In This Issue...

From The Chief Editor's Desk

There has been an ongoing discussion in the PCLinuxOS forum about legislators mandating age verification to **install an operating system!** If you're like me, the "legislators" part caused a deep sigh and my eyes rolled into the back of my head.

Those so-called legislators … you know, the ones who don't know the difference between RAM, drive space, and a CPU, much less how to even turn a computer on … are pushing for legislation that mandates age verification to install an operating system.

Their "showmanship" really is just that … showmanship. At the end of the day, such asinine legislation accomplishes absolutely nothing, but they can go to their constituents at reelection time and say, "See! I'm supporting everything I can to keep your kids safe from online predators!"

California and Colorado are states on the verge of passing these types of stupid laws (if they haven't already). I mention California and Colorado because the bills introduced in those two states are almost exactly the same, word for word. And those two pieces of legislation have ZERO teeth in them. Basically, the whole age verification is on the honor system. In other words, all you have to do is "attest" that you are over 18 years of age.

Mississippi was the first state to enact age verification legislation, and it only states that service providers have to make reasonable efforts to ascertain a new user's age when they sign up for a new account. You can read their law here. It says NOTHING about age verification to install an operating system.

Surprisingly, legislation has been introduced in Texas (of all places) regarding age verification. Unlike the legislation in California and Colorado, the Texas legislation requires verification of your age. The customary "verifiers" are either a credit card number or the number off of a government-issued ID (like a driver's license). Boy, doesn't that make it RIPE for hackers looking to steal your personal, private information!

Of course, much of this goes back to my thoughts that legislators should NOT be tasked with writing and passing laws about things they have next to zero understanding about (like computers and computer operating systems). Geez, these elected "Einsteins" think a fax machine is a modern miracle. Or, they think "passw0rd" or "passw0rd123" is an example of a secure password. Yet here they are, trying to write and pass legislation that affects every person who does have a greater understanding of the modern world.

So, here's what I'd like to tell these legislators. Just because you know how to turn a computer on, or you know how to scroll Facebook and check your email, that does not mean you are a computer "expert." Not even close! You don't have but even the thinnest veil of computer literacy, and as such, you should NOT be writing legislation or voting on legislation governing the computer industry. There's FAR, FAR more to being computer literate (turning a

computer on, scrolling Facebook, and checking your email doesn't qualify), so there's absolutely no chance that you can even begin to grasp or comprehend the far reaching ramifications of said legislation.

This is, without a doubt, one area where your constituents are far better off without your intervention than they would be with it. And, this isn't something that should be farmed out to your favorite lobbyists, PACs, and other special interest groups, all of whom have their own self-serving take on the topic.

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This month's cover was generated with Bing Image Creator. It goes right along with one of our articles this month, covering the current state of U.S. income tax filing. It's amazing how far we've come in just 10 years, much less the last 20 years, in this area. When I first started with Linux, there were few to no options for Linux users, aside from either dual boothing their system with Linux and Windows, or keeping a copy of Windows installed in a virtual machine. Now, with everything online, Linux users are no longer "shut out" from the U.S. income tax circus (Yay for us! … [/sarcasm]) Don't forget … the "deadline" for filing your 2025 income taxes is April 15!

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Until next month, I bid you peace, happiness, serenity, prosperity, and continued good health!

Screenshot Showcase

Posted by astronaut, March 3, 2026, running Openbox.

# Filing Your 2025 Taxes: You Have Options

by Paul Arnote (parnote)

Editor's Note: This article is for those who have to "pony up" their hard-earned wages to pay to file their U.S. income taxes. While I'm aware that other countries also put up with this BS (and many others are blessed with a much simpler system), my only frame of reference is for the U.S. system of filing your income taxes. So, if you are not having to pay U.S. income taxes, reading this article may provide you some comedic relief to your day, as you laugh at us arrogant, egotistical Americans going through this absurd, antiquated, annual ritual with filing our income taxes.

I have been filing my (dreaded) income taxes for many years using tax software that's commonly and commercially available. This goes WAY back to when I was a Windows user. Prior to that, I grabbed up a pencil or pen, and proceeded to fill out paper forms to mail in (things were simpler then). For a few years, I paid a tax preparer to prepare my returns for me.

At first, I'd have to make the annual trip to the store of my choice to purchase the software (usually on CD-ROM). Literally, the software was sold almost everywhere. About the only places I didn't find tax software being sold would be at the gas station, the grocery store, and restaurants. And, it was like the wild, wild west trying to figure out which one best served my needs. As a result (and because of my budget), price played a HUGE factor for me.

At that time, virtually NO ONE was offering online income tax preparation services. Back then, you either paid someone in the business of preparing income tax returns to prepare and file your taxes, you waded through the unnecessarily onerous tax filing maze yourself, or you bought the software to file your income taxes from your computer.
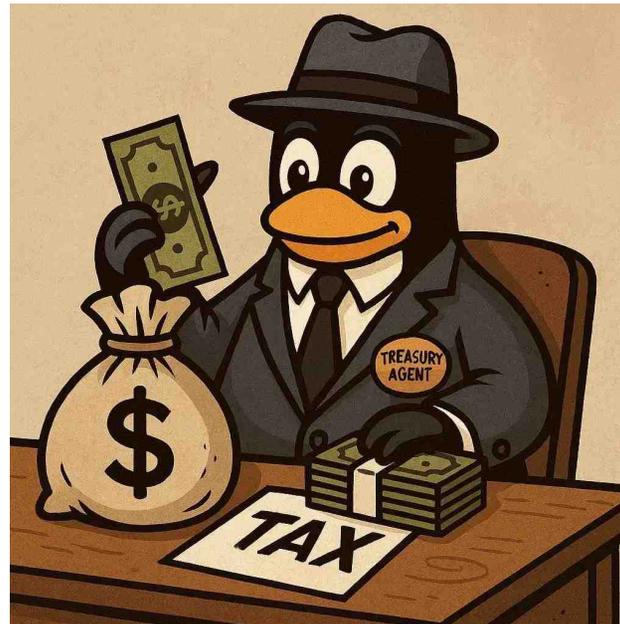
AI image created with Bing Image Creator

Over that time, I was a big fan of Kiplinger's tax software … until I wasn't. The end came with Kiplinger pricing themselves out of my price range for what I perceived that I got in return. For me, it no longer represented a "value-based" solution to my income tax filing needs.

So, after dabbling for a couple of years with other tax software offerings, I settled on using TaxAct's income tax preparation software. And, I used TaxAct – religiously – all the way until 2025 when I filed my 2024 income taxes. This year, I'll be looking elsewhere (for reasons I'll reveal when we get around to talking about TaxAct).

I remember "buying" TaxAct on a CD-ROM disc, just like I did with Kiplinger's, when I first started using it (you never really "own" any commercially offered software … you just "lease" its use … I was so naive then!). A few years later, they eased into a more "online focused" platform, and I then started "buying" their software online and downloading it to my computer for installation.

Finally, TaxAct switched to doing EVERYTHING online, thanks to "secure" web servers. In fact, they appeared (at the time) to be one of the few income tax preparation services that offered a totally-online solution.

During those "early" days of my Linux journey, I either kept one computer in the house loaded with Windows, or (more commonly) I kept Windows installed, either on a dual-boot system, or running Windows in a virtual machine. And,

the income tax software was the primary reason I did things that way. None of the income tax preparation software makers produced a version of their software for Linux users. It was always offered only for Windows or Mac. When I took a moment to examine the reasons I kept Windows around, it just seemed like way, way too much work to maintain a copy of Windows for use one day each year. Looking back, that was just insanity.

Soon after, more and more income tax preparation packages had transitioned fully to online income tax preparation services. Today, most of the "big players" in the income tax preparation rip-off scheme are totally online endeavors. And, to be perfectly honest, I don't see income tax software offered in the stores like it used to be. Of course, it could also be that I don't notice it any longer, since I have zero interest in purchasing it at a retail store these days.

Income Tax Preparation In 2026

Today, the income tax preparation landscape is vastly different than it was 25 or so years ago. Now, all of the "big players" in the income tax preparation business are online solutions. *FINALLY!* It certainly took long enough.

So, let's take a look at the options available to U.S. income tax filers. Keep in mind that I have NOT used all of these services, but have been "aware of them" for a considerable amount of time. After all, we (Americans) do this same song-and-dance/dog-and-pony-show

Every. Single. Year. Without. Fail. You don't even want to think of the ramifications by not complying. The punishments for noncompliance are fairly severe. But, even though I haven't used some of these services, I will list their pros and cons, mostly focusing on their costs. So, by the end of this article, you should be in a good position to make an informed choice or decision about which one best suits your needs.

TaxAct

I'm starting with TaxAct first, since I'm the most familiar with it. I have used TaxAct for over 20 years to file my annual income taxes. (I will NOT, however, be using them to file my income taxes for the 2025 tax year).

When I first started using TaxAct, it was a *very* affordable solution for filing my income taxes. It was considerably cheaper than just about anything else out there. However, that is no longer the case. And, I think I uncovered WHY TaxAct kept getting more and more expensive over the years. Remember me saying earlier that I used Kiplinger's income tax preparation software? Even though it is NOT advertised on the TaxAct site, I have discovered that there are DEEP ties between TaxAct and Kiplinger's. I'm not certain exactly what those ties are, but either Kiplinger's has joined forces with TaxAct, or they have purchased the company outright.

