

How to Install a Desktop (GUI) on a Linux Ubuntu Server

Ubuntu Server 20.04 LTS (or previous versions) does not include a Graphical User Interface (GUI) upon installation. However, a desktop environment (a GUI) can be added after Ubuntu Server is installed. Installation is done from the command line interface (CLI) either with or without the necessity of installing or employing the task select manager utility (tasksel), which necessity will depend on the Display Manager and/or the GUI that you choose.

Update the Repositories and Packages

Since we want to have access to the latest packages that are available to install, it is good practice to begin with updating the repositories and package lists by entering the following at the CLI.

```
sudo apt-get update && sudo apt-get upgrade
```

Press `y` and the enter key at the prompt - 'Do you want to continue?'

If asked, enter your root/sudo password at the prompt.

This ensures that we have the most recent software updates.

Install the Tasksel Manager Utility

Tasksel is a utility for simultaneously installing related software packages.

To install tasksel manager utility, enter the following at the CLI:

```
sudo apt-get install tasksel
```

If asked, enter your root/sudo password at the prompt.

Display Manager and GUI

The display manager chosen supports certain or various choices of the GUI / Desktop Environment that you select based on your choices of the look, feel, functionality of the display manager and GUI, as well as the resources that are consumed or preserved (with a heavier or more light weight display manager and/or GUI).

Selecting a Display Manager

The “default” display manager is **GDM3** which is relatively resource-intensive. The GDM3 display manager is used with and supports the KDE-Plasma Desktop GUI. In order to conserve resources, there are lighter display managers to choose from, such as **SDDM**, **SLiM**, and **LightDM**.

Here is how to install a specific display manager other than the GDM3 default display manager. It may involve the command line **apt-get** package manager to install, or by using the tasksel menu (addressed below).

The **SDDM** display manager can be installed from the **tasksel** menu during installation of **KDE Desktop** (as compared to **KDE-Plasma** which as stated above is supported by GDM3).

To install either SLiM or LightDM managers, use the apt-get Package manager as follows:

To install SLiM enter the following at the CLI:

```
sudo apt-get install slim
```

To install LightDM, instead enter:

```
sudo apt-get install lightdm
```

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