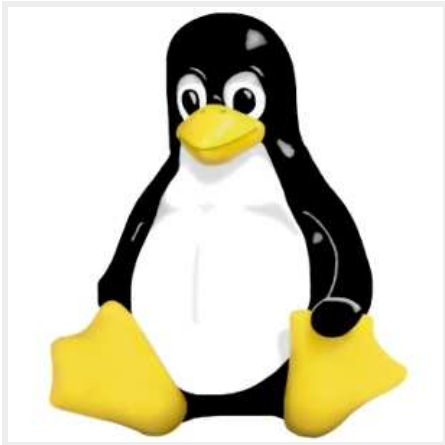
Our smartphones are amazing tools as they receive Internet service almost wherever we travel, unlike most laptops which are limited to whatever WiFi hotspot they can find. While some carriers place limits on the amount of data which you can consume, others have plans which have higher limits which allow tethering, as well as unlimited data.

For those who don't know, tethering is the act of connecting a mobile device to a computer such as a laptop in order to latch onto the mobile device's Internet connection and use it on the computer. Normally I wouldn't recommend trying to tether to a smartphone which doesn't have a data plan which explicitly allows tethering, as carriers can quickly determine whether the data is being used by your smartphone or by another device.

However, if you still want to take your chances, or if you have an appropriate data plan, here are some ways to tether your smartphone to your Linux machine.

A Linux Tether for Android

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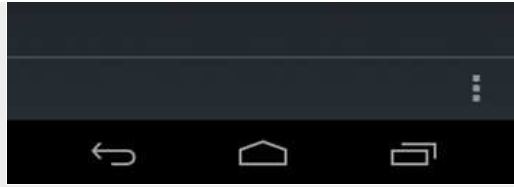
If you have an Android device, tethering is a rather simply affair as both devices are Linux-based. There are three main ways which you can tether your phone — via a USB cable, via a personal hotspot, or via Bluetooth. Please note that most carriers will block these features or have them work improperly if you don't have a data plan which allows tethering, unless you're running an unofficial ROM. If you want to tether via a USB cable, connect the cable to the phone and the Linux machine. Then, go into your Android phone's settings, choose "More" under Wireless & Networks, then Tethering & portable hotspot. Simply choose the USB tethering option, and you're done on your phone! Now, on your Linux system, go into your network tray applet, and you should find a new network option with a name like "auto usb0". Pick it, and your Linux system should connect to your phone via the USB cable. You should now have Internet!

If you wish to use the portable hotspot feature, go into the same menu as for USB tethering, but instead of enabling that option, choose "Set up WiFi hotspot". It's important that you do this and enable encryption so that only authorized users (you and whomever else you share the password with) can get access to your phone's Internet connection. When you're done, go back and then choose to enable Portable WiFi hotspot. This will create a new wireless network which you should be able to find in your Linux system's network tray applet. Select the network, type in the password, and you're set!

Last but not least, you're even able to tether your smartphone to a Linux system via Bluetooth, provided that the phone is capable of doing so. Again, in the same menu, choose the Bluetooth tethering option, and it'll be able to share the Internet connection to any paired computer. This is the least common way to share your Internet connection, but it's still a possible method.

iPhone

If you have an iPhone with a data plan which allows tethering, you can also create a personal hotspot by going into the Settings –> General –> Cellular (Network in older versions of iOS) menu. Just set up your settings accordingly, and then connect to it via your Linux system's network tray

applet.

Tethering your iPhone to a Linux system when it doesn't have a tethering-enabled data plan is an iffy affair and does not always work. Among the four major smartphone types, iPhones are the hardest ones to work with, but you're more than welcome to take a shot at a suggested technique. Before we begin, it's important to have your iPhone jailbroken, or else you cannot tether, period. You'll need to download a program for Linux called itunnel, set it to have executable rights, run it in a terminal, connect your iPhone to your Linux system via USB cable, check the terminal's output for "successfully got device/server waiting for ssh connection", and then open a new terminal and run "`ssh -D someportnumber -p 3023 mobile@127.0.0.1`". You then need to enter in set-up password (the default is "alpine"). Finally, you need to set your browser to use a SOCKS proxy on port 3023. If you're having DNS issues, switch to Firefox, and after typing about:config into the address bar, change network.proxy.socks_remote_dns to true.

BlackBerry

Depending on how old your BlackBerry is, there are a number of options for tethering it to a Linux system. If you're using an older BlackBerry phone, you can use software made especially for Linux called Barry. With this software, you can connect to your BlackBerry and not only tether to it, but also perform certain data synchronization tasks. The best part is, you won't need to install anything extra on the BlackBerry phone!

More modern phones such as the BlackBerry 9930 offer personal hotspot capabilities, which you can find by tapping on Manage Connections, Network and Connections, Mobile Hotspot Connections, and Options. From here you can set up preferences as necessary, where you can then connect to the hotspot via your Linux system's network tray applet. The newer phones such as the BlackBerry Z10 allows tethering via USB or Bluetooth by going to Settings -> Network Connections –> Internet Tethering. In the Connect to drop-down list, choose the connection method, and then turn on Internet Tethering.

Windows Mobile and Windows Phone 7/8

In order to communicate with Windows Mobile phones, you'll need to install SynCE on your Linux system. This is very helpful for common synchronization tasks, but it also allows you to share the mobile phone's Internet connection with your Linux machine. Therefore, before continuing, make sure that the software is installed on your computer. In the Windows Mobile Programs menu, choose the Internet Sharing function and you should be good to go! Windows Phone 8 users won't even need the SynCE software to share their Internet connection. Instead, you can create a personal hotspot via the Internet Sharing function. You can connect to the newly created hotspot network from your Linux machine via the network tray applet.

Conclusion

Hopefully you can be successful at setting up a Linux tether to your smartphone. If you're in luck, you'll have an Android or Windows Mobile phone or it's as simple as starting a personal hotspot to share the Internet with your Linux system. BlackBerry users will have a bit of work to do, while iPhone users may have mixed results. In any case, suggestions are available online and worth a shot to try out.

Have you tried to tether your phone to Linux? What type of smartphone do you have, and how successful were you? Let us know in the comments!

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