So, just as Kiplinger's priced themselves out of my "budget" years ago, so has TaxAct. In fact, TaxAct is now **at least** as expensive as the "big boys" (TurboTax, H&R Block, etc.) in the income tax preparation business. Just because you pay more doesn't necessarily mean that you get any better income tax preparation software, despite that idea being imprinted in people's brains over the years.

TaxAct is available at four tiers. The "Free" version is available for filers with the most basic income tax filing needs. Under the "free" version, filing your federal return is free, while filing your state's income taxes will cost you $44.99 per state. Under the "Deluxe" version, touted as being for "Home & Family," the cost to file your federal return is $52.99, while filing your state's income tax return will cost you $59.99 per state. The "Premiere" version is touted as being for "investments," will cost you $89.99 to file your federal return, while filing your state's income tax return will cost you $62.99 per state. The fourth tier is known as "Self-Employed" or "Entrepreneur." It will cost you $104.99 to file your federal return, while it will cost you $62.99 for each state income tax return you are required to file.

As you can see, those prices are pretty steep. It becomes increasingly apparent when you compare costs to some of the other options we'll present here. And trust me … these charges add up *QUICKLY*.

The PCLinuxOS Magazine Created with Scribus

I will say, however, that I've never had a problem with any of my tax returns prepared with TaxAct, so they do have that going for them.

Intuit TurboTax

To maintain full transparency, I've never used TurboTax. I've never been too fond of Intuit as a software company, and despite being one of the best-selling income tax preparation software packages out there, it was always priced outside my budget. Even when it was sold on CD-ROM in the retail stores, there were other income tax preparation packages that were more affordably priced.

Even today, it remains one of the more expensive income tax preparation packages out there. TurboTax is available in three tiers of service. The "Do It Yourself" tier will cost you anywhere between $0 and $129 … just to file your federal return. In my opinion, that's a pretty big range. Then, each additional state income tax preparation will cost you between $0 and $59 for each state return you are required to file. Under this plan, I suspect only the most basic federal returns are the ones that qualify for the $0 return preparation. The state return is also $0, but only if your federal return also qualifies for the $0 rate. The "Expert Assist" tier or service will cost you between $49 and $199 to file your federal return, with each state return

costing you between $54 and $64 for each state return you're required to file. The "Expert Full Service" tier is a flat-rate $150, with some caveats. First of all, that rate only applies if you have never used the "expert full service" tier previously. Otherwise, its price can vary based on the complexity of your tax return (and under the current U.S. tax laws, there's a LOT of complexity).

H&R Block

This is another income tax preparation software offering that I've never used. Perhaps despite (and perhaps because of) the H&R Block corporate headquarters being in my hometown of Kansas City, I avoided them out of fear that their income tax software was as good (read that as "bad") as their brick-and-mortar walk-in income tax preparation stores. Around here, the

tales of their bad performance are lengthy and legendary.

Like some of the other income tax preparation services, H&R Block has four tiers of service. Their "Free Online" tier is limited to what H&R Block calls "simple returns." The company claims that "52% of taxpayers qualify" for the "free online" service. Yeah. Right. Maybe. If you're living in a homeless camp. If you can avoid the "potholes" that automatically bump you up to the higher priced plans. The next tier is called "Deluxe." Its price is $70 to file your federal return, and each state return you're required to file will drain another $49 from your bank account. The "Premium" tier (supposedly for those with "investments") will cost you $110 to prepare and file your federal return, plus another $49 charge for each state return you're required to file. The fourth tier is for those it terms as "self-employed." It will set you back $130 to file your federal return, plus another $49 for each state return you're required to file.

As you can see, these charges have the potential to add up *REALLY* fast.

TaxSlayer

![TaxSlayer.com logo]

TaxSlayer offers an income tax preparation service that's starting to get a lot more affordable (when compared to the ones we've talked about so far). Like many of the other online income tax preparation services, TaxSlayer offers four tiers of services. The "Simply Free" service is free to file both your federal and state income taxes … provided you meet the rather limiting guidelines. Most people will be eligible for the "Classic" tier, which will cost you $39.99 to file your federal return, and then tap you for another $45.99 for each state return you need to file. The "Premium" tier will cost you $59.99 to file your federal return, with each state return you are required to file will set you back another $45.99. With the "Premium" tier, you get express phone and email support, as well as access the advice of a "tax pro" (whatever that is). The "Self-Employed" tier costs $69.99 to file your federal return, and each state return will cost you $45.99.

While the prices for TaxSlayer are a LOT more reasonable, it's easy to see how the prices can add up fast, with users quickly running up a cost of $100 or more. Believe it or not, and as you'll soon see, there are other options that are much more affordable.

![Electronic Frontier Foundation - Defending your rights in the digital world]

FreeTaxUSA

![FreeTaxUSA logo]

Now we're getting into some of the **VERY** affordable income tax preparation services. FreeTaxUSA offers free … yes, I said FREE … preparation and filing of your federal income tax return, regardless of how simple or "complicated" it may be. Since they started in 2001, they've handled the preparation and filing of over 82,000,000 – that's 82 million – federal income tax returns.

If you are required to file a state income tax return, it will cost you only $15.99 for each state return you are required to file. Curiously, FreeTaxUSA has four tiers, like most of the other services we've discussed thus far, and the price is the same for all tiers – $0 for the preparation and filing of your federal return, and $15.99 for each state return you are required to file.

OnLine Taxes

![OLT OnLine Taxes logo]

OnLine Taxes is another FREE income tax preparation and filing service, at least for the federal income tax return. Regardless of whether you have a simple or "complicated" federal return, the price is the same: $0.

OnLine Taxes is offered in two tiers for you to choose from. The "Federal Free Edition" is (as you might have guessed) free to file your federal return. Each state income tax return you are required to file will cost you $9.95. The "Premium Edition" will cost you less than $8 ($7.95), with each state return you're required to file costing only $7.95. With the "Premium Edition," you get everything included in the "free" version, plus phone and live chat support, audit support (just in case you are subjected to an audit), year-over-year comparison, and priority processing.

IRS Free File

![IRS logo]

I know your mouth may be hanging agape right now, but yes, the IRS itself offers free income tax preparation and filing. They even support the preparation and filing of several state income tax returns.

To use their "guided free file" service, you have to earn less than $89,000 (adjusted gross income). The state returns are offered for free, as well.

But, what if you earn more than $89,000 AGI? They have another free service, called "Fillable Forms," and is open to all taxpayers, regardless of income. You select the forms you need, and

then you fill out the electronic forms from the instructions on those forms. There is no "guided" service, and there are no state filings supported … at all.

Why Is All Of This SO Complicated?

Actually, that is a question that no one seems to be able to answer. For as long as I can remember, there has been a push to not only simplify the U.S. tax code, but to also make filing your annual income taxes super simple. All attempts have failed miserably. In more recent times, the biggest reason is the PAC (political action committee) founded by the makers of the overpriced tax services. Both simplifying the tax code and simplifying the filing process cuts into the significant profits that these companies make. You really didn't think that they make all of those glitzy, fancy television commercials for free, did you?

They have literally bought lawmakers and policymakers to keep things as complicated and untenable as they are. That is, after all, where their profits reside. If you simplify either aspect of taxes – the tax code or the filing of taxes – their services wouldn't be needed.

Of course, other PACs get involved in lobbying lawmakers and policymakers anytime there's talk about simplifying the tax code, which usually involves eliminating tax deductions. Every entity wants to see their tax deductions preserved, and politicians are hesitant to alienate voters, especially when they are up for endless

reelection campaigns, thanks to a lack of term limits for most legislators.

Like I mentioned previously, income taxes (and the "industry" that grew up around them) are a complicated, arduous, antiquated, ridiculous, unmitigated mess in the U.S. And, for as long as there's profits to be made and politicians to be bought, don't expect anything to change anytime soon. For now, the only thing that has improved with the services all offering online versions of their income tax preparation services

is that Linux users aren't "shut out" or cut off from access like we used to be, just because we don't run the operating system they want ~~to control us with~~ us to use.

I am certain that there may be other "options" to file your taxes online. If you find them, like them, and they fit your needs, by all means, use them. But this article should cover all of the current major players in the income tax preparation and filing scam … er, I mean "products."

Posted by youcantoo, March 1, 2026, running KDE.

PCLinuxOS Recipe Corner

from the kitchen of youcantoo

John Wayne Casserole

Serves: 12

INGREDIENTS:

1 (16.3 ounce) can refrigerated biscuits
　　* can substitute for refrigerator pizza crust
2 pounds ground beef
1 (1 ounce) package taco seasoning
¾ cup water
1 medium onion, halved and sliced
1 medium red bell pepper, halved and sliced
½ cup sour cream
½ cup mayonnaise
8 ounces shredded Cheddar cheese, divided
2 medium tomatoes, sliced
1 (4 ounce) jar sliced jalapeño peppers, drained (Optional)

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) and lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking pan.

Place and press biscuit dough into the bottom of the baking pan and halfway up the sides.

