

Free Stuff!



Linux

Linux is an operating system developed by Linux that was initially created as a hobby by a young student, Linus Torvalds, at the University of Helsinki in Finland.

This code (Kernel) has been used to provide free software applications to enable access to IT functionality by a world wide community who believe that access to IT and digital technology is fundamental in today's society and should be freely available.

Examples of organisations which use the Linux system include Mozilla Firefox web browser, Sun Microsystems and many of the BBC's technical IT functions.

For more information on Linux and Open Source software, can be found at www.linux.org

Open Source Software

1. Open Office



Available from www.openoffice.org

Open Office provide a suite of programmes to designed to meet the needs of most office functions. It's comparable to Microsoft Office. It's improved considerably in recent years, and is now more comparable to the Enterprise versions of Microsoft Office.

The software contains the following programmes

- Text – Word Processing
- Spreadsheet
- Database
- Presentation
- Drawing
- Calculation

One tool the Text programme has which Word 2003 as standard doesn't have – you can convert to PDF. (Don't know if Word 2007 has this option included).

A number of extensions are available from the Open Office website, and there is an extensive online help.

Lots of extensions and add ons available.

2. Gimp – photo editing software

Available from www.gimp.org

This is an all singing and dancing photo editing package and designed to compete with the full version of Adobe Photoshop.

Ensure that you download a stable version and not one of the developmental versions, and that it's suitable for your operating system e.g. Mac or Windows XP/Vista etc.

There is help on line as well as several sites offering tutorials and online forums.

If you've already experience of Photoshop then you can convert Gimp to have the same terminology as Photoshop by using GimpShop. Download links are available from the Gimp main site.

Please note for some of these downloads you maybe passed on to another site e.g. Sourcenet.com and CNet.com. All of these are reputable sites, but please be cautious of downloading software without checking that the site is secure, make sure that you have a good firewall and spyware installed.

3. Scribus – Desk Top Publishing

www.scribus.net

Designed to be comparable to Publisher, seems to have some good reviews. Appearance might not look as sophisticated as some packages, but that doesn't mean that it won't do the job required.

Also – have a look at Serif's PagePlus X2 or X3 – not free but great value for money.

4. Inkscape – vector drawing

www.inkscape.org

Designed to be comparable to Adobe Illustrator, CoralDraw or Xara, using WC3 standard for Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG) . These can be quite pricey packages to buy, especially if you're planning on being a professional graphic designer.

A lot of on line help and tutorials available.

5. Serif.com

Serif is an American based company, which also has a base in Nottingham. It produces a range of software packages which are value for money software which is easy to use.

Very basic versions are available to download for free but these are a bit of a carrot to get you to buy the more recent versions.

Packages include

PagePlux X3
DrawPlux X3
PhotoPlus X3

WebPlux X3

There are also video/movie packages plus other computer software.

Prices range from £19.00 to £79.99 – depending on the deal, version and negotiating skills!

IT Training

Available at www.alison.com

This is a good source for all the Microsoft Office programmes – Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Access and Outlook.

There are a number of other courses available from Health and safety to personal development.

They are trying to increase the number of free training programmes available so worthwhile checking it out now and again to see what's new.

You can save you're training in an on line account so you can keep track of your learning and progress. For those of you with staff, this can count towards their CPD record, thereby offering a very cost effective route for staff training and development – all you would have to provide is time and resources.

Market Research

Survey Monkey

www.surveymonkey.com

Create your own online market research questionnaires.

Basic package for free. Allows up to 15 questions and 100 replies.

For more complex survey's, improved reporting and unlimited replies, costs USD19.00 per month. No contracts, so either buy on a month by month basis or a year contract. Year cost USD 200.

E mail Marketing

There are a number of email marketing software programmes. Although not free stuff, most offer 2 or 3 month trials. Plus lots of free information about how to improve your email marketing and e newsletters.

www.constantcontact.com

www.newszap.net

www.newsweaver.co.uk

www.mailchimp.com - part of survey monkey. Basic package free.

Google – more than a search engine!

Lots of free stuff available from Google.

Google Documents

Share your files on line with Google Docs. Upload or create on line. You can give full editing authority or restrict to viewing only. Helps keep track of share information without the need to keep circulating different versions of the same file.

The LBN manages it's members database by using a shared spreadsheet and it really has made the process a lot easier.

Google Local

This identifies you locally with a map location. If you want a good example of how this works check out do a search for Quest House Kendal, click on Hilary Claxton's

new entry at www.beech-house-kendal.co.uk and see all the references to her guest house listed below on the link.

Google local entries always come on top of a Google search – takes priority over other SEO techniques other than pay per click advertising.

Picasa

Online photo album and editing. Provides albums, storage, and basic editing. Store images either on the web or on your own PC.

Google Sites

Free website. Relatively easy to get started. Looks like a Google website with tabs, but very useful for a quick web presence, to test a new venture, to use as an intranet, for clubs, family, special events.

You can either make it open to the public or limit access through email access similar to Google Docs.

Google Reader

Use to download radio programmes, news alerts, subscribe to favourite sites so that you get new content when it's posted

Specialised Google Searches

Sometimes you may want to search for more specialist information and there are a number of more dedicated search engines rather than the general Google search.

Google Scholar – looks at more technical, scientific, educational sources

Google Universities – searches information published by the world's universities.

Froogle – Shopping sites only.

News and News Alerts – search for news items and set up news alerts.

Also Google Maps and Google Images.

Google Business

Lots of information and packages for business.

Adwords

Analytics – analysis traffic to your website

Google business Local

Check out all options at www.google.com/services

There's also a course you can do on line to become a professional in Google Adwords find under Google Adwords Professional