

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [Which Linux distro is actually best for a ThinkPad?](#)

Mxstermind - September 22, 2026, 10:47 am

I've finally decided to give Linux a proper try.

I already have a ThinkPad, so the hardware part is sorted. ?

Now I'm stuck on the distro.

I'm seeing people recommend:

- > Fedora
- > Ubuntu
- > Linux Mint
- > Debian
- > Arch
- > openSUSE

And everyone seems to have a completely different opinion.

I mainly want to use the ThinkPad for:

- coding
- learning Linux properly
- Docker
- Git
- servers / SSH
- automation
- general productivity

I don't mind learning the terminal or getting my hands dirty. I'm actually part of the reason I want to switch — I want to understand the machine rather than just use Windows.

From what I've been reading, Fedora seems to come up a LOT with ThinkPad users, while Ubuntu seems to be the safer beginner option. I've also seen people say Mint is better if you just want everything to work, and Arch if you actually want to learn how Linux works.

But I'd rather hear from people who actually use a ThinkPad.

What distro are you running on your ThinkPad, and why?

And if you had to install Linux on a ThinkPad today, what would you personally choose?

Bonus:

What ThinkPad-specific things should I configure after installing it?

Battery?

TrackPoint?
Power management?
Fingerprint reader?
Firmware?
Security?

I'm genuinely curious what the ThinkPad + Linux veterans recommend.

Mercury - September 22, 2026, 3:22 pm

You really can't go wrong with Debian, especially for your specific needs and application. It's user friendly enough but you also have a tremendous amount of control over how things operate. Ubuntu and Mint are both derivatives of it so you're kind of getting Linux in one of its rawest forms in that sense. If you're coming from Windows I'd recommend running KDE Plasma as your desktop environment; Gnome if you're coming from Mac. These are just suggestions based on what I feel will make you feel like you're in a familiar place.

I have yet to do this myself but, learn it and get yourself as familiar as possible so then if you really want to get down and dirty you can build your own Arch based system later on. Anyone who tells you to just run Arch as your first Linux OS is an elitist weirdo that is just trying to validate their own complications. It may have gotten more user friendly over the years but I'm not really sure. As awesome as it is, historically speaking it just is not for beginners.

Also, I run Debian 13 on my Thinkpad with absolutely no issues. It should work right out of the box. What model Thinkpad are you using? What specs, etc?

Raijin - September 23, 2026, 4:26 am

Ubuntu is the most user friendly from your list.

Mozart - September 23, 2026, 6:19 am

Was literally going to come here and suggest mint but it was already recommended. Mint is really nice, it'll do your pad justice.

(Sep 22, 2026 03:22 PM)Mercury Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) You really can't go wrong with Debian, especially for your specific needs and application. It's user friendly enough but you also have a tremendous amount of control over how things operate. Ubuntu and Mint are both derivatives of it so you're kind of getting Linux in one of its rawest forms in that sense. If you're coming from Windows I'd recommend running KDE Plasma as your desktop environment; Gnome if you're coming from Mac. These are just suggestions based on what I feel will make you feel like you're in a familiar place.

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Currently on ubuntu with KDE Plasma as my enviro, been here for a couple years with it like this and let me say, its beauuuuuuuutifulll

elghub - September 23, 2026, 6:15 pm

If I had to pick one today: Fedora Workstation for a ThinkPad, or Debian if you care more about stability than fresh packages.

For your use case, coding, Docker, SSH, automation, learning Linux, I would avoid jumping straight to Arch unless you actually enjoy rebuilding your system when something breaks. It is a fun later project, not necessarily the best first daily driver.

Ubuntu and Mint are fine, but if you want to understand the machine, Debian or Fedora will push you a bit more without being miserable.

ThinkPad specific stuff I would set up early:

1. fwupd and LVFS for firmware updates
2. thinkpad-acpi for battery and thermal info
3. TLP or power-profiles-daemon for power management
4. fprintd if the fingerprint reader matters to you
5. libinput settings for TrackPoint and touchpad
6. test suspend and resume early, because that is usually the first annoying thing
7. keep a USB recovery stick around, always

Honestly, ThinkPad plus Linux is one of the better combos. Once you get past the first setup phase, it usually just works.