Pre-bake the crust in the preheated oven until lightly browned, 15 to 20 minutes. Leave the oven on.

Meanwhile, heat a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat and cook ground beef until browned and crumbly, about 5 minutes. Drain fat. Stir in taco seasoning and water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Transfer cooked meat to a bowl and wipe out the skillet.

Add onion and bell peppers to the same skillet and cook over medium heat until slightly tender, about 5 minutes.

Combine sour cream, mayonnaise, 1/2 of the Cheddar cheese, and 1/2 of the onion-pepper mixture in a bowl.

Layer browned meat, tomatoes, onion-pepper mixture, jalapeño peppers, and sour cream mixture on top of prebaked biscuit dough. Sprinkle it with remaining Cheddar cheese.

Bake uncovered in the preheated oven until the cheese is lightly browned and bubbly, 30 to 40 minutes.

NUTRITION:

Calories: 538　　Carbs: 21g　　Sodium: 781mg
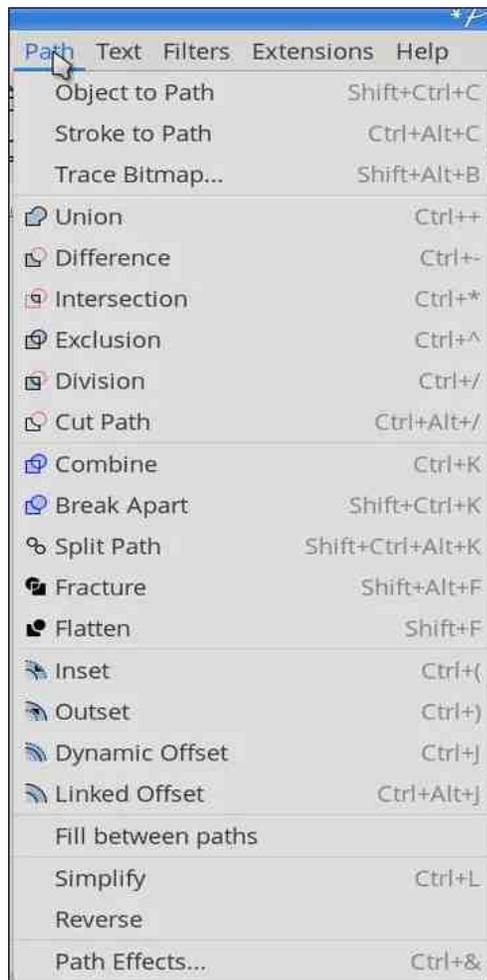Protein: 21g　　　Fiber: 1g

Inkscape Tutorial: Boolean Path Operations

by Meemaw

It occurred to me earlier that there are so many things you can do with Inkscape, there may be some you don't know yet. The Paths menu has an awful lot of items, and it might help to know what can be done with each. Let's go in order down the menu and look at them.

Here's the menu:

Bear in mind that some of these operations work on only two objects at a time, so if you have more objects, you'll have to adapt a bit, depending on how you want to end up and which operation you use.

Union

Union puts together two objects. If they overlap, Union combines them into one item. If they are different colors, Union will use the bottom object's color. If they don't overlap, the bottom color will be used, but the objects will be grouped.
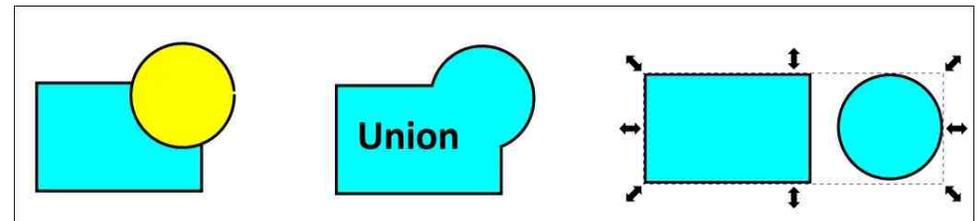
Difference

Difference cuts part of the object out. If they overlap, the top shape will be cut out of the bottom shape, and the top shape will be deleted. If they don't overlap, the top shape will be deleted.
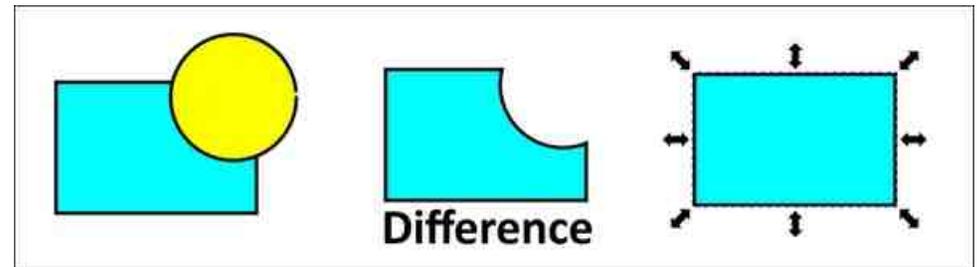
You can take more than one shape away, separately, or, using the Union operation on the objects you want to cut out, do it once.

Intersection

If Intersection is performed on these two items while they are overlapping, the only thing left will be the part of each shape that they have in common. If they don't overlap, there is no Intersection, and the operation removes both shapes.
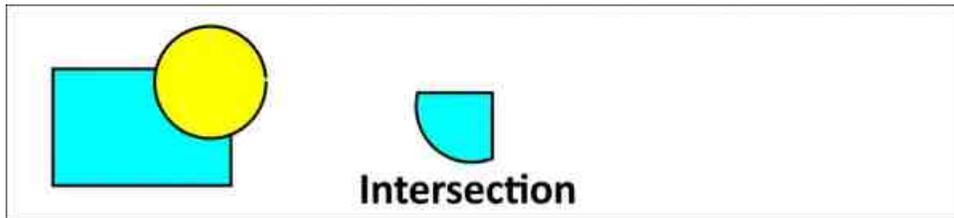
Exclusion

In Exclusion, overlapping shapes will have the part they have in common removed. If they don't overlap, they will both have the bottom item's color.
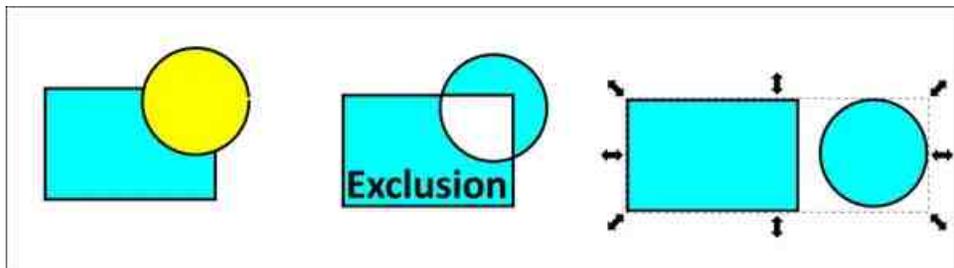
If you have an object you want to just cut a piece out of, Exclusion will work. Remember, both objects have to be paths (so an imported image won't work). In this operation, the white letters in the heart are actually a hole and an object placed behind them will show through (right, top).
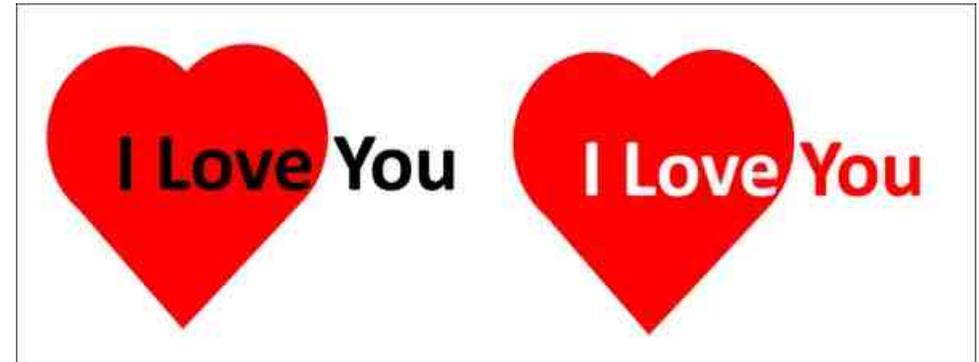
Division

In Division, the bottom shape will be cut along the edge of the overlapping top shape. If they don't overlap, the top shape will disappear.
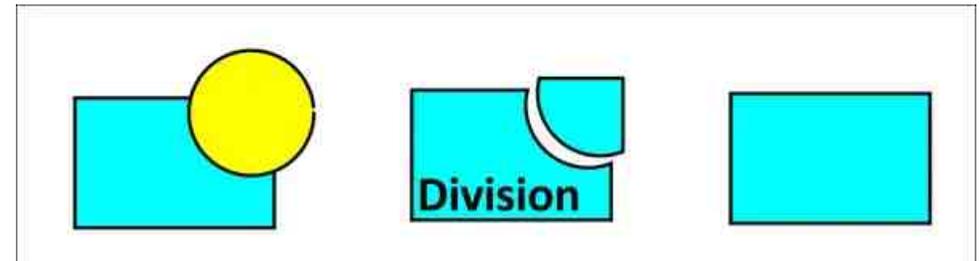
An easy use for this would be anything you want to show in two pieces, like a pie chart. You can do it more than once. Just choose the ones you want to cut out and use union first (two at a time).
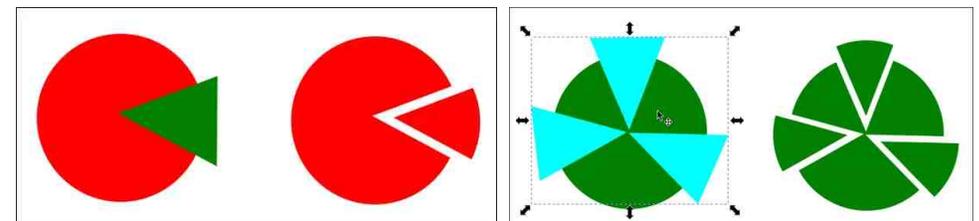
Cut Path

