Ubuntu Dapper Drake (6.06) Installation

by Ken Baker, LCCS member

Several months ago I installed Ubuntu Breezy on a computer at the A-Frame and was impressed by the easy installation and ease of use of this Debian based Linux distribution. I had planned to write an article covering the installation and basic configuration of Ubuntu for Random Bits but with the release in June of the latest version (Dapper Drake 6.06) I thought it would be better to cover the newest version.

Ubuntu has been the most popular Linux distribution for some time. With support for Windows 98 slated to end on July 11th Ubuntu is being touted as a replacement for all those aging Win98 boxes out there (like mine). With that in mind let's go through the basic install.

This distribution comes as a live CD with an install option that gives you a chance to see if Ubuntu works with your system before installing. You can download it and burn it yourself or you can order from the Ubuntu website for free. I chose to download the ISO and burned it to CD with no problems. After making sure that my BIOS was set to boot off the CD drive I rebooted. Like all live CD's it takes a long time to boot up and runs slowly since it runs entirely from the CD drive. Since live CD's do not install anything to your hard drive you can experiment with Linux without endangering your Windows setup. It detected all my hardware and automatically setup my broadband Internet connection. Dapper Drake uses the Gnome GUI by default which presents a very clean user interface reminiscent of the Mac interface (figure 1). All screenshots are from OSDir.com.
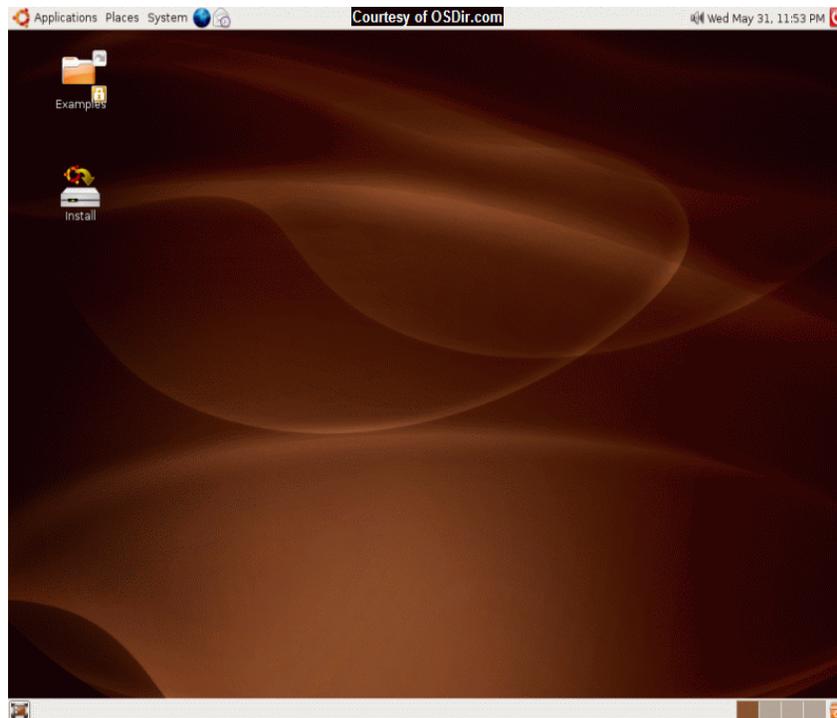
I tend to prefer the somewhat more popular KDE but had no problem using Gnome. After exercising the system successfully, I decided to go ahead and install it to a second hard drive on my home system (PII450, 384 MB RAM). The installation has been streamlined considerably from previous versions. It now consists of just six (6) steps and is started by clicking on the Install icon on the desktop.

