GENERAL

how to install ubuntu from usb

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Ubuntu is one of the most popular Linux distributions, known for its user friendly interface, robust security, and vibrant community. Whether you're a seasoned developer or a Windows user curious about Linux, installing Ubuntu from a USB stick is a quick, reliable way to try out the operating system or set it up on a new machine. This guide covers everything you need to know—from downloading the ISO to troubleshooting common problems—so you can confidently **install Ubuntu from USB** and enjoy a smooth, native experience.

Why Install Ubuntu from a USB?

Installing Ubuntu via USB offers several benefits:

- Portability – Carry the OS on a flash drive and boot any compatible computer.
- Speed – USB 3.0 or 3.1 drives provide fast read/write speeds, reducing installation time.
- Safety – The installation process doesn't affect your existing OS until you're ready.
- Live Session – Test Ubuntu in a live environment before committing to a full installation.
- Easy Recovery – If something goes wrong, you can simply reboot from the USB and retry.

Before You Begin: What You'll Need

Gathering the right tools beforehand can save time and frustration. Here's a quick checklist:

- A computer that supports USB booting (most modern machines do).
- At least a 4 /GB USB flash drive (8 /GB or more recommended for future updates).
- Stable internet connection to download the Ubuntu ISO.
- Backup of important data (although the installation process is safe, it's always wise to back up).
- Optional: a second USB drive for a backup installer or recovery tools.

Step 1: Download the Ubuntu ISO

The first step in **how to install Ubuntu from USB** is to obtain the official ISO file. Follow these steps:

1. Navigate to the Ubuntu Desktop download page.
2. Select the latest LTS (Long Term Support) version—currently Ubuntu 24.04 LTS is recommended for stability and security updates.
3. Click the Download button. The file will be around 2.5 /GB.
4. After downloading, verify the integrity of the ISO using the SHA256 checksum provided on the website. On Windows, you can use tools like 7 Zip or Hashcat; on Linux, run sha256sum ubuntu-24.04-desktop-amd64.iso in the terminal.

Step 2: Create a Bootable USB Drive

Once you have the ISO, the next step is to write it to your USB stick. There are several popular tools available for different operating systems.

Using Rufus (Windows)

1. Download Rufus from the official site.

2. Insert your USB drive and launch Rufus.
3. Under Device, select your USB stick.
4. Click SELECT and navigate to the downloaded ISO.
5. Leave the default Partition scheme (MBR for BIOS or UEFI, GPT for UEFI) or choose GPT for newer machines.
6. Click START and confirm that all data will be destroyed.
7. Wait until Rufus reports “READY” and safely eject the drive.

Using Etcher (Cross Platform)

1. Download Etcher from balena.io.
2. Open Etcher and click Flash from file, then select the ISO.
3. Choose the target USB drive.
4. Click Flash! and let Etcher finish the process.
5. When done, Etcher will verify the image and prompt you to eject the USB.

Using dd (Linux)

1. Insert the USB stick and identify its device name with lsblk (e.g., /dev/sdb).
2. Run the following command, replacing /path/to/ubuntu.iso and /dev/sdX with your ISO path and USB device:
3. Wait for dd to finish; it may take several minutes.
4. Once complete, run sync to ensure all data is written before removing the USB.

Step 3: Prepare Your Computer for Installation

Before booting from the USB, you’ll need to adjust a few settings in your computer’s firmware.

- Access the BIOS/UEFI by pressing F2, F12, Esc, or Delete during startup (the key varies by manufacturer).
- Disable Secure Boot if you encounter boot issues (Ubuntu supports Secure Boot, but some older hardware may not).
- Enable USB boot or set the USB drive as the first boot device.
- Save changes and exit the firmware settings.

Step 4: Boot from USB

With the USB inserted and BIOS configured, restart the computer. Most systems will display a boot menu; press the appropriate key (F12, Esc, or similar) to select the USB drive. The Ubuntu installer will load and present you with a splash screen.

Step 5: Start the Ubuntu Installer

When the Ubuntu boot menu appears, you’ll see two main options:

- Try Ubuntu without installing – Launches a live session that runs entirely from the USB. Useful for testing hardware compatibility.
- Install Ubuntu – Directly starts the installation wizard.

For most users, selecting **Install Ubuntu** is the simplest path. If you’re uncertain about your hardware, choose **Try Ubuntu** first, then run sudo ubuntu-drivers autoinstall in the terminal to install drivers.

Step 6: Choose Installation Type

The installer offers several installation scenarios. Pick the one that best matches your needs:

- Erase disk and install Ubuntu – Deletes all data on the selected drive and installs Ubuntu as the sole OS.
- Install Ubuntu alongside Windows – Creates a dual boot setup, preserving your Windows installation.
- Something else – Manual partitioning, ideal for advanced users who want custom layouts.

For beginners, the “Erase disk” or “Install alongside” options are recommended. The installer will automatically create the necessary partitions (/, /home, swap).

Step 7: Partitioning and Disk Setup

If you selected **Something else**, you’ll need to manage partitions manually:

1. Click New Partition Table if starting fresh.
2. Allocate space for the root partition (/) – at least 20 /GB is recommended.

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