Cut Path is similar to Division, except that it removes the fill color from your object. If the objects are overlapping, it will cut the bottom object and remove the fill, and the top object will disappear. If they don't overlap the top object will disappear and the bottom fill will be removed.
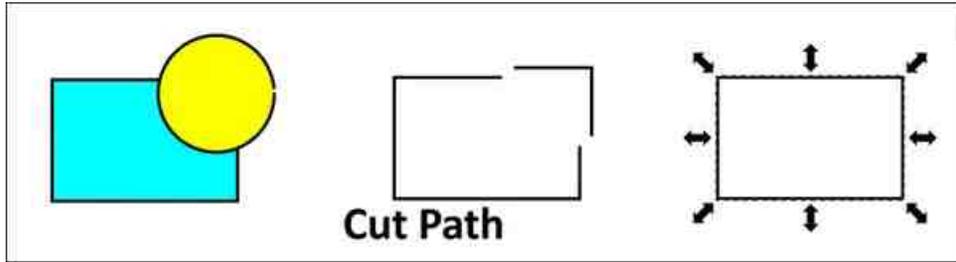
Combine

Combine does what it sounds like, combining the two objects and using the top object's fill color. If they overlap, the strokes are saved, which makes it different from Union. Combine makes the two objects sub-paths, which means you can edit them with the nodes tool. If they don't overlap, they are "grouped" and the fill color of the top object is kept.
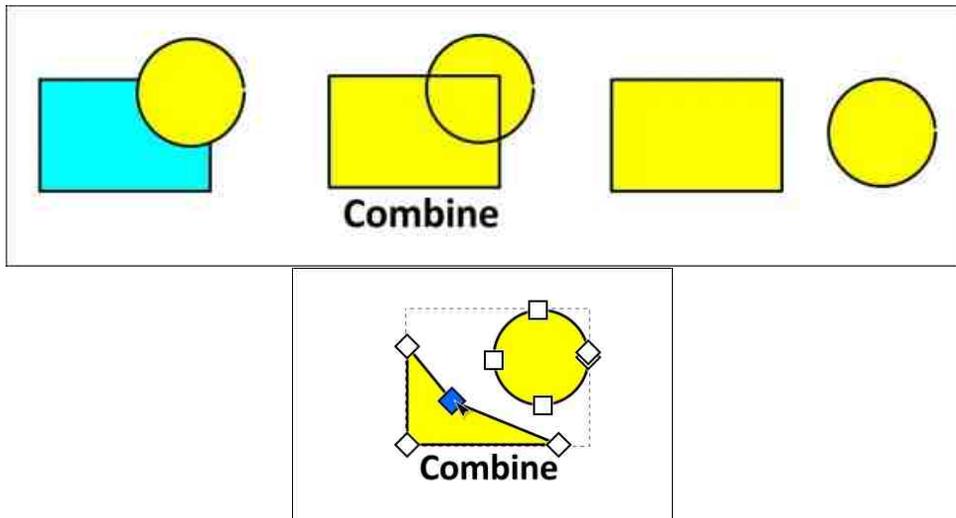
Combine works on more than two objects, too. Going back to our pie, you can draw your lines to make the pieces. Before you use division, select the lines and use Combine, then use Division (right, top).
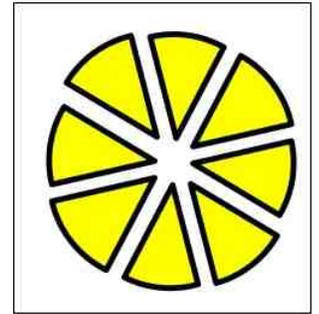
Break Apart

This is kind of an undo for Combine (or even Exclusion). If you had combined two objects, and later decided you wanted them separate again, you could use Break Apart. Depending on what your object looks like, you might get some extra pieces. On this one I used Exclusion, and got the white spaces, which were transparent. If I decided I didn't want those "holes", I could use Break Apart to restore the objects as they were.
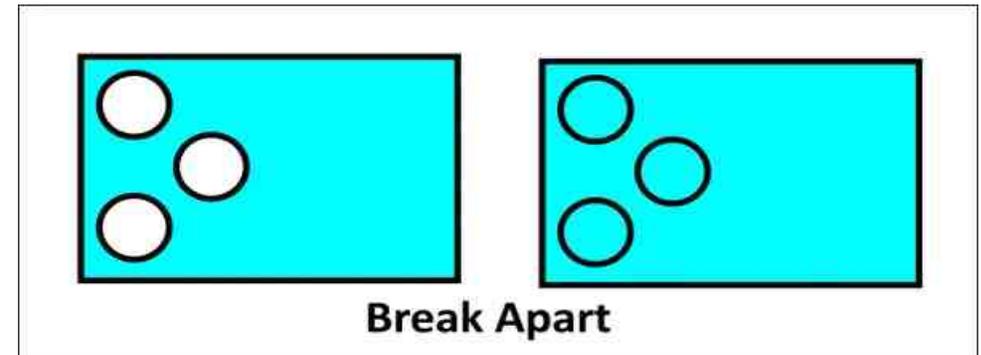

Split Path

Split Path is kind of an undo for Combine, undoing the sub-paths. However, if the sub-paths are overlapping, it doesn't do anything. If the sub-paths are not overlapping, it will separate them. Actually, the best use I've seen for Split Path is on text editing. When you create text and use Split Path, it separates the letters so you can deal with one at a time. This is especially useful if you want to spread your letters out unevenly. On the left, the whole word was one object, but on the right, each letter is its own object (next page, top left).
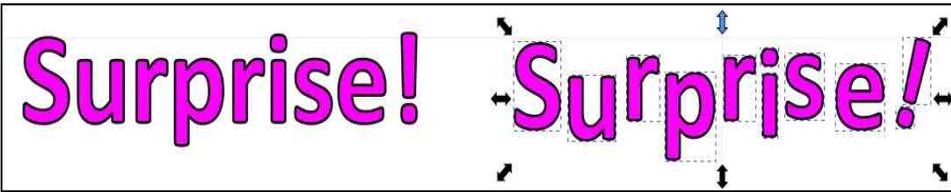
Fracture

Fracture cuts objects into pieces according to their stroke lines. It can work on more than two objects.
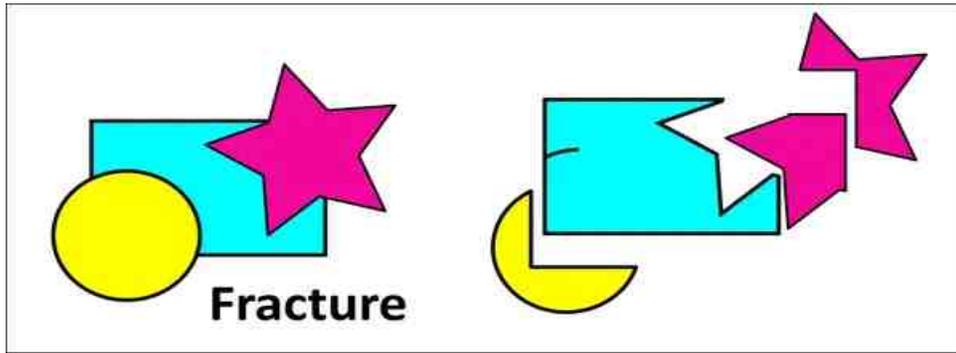
Going back to our pie, you can do the whole thing in one step, rather than using combine and division. Draw your circle and your lines, and select everything, then just use Fracture. My Inkscape must be weird, because when I did that I lost one piece of my pie.
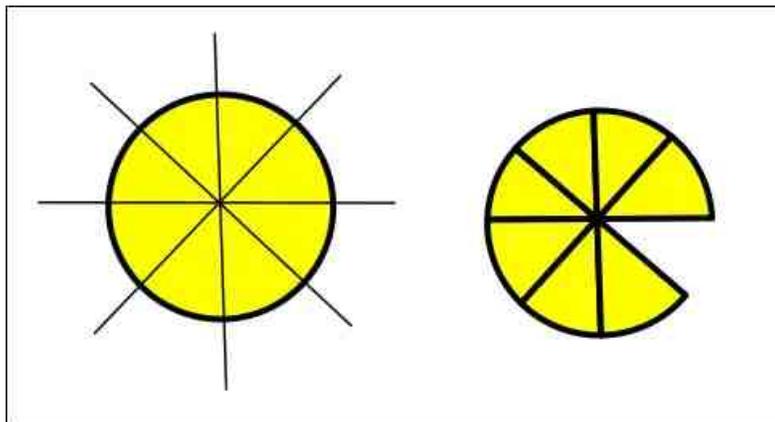
Flatten