Betty Blue - September 24, 2026, 5:42 am

It doesn't matter. Distro doesn't matter. It's 2026, it should be pounded into everyone's head. It doesn't matter. You can do XYZ with any of them. The only thing you're choosing between is politics, package manager, and release schedule and whatever default software they come with that is available on any distro.

Personally, Arch goes on everything that's not a server. I only use Thinkpads. I have an X201, X220, X230 upgraded, X13 Gen 1 and a bunch of other Lenovo stuff.

Arch has great repos, the AUR if you want it, I like rolling release on anything that's not a server, everything to configure manually so you know it's done right (unlike Omarchy), and there's Arch Wiki.

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it usually just works. Again, it's 2026. Arch does not just break. I have multiple systems on Arch installations 10+ years. Not once have they been "broken". If Arch breaks, you fucked up.

octanitrocubane - October 4, 2026, 10:38 am

What model? I have T490, works fine with Linux Mint (Ubuntu with bad stuff cut out and good stuff put in.). Any distro should work.

7 - October 5, 2026, 7:28 am

100% Omarchy. If your into AI.

Hyperland QuickShell and automated fixes on bugs.

Its my main OS right now. I have all others for different reasons but Omarchy is wining its fast, its just crazy good.

I also use Fedora, QubesOS, Kali, Debian, OSX and Windows and for hosting I prefer alma but arch is bleeding edge and with diagnostics and fixes instant now. You can add blackarch repositories and whatever you need. Literally its mind blowing fast

Ubuntu and Mint are just customised Debian forks really. RHL & Arch spin offs are my favorites for stability or bleeding edge.

ahw9n2io8wd9h - October 5, 2026, 9:51 am

Just for "learning Linux properly" alone, I'd suggest you go for plain Debian or Arch. You'll learn a lot when setting either of them up from a plain console start. Start from 0 to a full desktop, make as many mistakes and fail as much as you want. By the time you're done, you'll be comfortable with console and know basic linux commands.

opitz21254 - October 15, 2026, 1:24 am

(38 hours ago)sid7373736jdjJ Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Thank you so much for sharing this! ?? This is genuinely helpful and informative. I really appreciate the time and effort you put into creating and sharing useful content like this. Keep up the great work! ??

I really love Zorin os. Has made my life so much better in so many ways.

yurixx - October 15, 2026, 1:25 pm

For me Linux Mint and Arch Linux are the best

7 - October 16, 2026, 6:20 am

Yeah I once was one that spent all that time on coding languages and operating system functions.. tweaking. Does it make you anything?

No

Betty Blue - October 16, 2026, 2:22 pm

(Oct 5, 2026 07:28 AM)7 Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) 100% Omarchy. If your into AI.

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Ubuntu and Mint are just customised Debian forks really. RHL & Arch spin offs are my favorites for stability or bleeding edge.Omarchy is hardly "crazy good". Omarchy is a poorly pre configured Arch. I mean, seriously poorly configured. It is also the antithesis of Arch, which is specifically meant to be

a bleeding edge distro you configure yourself. At this point the only reason DHH used Arch is so he could install half the packages from the AUR, which is also a terrible idea.

Omarchy has also seriously hurt the open source community. People donating to Omarchy would be much better served by donating to the huge open source projects that run all technology. Last time I check, over \$18 million was given to Omarchy. \$18 million for a bad configuration and dotfiles.

Seriously, bad configuration. Why on Earth would anyone create a TEMPORARY PASSWD FILE, to STORE THE SUDO PASSWORD, then use only A SYSTEMD TIMER TO DELETE THE FILE AFTER 15 minutes, and not have any sort of verification that the file is deleted. And to top it off, sudo already has a logout timer.

Then just his personal configuration is, just gross and poorly done.