Step 1:
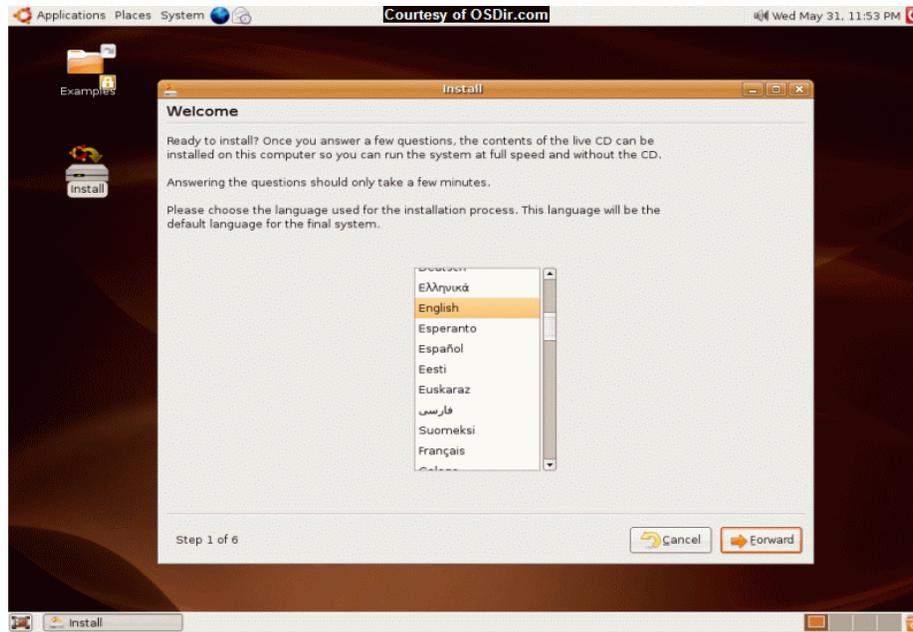
Choice of language is the first step and since English was already the default all I had to do was click the "Forward" button.

Step 2
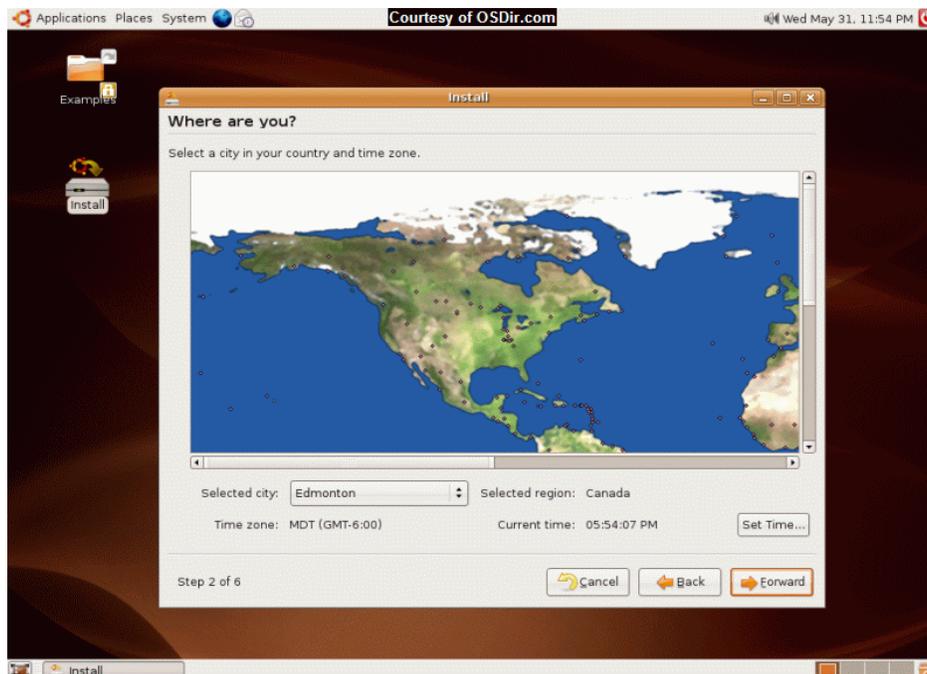
This step sets your time zone. I quickly discovered that you simply choose the city closest to you and don't bother using the "Set Time" button. Then click "Forward".