Flatten is interesting as well! Flatten divides everything, making lines and fill colors separate.
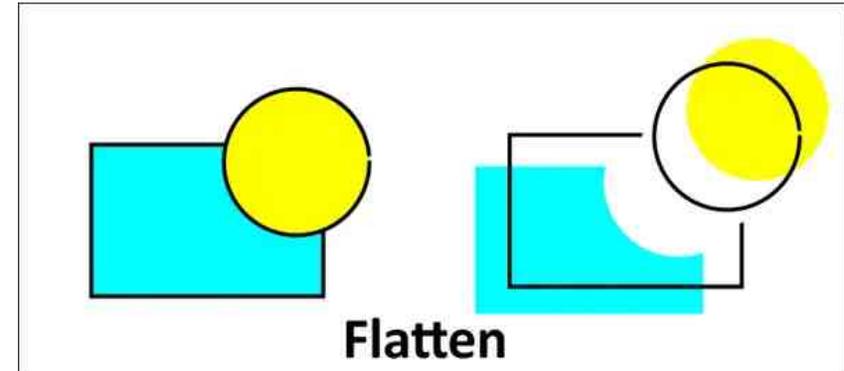
This could be useful if you were creating an object that had 2 or 3 objects, and you wanted to save them all but delete what's under them. Flatten can retain the original objects where some other operations won't. Here I created a square and a circle. I want to make a transparent area behind the circle and then resize the circle rather than getting rid of it. I used Flatten.
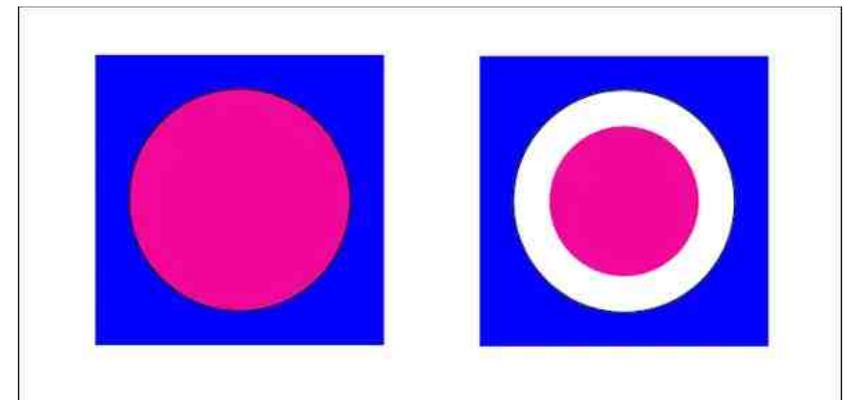
I hope you found some ideas to put to use that will make Inkscape easier for you!

I had help from a video from Sweater Cat.

ICYMI: Mental Health Apps Could Expose Users' Sensitive Medical Info

by Paul Arnote (parnote)

Microsoft

Microsoft has hit a major milestone in a project that could end the digital dark age, according to an article from TechRepublic. Their researchers have found a way to pack nearly 5 terabytes of data, roughly the equivalent of 2 million printed books, onto a piece of glass about the size of a drink coaster (75 by 75 by 2 millimeters thick). Unlike the hard drives or magnetic tapes used today, which tend to fail or decay within a decade or two, this glass storage is designed to keep information safe for at least 10,000 years. According to the Microsoft Research Blog, "Glass is a permanent data storage material that is resistant to water, heat, and dust." This durability means that once data is etched inside, it stays there. Richard Black, the research director for Project Silica at

Microsoft Research, told Nature: "The nice thing about the glass is, once it's written, it's immutable. You're done." The real breakthrough here isn't just the longevity, but the cost. Previously, this tech required incredibly expensive, high-purity silica. Now, the team has successfully moved the technology to borosilicate glass, the same sturdy material used to make Pyrex dishes and oven doors. By switching to a material found in everyday kitchens, Microsoft has cleared a massive hurdle for making this technology affordable enough for actual use. The system has also become much leaner. While older versions required a complex array of cameras to read the data, the new version needs only one. This makes the hardware smaller, faster, and much easier to build at scale.

If you're a fan of chatbots like ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini, it might seem like a no-brainer to ask the AI to generate passwords for you, according to an article from Lifehacker. You might like how they handle other tasks for you, so it might make sense that something seemingly so high-tech yet accessible could produce secure passwords for your accounts. But LLMs (large language models) are not necessarily good at everything, and creating good passwords just so happens to be among those faults. As highlighted by Malwarebytes Labs, researchers recently investigated AI-generated passwords, and evaluated their security. In short? The findings aren't good.

Researchers tested password generation across ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini, and discovered that the passwords were "highly predictable" and "not truly random." Hackers can use these limitations to their advantage. Bad actors can run the same prompts as researchers (or, presumably, end users) and collect the results into a bank of common passwords. If chatbots repeat passwords in their generations, it stands to reason that many people might be using the same passwords generated by those chatbots — or trying passwords that follow the same pattern. If so, hackers could simply try those passwords during break-in attempts, and if you used an LLM to generate your password, it might match. It's tough to say what that exact risk is, but to be truly secure, each of your passwords should be totally unique. Potentially using a password that hackers have in a word bank is an unnecessary risk.

Protein dominates the grocery shelves: Protein chips. Protein cookies. Protein water. It's in the headlines, too: January's new US dietary guidelines raised the recommended amount from 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram body weight to 1.2 to 1.6 grams. **Yet there's a cadre of scientists studying a contrary phenomenon: In critters from single-celled yeast to insects to rodents, cutting protein intake to measly levels makes them live *longer***, according to an article from Knowable Magazine. Could it work for people? To be clear: The body needs protein to build and repair

its parts, and a diet with about 7 percent or less of its calories from protein is a recipe for malnutrition, not centenarian status. But studying protein restriction in lab animals helps scientists learn how animals sense nutrients, how their bodies strategically respond to excess or to shortage, and how all of this affects their health and longevity. And that could carry lessons for human beings.

Image by PDPics from Pixabay

Several mental health mobile apps with millions of downloads on Google Play contain security vulnerabilities that could expose users' sensitive medical information, according to an article from Bleeping Computer. In one of the apps, security researchers discovered more than 85 medium- and high-severity vulnerabilities that could be exploited to compromise users' therapy data and privacy. Some of the products are AI companions designed to help people suffering from clinical depression, multiple forms of anxiety, panic attacks, stress, and bipolar disorder. At least six of the ten analyzed apps state that user conversations or chats remain private, or are

encrypted securely on the vendor's servers. "Mental health data carries unique risks. On the dark web, therapy records sell for $1,000 or more per record, far more than credit card numbers," says Sergey Toshin, founder of mobile security company Oversecured.

At least 25 million people have had their personal information stolen in a major hack on business services company Conduent. The data breach itself isn't new — it was initially disclosed in January 2025, and Conduent has already notified millions of individuals whose data was compromised in the incident. However, **the breach is now believed to be larger in scale than previously reported**, possibly among the largest to affect healthcare, according to an article from Lifehacker. In January 2025, Conduent suffered an outage that was later confirmed to be the result of a "cybersecurity incident." The disruption lasted several days, during which agencies across the U.S. were unable to process some benefit payments. While the breach was discovered in January, hackers reportedly gained access to Conduent's systems months earlier on October 21, 2024. The Safepay ransomware gang later took credit for the attack. While Conduent confirmed in April 2025 that client information had been stolen in the breach, it didn't begin notifying affected individuals until October. According to those notices, the compromised data included names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, health insurance policy information, and medical information.

Google has released a security update for its Chrome browser that addresses three high- severity vulnerabilities, which could pose risk to users, according to an article from eSecurityWeek. One of the vulnerabilities, CVE-2026-3061, allows "… a remote attacker to perform an out-of-bounds memory read via a crafted HTML page," said NIST in its advisory. The security update addresses three High severity vulnerabilities — CVE-2026-3061, CVE-2026-3062, and CVE-2026-3063 — spanning Chrome's Media component, the Tint WebGPU shader compiler, and Chrome DevTools. Two of the three flaws involve out-of-bounds memory access, a vulnerability class commonly associated with remote code execution (RCE), memory disclosure, and sandbox escape chains when paired with additional weaknesses.

The ShinyHunters extortion group has published personal information in more than 12 million records allegedly stolen from CarGurus, a U.S.-based digital auto platform, according to an article from BleepingComputer. CarGurus is a publicly traded automotive research and shopping company that operates in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. Its website has an estimated 40 million monthly visitors and helps people find,

compare, and contact sellers of new and used vehicles. On February 21, the threat group published a 6.1GB archive containing 12.4 million records, saying it was from CarGurus. A day later, the HaveIBeenPwned (HIBP) data breach monitoring and alerting platform added the dataset, listing the following data types as compromised: Email addresses, IP addresses, full names, phone numbers, physical addresses, user account IDs, finance pre-qualification application data, finance application outcomes, dealer account details, and subscription information.

