

The Slackware Way

Slackware maintains a KISS philosophy. It uses text files for configuration instead of GUI configuration programs like many other distributions.

The main highlights and features of Slackware and the philosophy behind the distribution can be summarized as below.

Distribution Philosophy

Slackware is:

- A distribution that can be installed entirely offline with the CD/DVD set.
- A distribution which is released when stable and not according to a fixed schedule. Every release of Slackware Linux is thoroughly tested by the Slackware team and the community. Slackware places high value on stability rather than the “newness” or “freshness” of software.
- A distribution where “simplicity” is preferred over “convenience.” The lack of GUI helpers (common in many other commercial distributions) for system administration tasks is a case in point.
- A distribution where system configuration and administration is done through simple ncurses helper scripts or by directly editing well-commented configuration files through a text editor.
- A distribution that prefers to package “vanilla” software or software that hasn't been modified from upstream development. Little or no patching is done to upstream software and as a result, the software found in Slackware works as closely to what was intended by the original creators as practically possible.
- A distribution that does not add layers of abstraction or complexity on top of existing solutions. For instance, Slackware package management is handled by simple scripts acting on compressed tarball package files (*.tgz, *.txz, *.tbz) and there is no dependency handling for package management.
- A distribution which abides by the common-sense dictum “if it's not broken, don't fix it.”
- A distribution where the major decisions are taken by the BDFL (Benevolent Dictator for Life, the current chief maintainer Patrick Volkerding) and where the development process is more closed than purely community based distributions. As a result, Slackware is highly focused on its core strengths and values and does not cater to every preference of its community or others. For this reason, there is less pressure on the Slackware development team to be popular and cater to the larger mass market.

Community

A few highlights of the Slackware Linux community may be mentioned. Even though technically a commercial distribution (the chief maintainer of Slackware, Patrick Volkerding sells the product on CD/DVD to support himself and the project financially, though ISOs are available as free downloads), Slackware has a highly devoted, tightly knit and enthusiastic user community that is friendly and helpful to new users. The Slackware community generally emphasizes user empowerment by learning and understanding the system rather than blindly copying instructions, a trend common in commercial proprietary operating systems. As a result, quite a significant proportion of Slackware

users are also developers to a lesser or greater degree and are skilled enough, at the least, to create and debug simple shell scripts.

The availability of a large number of [SlackBuilds](#) or build scripts for making third-party software installation easier in Slackware is a case in point. A common complaint about Slackware is the tediousness involved in installing third party software by hunting down dependencies from different sources online, downloading and compiling the software manually. The issue has been largely addressed by the community of developers who have created SlackBuild scripts for many commonly used applications and libraries that are not part of the official distribution. A popular and high quality repository of SlackBuilds can be found at <http://www.slackbuilds.org>.

Sources

- Originally written by [V.Harishankar](#) for the SlackDocs Wiki Project

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