Step 3
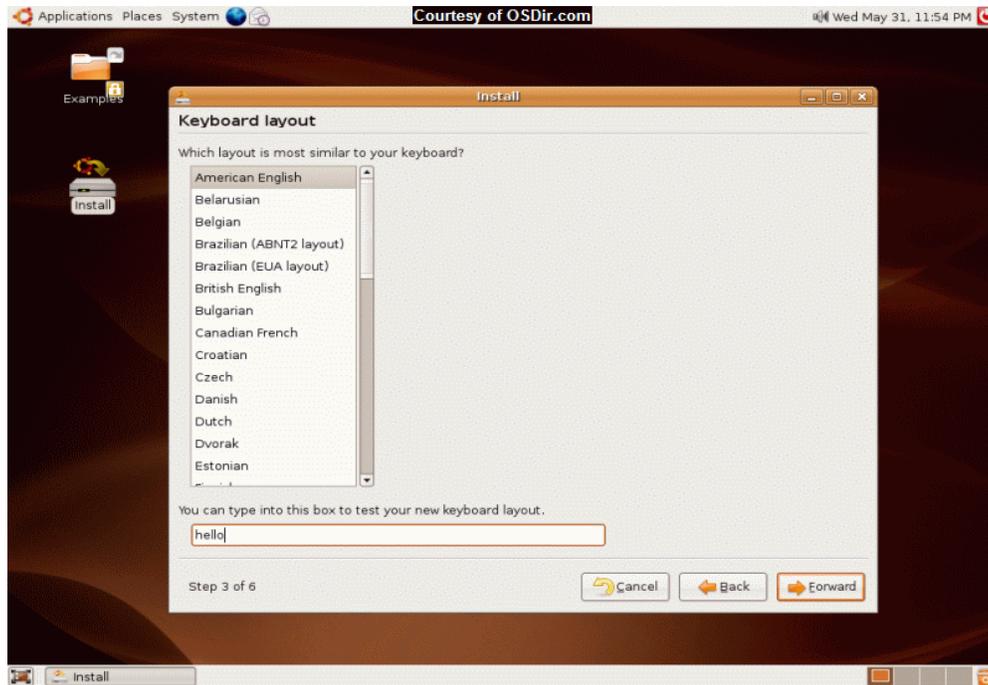
The default choice for keyboard is American English so, again, just click the "Forward" button.

Step 4
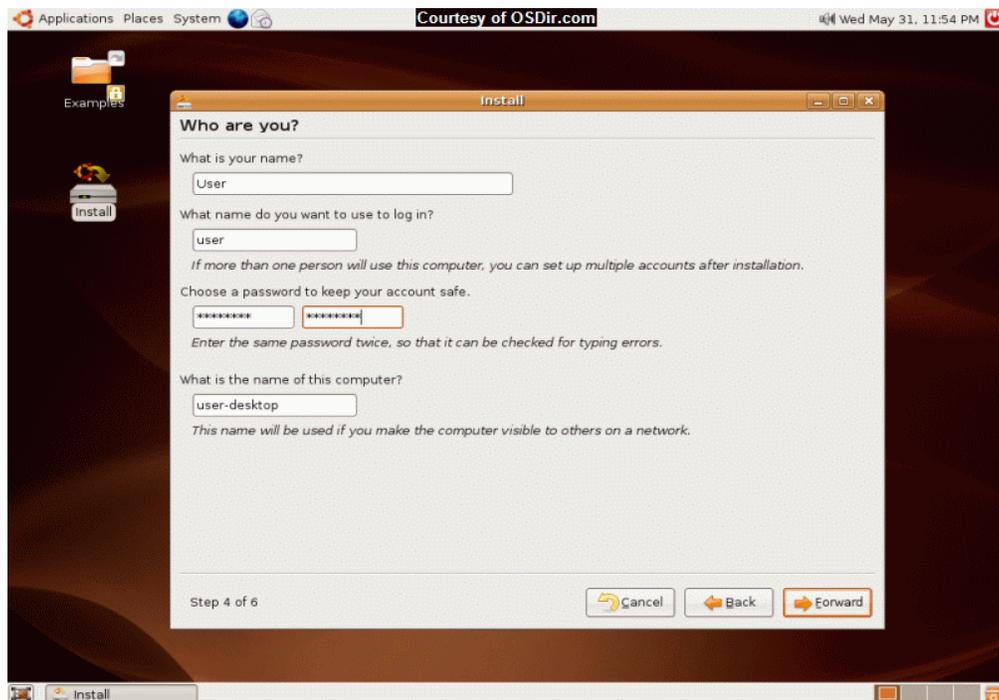
Here you identify yourself, choose a username and a password and name the computer. You can use any name you want but remember to use a relatively good password since it is also the administrative password. As before, click the "Forward" button when you are ready.