New photos captured by NASA's Curiosity rover show that Mars' giant, spiderweb-like "boxwork" features are covered in tiny, never-before-seen nodules that bear a striking resemblance to arachnid eggs, according to an article from LiveSciencePlus. And researchers are struggling to explain them. Over the last 8 months, Curiosity has been closely examining a series of interconnected rocky ridges, dubbed "boxwork," on the slopes of Mount Sharp, in the Gale Crater. These ridges, which cover an area up to 12 miles (20 kilometers) across, were created billions of years ago as ancient Martian groundwater seeped beneath the planet's surface. They were first spotted by orbital spacecraft in 2006, but they have remained largely unexplored until now.

If you are planning spring or summer travel, you may want to slow down and pay close attention to the process. **Scammers have a lot to gain by targeting travelers: The Federal Trade Commission tracked more than 58,000**

reports of travel, vacation, and timeshare plan fraud in 2024 totaling $274 million in losses, according to an article from Lifehacker. And AI is helping them get away with it. Some of the most common travel scams involve impersonation: of people, brands, and listings. For example, fraudsters will post fake vacation rental listings and collect payment (sometimes by pressuring you to use wire transfers or peer-to-peer apps) and leave you stranded with no place to stay or stuck in accommodations way worse than what you booked and paid for. On the back end of a trip, a dishonest host may try to make fraudulent damage claims and pressure you into paying hundreds or thousands of dollars for something you didn't do. Scammers will also impersonate travel agents and booking platforms, allowing them to collect sensitive personal information and money before you clock the fraud. Booking.com is a common target for scams. Multiple campaigns have used a spoofed version of the site to spread malware — another known as "I Paid Twice" targeted both Booking.com and Expedia.

Scientists from institutions across the US have now developed a strikingly "universal" vaccine, which has protected mice against a range of viruses, bacteria, and even allergies, according to an article from ScienceAlert. The new GLA-3M-052-LS+OVA vaccine can be delivered as a nasal spray. Three doses protected mice from infection from SARS-CoV-2 and other coronaviruses for three months, and reduced the viral load in their lungs 700-fold, compared to unvaccinated mice. The vaccine also accelerated the mice's immune response to SARS-CoV-2. While their lungs' adaptive

Image by Thorsten Frenzel from Pixabay

immune systems typically take up to two weeks to respond to the virus, those with the vaccine took as little as three days to launch a counter-attack. In follow-up tests, the vaccine was also found to protect the animals against bacterial infections. That included *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Acinetobacter baumannii*, both of which are often acquired in hospital settings and are becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics. Most surprisingly, the vaccine also cut the risk of asthma. When vaccinated mice were exposed to dust mites, their asthmatic responses, such as increased immune cell production and excess lung mucus, were reduced for three months as well.

A simple handful of pecans each day could deliver heart-health benefits, a new study found, according to an article from Fox News. The research, done by the Illinois Institute of Technology and published in the journal Nutrients, analyzed more than 20 years of studies exploring how pecans affect heart and metabolic health. The study was a review of

existing research, not a new clinical trial, and examined 52 studies conducted between 2000 and 2025, including trials involving human participants. The most consistent findings related to cholesterol. People who regularly ate pecans showed improvements in total cholesterol and LDL, often referred to as "bad" cholesterol, compared to those who did not include nuts in their diets. Some studies also reported healthier triglyceride levels. Pecans are rich in monounsaturated fats, fiber and antioxidants, which are nutrients commonly associated with improved cardiovascular health, the researchers noted.

Scientists at the University of Waterloo are working on a new cancer treatment that uses specially engineered bacteria to consume tumors from the inside, according to an article from Science Daily. The strategy relies on microbes that naturally thrive in oxygen-free environments, which makes the interior of many solid tumors an ideal target. At the center of this approach is Clostridium sporogenes, a bacterium commonly found in soil. It can survive only in places that contain absolutely no oxygen. The inner core of solid tumors is made up of dead cells and lacks oxygen, creating the perfect conditions for this microbe to multiply and spread.

A Florida woman will spend nearly two years behind bars after being found guilty of fraudulently acquiring Microsoft certificate of authenticity (COA) labels and selling them in bulk, according to an article from The Register. Heidi Richards, 52, operated the company Trinity Software Distribution (Trinity)

Image by Ashby C Sorensen from Pixabay

and, according to court documents, acquired Microsoft COA labels "from a variety of sources" that were separated from the software packages with which they were intended to be paired. Richards, also known as Heidi Hastings, Heidi Shafer, and Heidi Williams, paid more than $5 million for Microsoft COA labels between 2018 and 2023. According to the indictment [PDF], she primarily procured keys for different versions of Windows 10 (Home/ Pro) and Microsoft Office (2019/2021/Home/ Student). Richards obtained thousands of keys during this time, and instructed employees to take the COA labels and transcribe the product activation codes written on them into a spreadsheet. She then sent the codes to buyers who could redeem them. In plain terms, prosecutors said Richards was illegally obtaining Microsoft software keys and selling them at heavily discounted prices, all while personally profiting.

Ericsson Inc., the U.S. subsidiary of Swedish networking and telecommunications giant Ericsson, says attackers have stolen data belonging to over 15,000 employees and customers after hacking one of its service providers, according to an article from BleepingComputer. Headquartered in Stockholm and founded in 1876, the parent company is a communications tech leader with nearly 90,000 employees worldwide. In data breach notification letters sent to affected individuals and filed with the California Attorney General on Monday, Ericsson said that a service provider who was storing personal data for employees and customers discovered a breach on April 28, 2025. After detecting the incident, the service provider notified the FBI and hired external cybersecurity experts to assess the extent of the breach and its impact. The investigation, which was completed last month, found that a total of 15,661 individuals had their data exposed in the incident. However, Ericsson noted that the compromised provider has yet to find evidence that the data has been misused since the breach.

Another month, another critical flaw found in Google Chrome. Who'd've thunk it? **Google is pushing an emergency patch for a Google Chrome zero-day vulnerability** that has been exploited in the wild, and a second zero-day has

been identified and is expected to be fixed in a future update, according to an article from Lifehacker. As a reminder, zero-days are security vulnerabilities that have been actively exploited or publicly disclosed before the developer releases an official fix. These latest Chrome bugs are the second and third zero-days addressed so far in 2026.

Image by narciso1 from Pixabay

When you hit the share button on social media apps such as Instagram, Facebook, or Threads, these sites tack on a tracker to the link you're sharing, according to an article from Lifehacker. This tracker means that Instagram can tell who you've shared the link with, and it likely uses this information to further optimize its algorithm for ads. While the tech here is sneaky, it is easy to remove tracking information from these links. It's actually pretty easy to spot a link that has trackers. To check it out, copy the link to any Instagram post and paste it somewhere safe, like your notes app. A normal Instagram link looks like this: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVrMKVVAaBi/. The

same link with tracking has a bunch of additional characters at the end: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVrMKVVAaBi/?igsh=cGd5cGx4enJmcThu. Every character after that "?" is used to identify that your profile shared the link. While this example highlights Instagram, the same thing happens on many other apps and websites. Facebook, Threads, Reddit, YouTube, Amazon, and many others use some kind of tracking parameters in links to see how people arrived at a certain post or a page. These trackers have some legitimate use cases, such as tracking affiliate links to pay commissions or keeping tabs on social media traffic. In some cases, however, these tracking links serve no purpose other than to identify who shared the link with you, and who you're sharing links with. That can be used to identify people you're close to, which in turn, helps social media giants deliver targeted ads to you and your friends or loved ones. It can also compromise your privacy, since someone opening your link will see your account was the one to originally share it — even if you don't share that link directly with them.

People with a genetic risk for Alzheimer's disease did not have an expected increase in cognitive decline or dementia if they consumed relatively large amounts of meat, a Swedish cohort study showed, according to an article from MedPage Today. Higher total meat consumption -- comparing the top and bottom quintiles -- was tied to better-than-expected cognitive trajectories and reduced dementia risk in people who were either APOE4 homozygotes (APOE4/4) or had one APOE3 and one APOE4 allele (APOE3/4), said Jakob Norgren, PhD, of

the Karolinska Institute in Huddinge, and colleagues. Regardless of APOE genotype, a higher ratio of processed meat to total meat was unfavorably associated with dementia risk (subdistribution HR 1.14, P=0.04). There was no substantial difference between unprocessed red meat and poultry. In post-hoc analyses, all-cause mortality was lower in APOE3/4 and APOE4/4 carriers who ate more unprocessed meat.

Scientific publisher Springer Nature has begun to retract dozens of papers that relied on a dataset fraught with ethical and reliability concerns, according to an exclusive article from The Transmitter. Five papers have been retracted since 16 November, and 33 more retractions are planned, says Tim Kersjes, Springer Nature's head of research integrity, resolutions. The papers attempted to train neural networks to distinguish between autistic and non-autistic children in a dataset containing photos of children's faces. Retired engineer Gerald Piosenka created the dataset in 2019 by downloading photos of children from "websites devoted to the subject of autism," according to a description of the dataset's methods, and uploaded it to Kaggle, a site owned by Google that hosts public datasets for machine-learning practitioners. The dataset contains more than 2,900 photos of children's faces, half of which

are labeled as autistic and the other half as not autistic. Without identifying each child in the dataset, there is no way to confirm that any of them do or do not have autism, Bishop says.

