Ideas for contributing to the SlackDocs wiki

Contributing to the documentation of a project can be a highly rewarding and satisfying task, but many potential contributors are daunted by the prospect of writing documentation. The idea behind a wiki is not to create perfect documentation from the outset but to engage the community in making incremental improvements and getting there in the end. Hence, there is no necessity to be fazed by the thought.

Each individual may pick and choose topics to contribute, which they feel they are likely to add knowledge to. Here are some areas which may be of specific interest to potential contributors.

Edit, Expand, Improve

Editing, expanding and improving existing articles is a great way to start contributing to a Wiki-style documentation. Being a collaborative project, any and all improvements and corrections are welcome.

As a contributor, you should never feel that editing or correcting is any less important than contributing whole articles. Editing, correcting and improving is an integral part of a Wiki site and is as important as adding fresh content.

> ⚠️ Please read the Wiki style guide and etiquette before you start editing somebody else's work.

Substantive writing

When you are confident enough to go beyond editing and improving existing articles, here are some ideas for substantive contributions to the wiki, in no particular order.

Technical HOWTOs/Tutorials

Technical HOWTOs for performing specific tasks or achieving specific results are much appreciated by the Linux community. Technical HOWTOs focus on a specific task and how to get it done, step by step, with explanations and illustrations. Technical HOWTOs are highly task-oriented and should provide code examples when necessary. Caveats, notes and warnings play an important role in such articles and help the reader figure out any potential gotchas.

Some examples of technical HOWTOs may be:

- How to set up a wireless network.
- How to set up a web/FTP/mail server.
- How to configure an internet firewall for desktop use.

and so on.

Specific programs or applications

These are short, informative pieces on specific programs or applications. Bear in mind that these topics need not be man-page substitutes. However they may provide enough information for users to get started with and may expand to deal with particular features that may need explanations or answers.

This may include topics on desktop applications and package management tools, for example.

General articles

These are articles that do not target any specific technical issue but focus instead on larger issues. A general article needs no specific technical know-how to write, but may be expanded later to provide links or short pointers to in-depth sources of knowledge on the same or similar subjects.

An example of a general article is the one on Slackware philosophy.

Subjects to cover

The following list is based on Woodsman's suggestion. It can serve as a good guide to add content to the wiki.

- An introductory guide, focusing on features and highlighting the software. Somewhat a marketing tool but technical in nature.
- A startup guide, focusing on the basics of using the software.
- A quick reference guide, focusing on mouse and keyboard shortcuts as well as the most common tasks.
- A fat user guide, focusing on all elements of using the software. Often includes tutorials.
- An administrator's guide. This is the stuff that makes most people's eyes water but is the first thing a geek grabs when confronted with problems.

- Introduction and Welcome Guide
    - What is Slackware?
    - How Does Slackware Differ From Windows and Macs?
    - What is Linux?
    - What is GNU/Linux?
    - The Idea of Free/Libre Software

- Startup Guide — An Overview
    - The KDE Desktop
    - The Xfce Desktop
    - The Fluxbox Desktop
    - Basic Mouse and Keyboard Techniques
    - Basic Keyboard Shortcuts
    - Using Menus
    - Using Dialog Boxes
    - Finding Help

- Reference Guide — Some Computer Fundamentals

- A Multitasking and Multiuser Computer System
- Security and User Permissions
- Logging In
- Logging Out
- Creating User and Group Accounts
- Shutting Down Properly
- Customizing the Desktop
- Customizing the Desktop for People with Special Needs
- Customizing for Multiple Languages
- Adding "Quick Launch" Icons to the Task Bar
- Adding Items to the System Menu
- Understanding Folders and Files
- System Files and User Files
- Using a File Manager
- Finding Files
- Using a Printer
- Setting the System Clock
- Terminating Programs That Crash or Freeze
- Connecting to the Internet
- Finding New Programs
- Automatically Updating Programs
- Viruses and Malware

- User Guide — How Do I . . .
  - Play Solitaire?
  - Quickly calculate some numbers?
  - Surf the web?
  - View a PDF file?
  - Send and receive email?
  - Organize my schedule?
  - Write a formal letter?
  - Edit basic text files?
  - Jot notes to myself?
  - Use special keyboard characters?
  - Schedule reminders and alarms for myself?
  - Let the children "paint"?
  - Do some serious drawing?
  - [Grab a screenshot](#)?
  - Touch up and edit images?
  - Draw a flowchart?
  - Create some charts?
  - Learn to type?
  - Listen to music files?
  - Listen to an audio CD?
  - Adjust my audio volume?
  - Watch DVD movies?
  - Make backups of my CDs and DVDs?
  - Rip an audio CD?
  - Use my USB flash drive?
  - How do I save camera photographs?
  - Browse and manage my digital photograph collection?

- - Download and read RSS feeds?
  - Chat with my daughter with instant messaging?
  - Edit my web site pages?
  - Manage finances?
  - Manage a small-scale project?

- Advanced Topics (Appendices or Separate Documents)
  - System Requirements
  - The Command Line Interface
  - Installing Multimedia Codecs
  - Configuring Video Cards and Monitors
  - Configuring Sound Cards
  - Configuring Mice
  - Configuring Internet and Network Connections
  - Configuring Printers
  - Configuring Page Scanners
  - Configuring TV Cards
  - Installing New Software
  - Installing Fonts
  - Installing Firefox Extensions Globally for All Users
  - Creating A Common File Storage Location
  - Scheduling System Tasks and Events
  - Modifying the Bootloader Options
  - Keeping Slackware Secure
  - Updating Security Patches
  - Obtaining Additional Packages
  - Some Thoughts About Backups

- Administrator's Guide
  - Finding Help
  - Hard Disk Partitioning
  - Installing Slackware
  - Updating Slackware
  - Building Packages
  - Some Unix Basics
  - The Filesystem Hierarchy and Structure
  - Command Line Shell Basics
  - How the Slackware System Boots
  - System Services
  - Kernel Modules and Devices
  - Slackware Package Management
  - Emergency Repair Tricks
  - System Information and Inventory Tricks
  - Solving System Problems
  - Installing Windows in a Virtual Machine
  - Configuring a Firewall
  - Configuring a Router and Family Local Network
  - CPU Frequency Scaling
  - Power Management
  - Managing a Slackware/Windows Dual Boot System
  - Migrating Web Browser Settings
  - Migrating Email Settings

Unsuitable topics

Although a Wiki grants a lot of freedom to its contributors, there are certain topics and subjects best avoided in a Wiki. Some of those may be:

- Subjective opinions or rants. These style of articles belong to blogs and not to information-sharing Wikis.
- Topics which are too philosophically oriented. The main Slackware philosophy is already discussed in the Slackware way.
- Topics which are critical of other distributions or the way other distributions or its maintainers/community approach issues. These kind of topics would show the Slackware community in an unprofessional light. Focus on positives, not negatives.
- Any topic that is more discussion oriented than information oriented. For example, KDE vs. Xfce, or DE vs. WM. Discussing the preferences for desktop choice is a subjective opinion and not an information article, unless of course, the article has a specific technical input on the subject.

Potential contributors should also check for the existence of a topic in the Wiki before creating a new page with a similar topic. Avoiding duplication of effort is part of what a Wiki is all about.

Related pages

- SlackDocs style guide

Sources

- Originally written by V.Harishankar for the SlackDocs Wiki Project.
- Additional inputs by kookiemonster based on suggestions made by Woodsman from LinuxQuestions.org forums.

slackdocs

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