Step 5
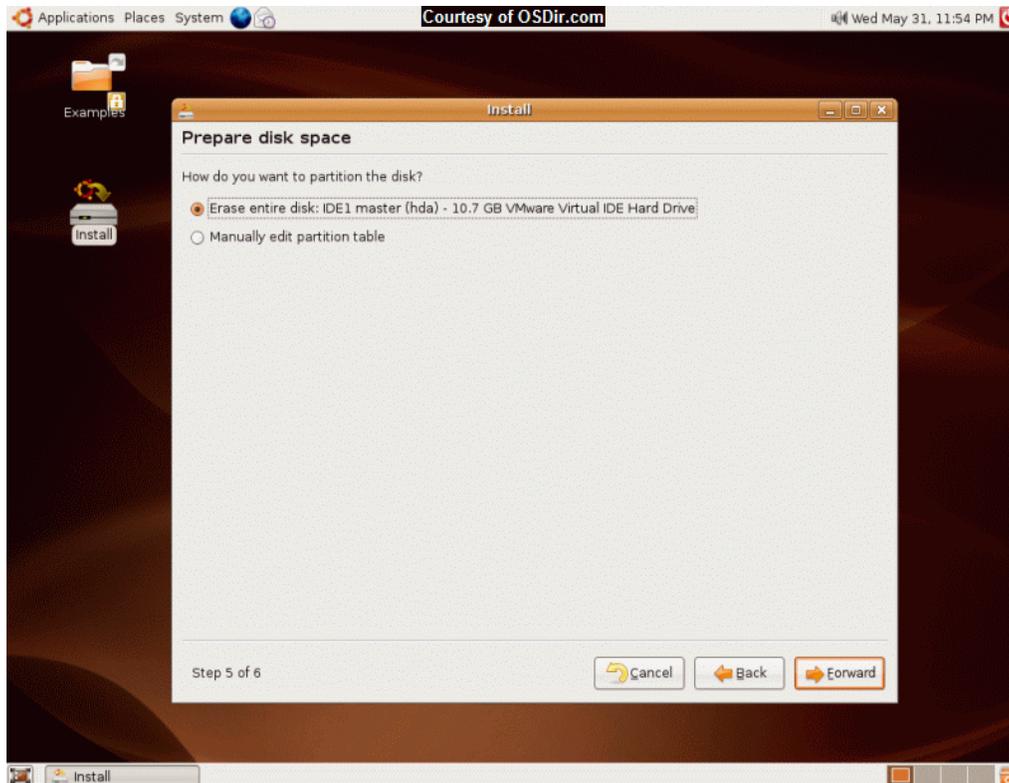
Now we get to the the good (read scary) part – partitioning the hard drive! If you have just one hard drive and will be erasing Windows it's easy. Just choose the Erase entire disk option. But if you want to preserve your windows install and dual boot, you have to shrink the Windows partition to make room for Linux. This is the part that usually scares people the most and with good reason. You could end up destroying your Windows install if you make a mistake! As with any operation of this type, it is imperative that you have a backup of your Windows install. Drive Image or Norton Ghost works well here. The partitioning can be done entirely from the Ubuntu install program but I generally prefer to shrink the Windows partition from within Windows using PartitionMagic. I leave the empty space created as unallocated space. If you do that you will have the option to use free space on the disk to install Linux. In my case I had an unpartitioned second hard drive on the system so all I had to do was choose it and let the install program partition it. You have the option to manually partition the drive but for starters it's just easier to let the install program do it for you. When ready click the "Forward" button.