Image by Mohamed Hassan from Pixabay

Older adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes had a higher risk of dementia, a U.S. prospective cohort study found, according to an article from MedPage Today. Compared with people without diabetes, older adults with type 1 diabetes had a nearly threefold higher risk for incident all-cause dementia over a 2.4-year follow-up period, after adjusting for sociodemographic factors. Those with type 2 diabetes had a roughly twofold increased risk. An estimated 64.5% of dementia cases in people with type 1 diabetes could be attributed to the condition, Jennifer Weuve, MPH, ScD, of Boston University School of Public Health, and colleagues reported in *Neurology*.

If your browser of choice happens to be Firefox, good news: Your web surfing is about to get a bit more private, according to an article from Lifehacker. On March 17, Mozilla announced a number of upcoming updates to Firefox, all under the theme of user customizability. One such option happens to be a built-in VPN that Mozilla will offer users free of charge. This new VPN option in Firefox rolls out March 24, as part of Firefox 149. There are no downloads required, since the VPN is baked into the update: Once it hits your browser, you'll be able to turn on the VPN and start hiding your IP address and location while you use Firefox. The only caveat here is that Mozilla is capping VPN data usage at 50GB per month. The company doesn't say what happens once you hit that data limit, and I've reached out for clarification, but my guess is that the VPN will simply switch off, sending you back to Firefox's default browsing experience—at least until the next month starts, and your data limit resets. Users in the U.S.A., Germany, U.K., and France should see the feature rolling out starting March 24 (so it *should* be available for users in those countries by the time you read this).

A new immunotherapy drug has demonstrated early promise in a recent prostate cancer clinical trial, according to an article from ScienceAlert. The drug, called VIR-5500, is a "masked T-cell engager". This type of immunotherapy ignites our own immune arsenal to fight cancer. In the trial, which is still in progress and has not yet undergone peer review, patients with advanced prostate cancer who had failed to respond to other treatments were given VIR-5500. Remarkably, initial findings showed that in the patients who received the highest doses, 82% saw reductions in their PSA (prostate-specific antigen) levels – a commonly used measure of prostate cancer. Strikingly, nearly half of the patients within this group also showed tumour shrinkage at both the primary tumour sites as well as in metastatic tumours (tumours which had spread from the prostate into different parts of the body).
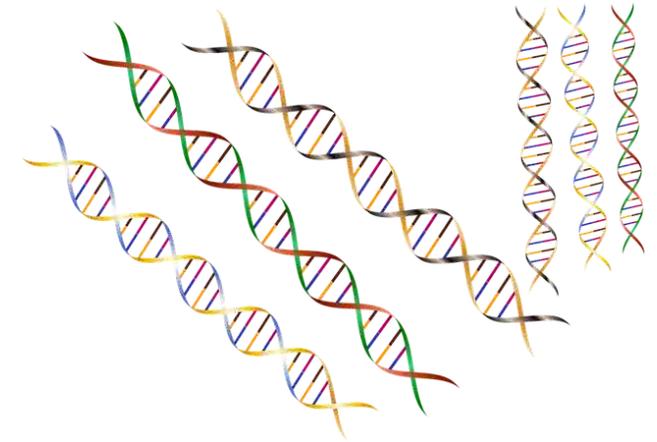

Image by amorimbiotec from Pixabay

Human DNA stores instructions for life in sequences built from just four nucleotides. Those instructions are read in three-letter groups called codons, and each codon tells the cell which amino acid to add when building a protein. Since several codons can specify the same amino acid, these alternative spellings were once thought to be mostly interchangeable. That view has changed. **Scientists now know that some of these synonymous codons help messenger RNA, or mRNA, remain stable and get translated efficiently, while others do not**, according to an article from SciTechDaily. In effect, two genetic sequences can encode the same protein but still behave differently inside a cell. mRNAs rich in non-optimal codons are translated less efficiently and are often broken

down more quickly, but the mechanism human cells used to detect this difference has been unclear. Researchers at Kyoto University and RIKEN, led by Osamu Takeuchi and Takuhiro Ito, set out to solve that puzzle. Their work points to a protein called DHX29 as a key part of the system cells use to read this hidden layer of genetic information.

Imagine landing on Mars and growing your lunch—not with supplies from Earth, but using dust, air, and microbes already there, according to an article from Interesting Engineering. This idea has long sounded like science fiction, mainly because Mars lacks one critical ingredient, fertile soil. Its dusty surface contains minerals, but not the organic nutrients plants need to grow. Now, researchers in Germany have found a clever solution that involves turning Martian-like dust and hardy microbes into a working fertilizer system that can produce edible plants. It's a small but powerful step toward making Mars missions self-sustaining.

It would be tempting to assume there's nothing much of note happening on Mars, but that dusty rusty planet has a lot of interesting stuff going on. Most of it has to do with rocks. Mars has a lot of rocks. In fact, Mars has so many rocks that have undergone all sorts of weathering over the eons that, occasionally, it manages to produce something that looks a bit like an artificial or biological structure, if you squint. **The latest of these fascinating Mars illusions to hit the tabloids is an eye-catching structure, first spotted in 2002, that resembles a three-sided pyramid perched in a**

wind-scoured valley called Candor Chasma, according to an article from ScienceAlert. The claim appears to have gained traction after being shared on X by filmmaker Brian Cory Dobbs, who has previously promoted the idea that NASA imagery contains evidence of artificial structures on Mars. The post quickly spread, with cropped images of the formation circulating across social media and tabloid sites.

The images themselves are real NASA data from orbiters that first photographed the region in 2001. The earliest documented identification of the pyramid-like structure dates back to 2002, when independent researcher Wilmer Faust highlighted a strange feature he spotted in a Mars Global Surveyor (MGS) image, E06-00269.

Posted by mutse, March 2, 2026, running Mate.

Free Software Offers Trust And Privacy; Ring Offers Mass Surveillance

by **Heshan de Silva-Weeramuni**
Free Software Foundation

A lost dog's best friend: that's how Amazon-subsidiary Ring tried to position itself with its 2026 Super Bowl commercial. Trying to collar the doorbell surveillance camera market, Ring presumably hoped for enthusiastic tail-wagging on the public's part when unveiling its "Search Party" feature in the ad. Instead, what Ring unleashed was a flood of ridicule and scorn. Numerous privacy advocates, lawmakers, and civil liberties groups, as well as the ad's viewers, all united to rightly label what Ring was trying to push as nothing but a thinly-veiled wolf-in-sheep's-clothing propaganda campaign for mass surveillance. Amazon's ultimate aim is to monitor humans, not dogs. This point was especially well articulated in a video post by notable dog-lover Matt Nelson, the owner of the social media account WeRateDogs. Even Ring's fellow proprietary software competitor Wyze, sensing a chance to out-alpha an industry top dog, hastily joined the dog-pile with its own parody ad. Tail between its legs, Ring retreated.

In an obvious effort to deflect from their negative intentions, rather than continuing to promote its Search Party feature, on February

Any kind of mass surveillance, especially if it involves nonfree software, is unacceptable.

12, 2026 (four days after the Super Bowl), Ring spread the word that it had ended its partnership with Flock Safety, another controversial mass-surveillance freedom-restricting software outfit. This partnership with Flock (which started in October 2025) was described by Ring as a project "to work together on an integration with Community Requests." Community Requests is Ring's feature which lets police ask for users' Ring footage. In its announcement, Ring was careful to pointedly state that "the integration never launched, so no Ring customer videos were ever sent to Flock Safety." Were they planning to?

A search party for whom exactly?

Flock's freedom-restricting software reads your license plate without your consent, and passes that data on to US law enforcement agencies, also without your consent, and "without a warrant, or probable cause, or even reasonable suspicion of wrongdoing." Perhaps Ring's management hoped that severing links with a fellow corporate mass surveillance peddler was a good way to improve its public perception. After all, Flock is receiving lots of negative scrutiny for gobbling up enormous amounts of data documenting your movements, and then selling that data to US government agencies, including ICE.

Instead, a few days later, 404 Media published an internal email that had been sent to Ring staff by its founder Jamie Siminoff, further cratering its reputation. In his email Siminoff celebrated the rollout of the Search Party feature by declaring that, "I believe that the foundation we created with Search Party, first for finding dogs, will end up becoming one of the most important pieces of tech and innovation to truly unlock the impact of our mission. You can now see a future where we are able to zero out crime in neighborhoods." Clearly, finding dogs is not the ultimate goal for the Search Party feature, unless of course Siminoff believes lost dogs are committing crime in neighborhoods.

When you consider that Amazon's Ring also has a feature called Familiar Faces which allows users to identify individual faces, the connection isn't really that difficult to make between the software's existing or potential capabilities and the stated vision Siminoff has for the future of the technology. Couple that with how law enforcement agencies or ordinary Ring users may be able to activate other people's cameras through the Search Party feature, people's reaction of "this is creepy" becomes even more justified. Picture Ring users activating their neighbors' cameras to follow you home if they want to know where you live. Or tracking you on a public street because in their eyes you "don't look like the type of person who belongs here." Or because it doesn't like what you believe in, a government agency could commandeer a vast camera network to trail you to a public square or a friend's home where you're peacefully exercising your rights to free assembly and free speech. We should all be troubled.