Step 6
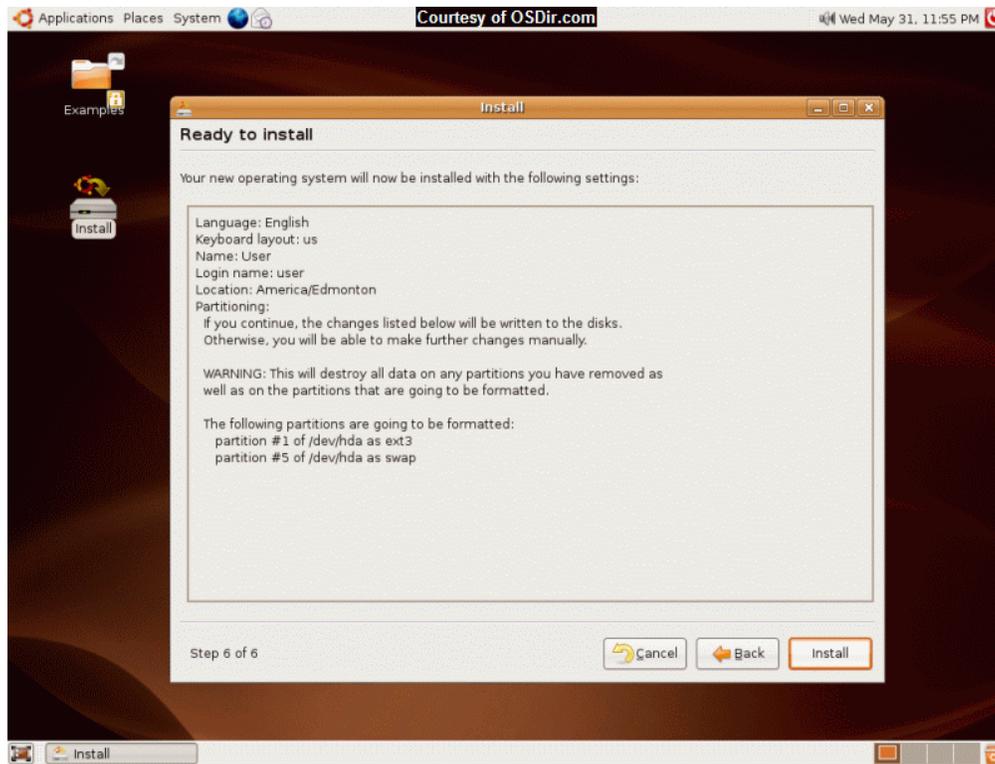
This last page shows you the settings you have chosen and gives you the chance to back up and change things. If you are ready, click the "Install" button. From here everything is automatic. When the install is done the program will have you remove the installation disc and reboot.

Figure 2.

After rebooting and logging in, the system will prompt you for any updates that are ready to be installed. After that your system is almost up-to-date. What's missing is a variety of multimedia codecs, Java and Flash that are not installed because they are not open source. These can be found and installed manually, but it's much easier to use an all-in one service to do this.

Jim Amore and I have tried several of these, especially EasyUbuntu and Automatix. I think that the best and the easiest is EasyUbuntu.

Next time I'll go over using EasyUbuntu to get all your multimedia packages installed.

Here are some good links for Ubuntu users:

http://www.ubuntu.com/
http://easyubuntu.freecontrib.org/
http://ubuntuguide.org/wiki/Dapper