Trust, data privacy, and free software

Unlike the intrusive proprietary nonfree software Ring wants to push on us, the free software philosophy is built on the fundamental belief that software should respect you. Rather than you having to blindly trust a corporation with your data and hope for the best, the four freedoms embed trust and transparency — the freedom of a computer user to run, study and edit, copy, and share the software they use. When we understand and enact these simple but fundamental principles, we also virtually guarantee a host of other personal freedoms. This is in stark contrast to freedom-restricting proprietary software created by unaccountable corporations or government agencies across the world. Instead of building user freedom at its center, giving you the respect to make decisions about the technology you use in your daily life, proprietary software instead insists it acts for you, and then insist you trust it by simply taking its word that it will not curtail your freedom.

Because you don't control your data or the software used to access it, systems like Ring can and will share your data with third parties without your consent, including with police forces who don't have a warrant. Threats to freedom have only increased since the shift from storing our media locally and using local software, to storing them on other people's servers and using other people's servers. Methods of mass surveillance have become slipperier, more privatized, and increasingly cloaked in slick corporate marketing campaigns, like those that tugs at your heartstrings about lost dogs. And of course the punchline: the deployment of these types of mass surveillance structures that trap us all are also designed to be paid for and installed by us, either through our taxes or through our wallets but without our control. Almost unconsciously, we are being asked to sleepwalk into a future where we live inside a mass surveillance panopticon we have no control over.

Free software has a vital role to play in successfully resisting this march toward mass surveillance. We can individually and collectively help build the more just and transparent world we all deserve through free software that embraces user freedom.

Combating mass surveillance by taking back control over your own data

In practical terms, what can you do? Consider opposing mass surveillance by not having a camera (free or nonfree) stalking your neighborhood. If you absolutely must have a home camera to keep an eye on your dog, you can consider a DIY approach because we are not aware of a good free software camera system. But we understand that it may require some effort on your part, or may mean you have to turn to someone else to help set it up for you. But though such a DIY approach may require more work to set up, choosing not to contribute to mass surveillance is something we will all be grateful to you for. But whatever you do, avoid computing that uses Service as a Software Substitute (SaaSS) models. These remotely-hosted programs collect data from users to do computing that they could do on their own machines. There's no real way to see what these servers are doing with your data, and like in the case with Amazon's Ring, you are asked to take the corporation's word for it that they are being responsible. You can also explore the broader resources we point to in our surveillance campaign pages.

One last thing: of course there is a key analog method to combating intrusive mass surveillance: talk to people about the software's inherent nonfree nature. Talk to your family, friends, colleagues, lawmakers, neighbors —

especially your neighbors who use doorbell systems that spread mass surveillance. Let them know what free software can offer them, and help them understand that free software is about user freedom. Let's further the collective public conversation about what we stand to lose in a world where freedom-restricting corporations like Amazon, with their clearly described mission of mass surveillance, are allowed to run rampant. Together we can send mass surveillance peddlers to where they deserve to be: the doghouse. You know your dog will agree, and who knows: maybe your cat will, too.
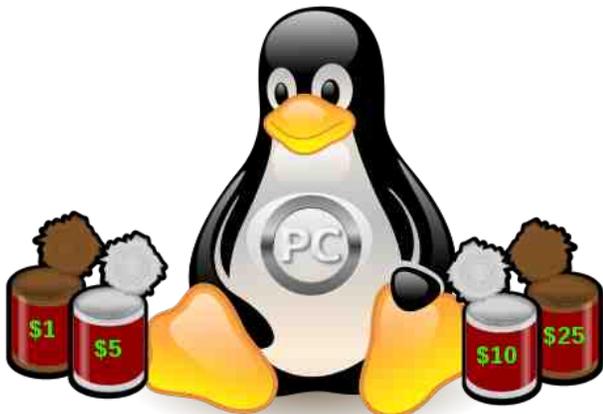
Screenshot Showcase

Posted by tbs, March 1, 2026, running KDE.

Making Quality Music Easily and Cheaply on PCLinuxOS, Part 3

by Alessandro Ebersol (Agent Smith)

Continuing the series of articles about music making, I will discuss the first software here, Schism Tracker.

Schism Tracker is a music tracker module editor that aims to reproduce the look and feel of Impulse Tracker as faithfully as possible. It can load the most common tracker formats, supports saving in IT and S3M formats, and also allows exporting to WAV and AIFF.

A Little History: Impulse Tracker

The Impulse Tracker (a.k.a. IT) was simply sensational. For its time, it was revolutionary: 64 channels, 99 samples, real stereo support on the Sound Blaster (instead of just full left and full right sound), music rendered in disk, and a host of other incredible features that made the

Scream

Tracker obsolete and also dealt a hard blow to the Fast Tracker. Of course, die-hard Fast Tracker 2 users didn't change their minds, because the Impulse Tracker had a completely different user interface... and what idiot would want to learn a completely new interface after having assimilated all the subtle nuances of the one they already knew?

Unfortunately, since Impulse Tracker was written for MS-DOS — and, moreover, 100% in assembly language — over time it became increasingly difficult to make it work on newer computers and virtually impossible to use on non-Windows computers. Windows-based trackers gradually began to emerge (the best known being Modplug), and eventually some cross-platform trackers also appeared, but none of them had the same look and feel that die-hard IT fans had known and loved. Of course, they could switch to something else, but what madman would want to learn a completely new

interface after having internalized all the subtle nuances of the one he already knew?

Several projects were initiated to create clones of IT, the most notable being Cheesetracker. However, none of these programs aimed to offer the same user experience, lacked essential features such as a fully keyboard-controlled interface, or were generally unstable, and most were abandoned by their developers. The main goal of Schism Tracker is to fill this long-awaited gap.

Enter the Schism Tracker
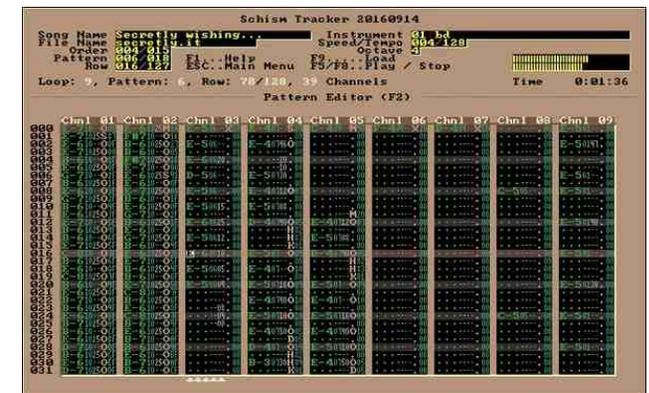
Impulse Tracker was a program used to create high-quality music without the need for specialized and expensive equipment. The hardware requirements were easily met: any IBM 386+ compatible computer (although a 486+ was recommended) and a VGA or higher video card.

Unfortunately, Schism Tracker has somewhat less modest hardware requirements. This is partly due to the fact that Schism Tracker was written in portable C, but also to the various layers of abstraction (the host operating system, the emulated VGA video card). You will need at least a 166 MHz PowerPC or a 233 MHz x86 to achieve acceptable performance. Other architectures and platforms will have different requirements, as well as different definitions of "acceptable performance." These are just guidelines.

Schism Tracker was created by Storlek and Mrs. Brisby, using code from the Modplug player by Olivier Lapicque. The project is based on Impulse Tracker by Jeffrey Lim, as we saw above.

Getting to know SchismTracker

Schism Tracker simulates the VGA display in a specific VGA text mode that Impulse Tracker used when running on PC-DOS. Schism Tracker faithfully reproduces the Impulse Tracker user interface, including its pseudographic buttons and scroll bars. You can use the mouse to manipulate the user interface, but Schism Tracker, like Impulse Tracker, works best when operated with the keyboard.

So, Schism Tracker will display the window above the first time it is run.

So let's start getting to know the program and, at the same time, let's try creating a song, which will make it easier to understand the program and the process of creating music with modules in Schism Tracker.

Starting the Schism Tracker
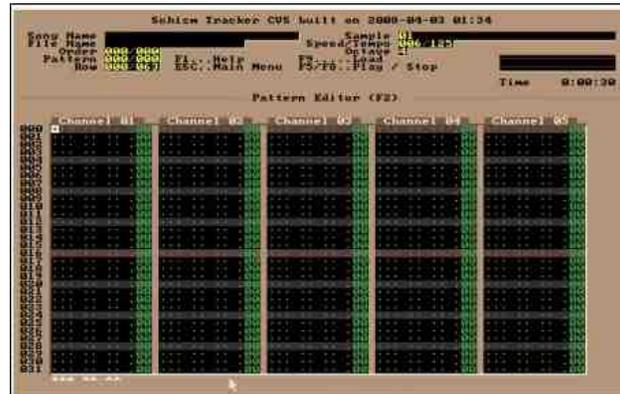
The initial window can confuse beginners: the program seemingly offers the option to load a file, even though you want to create a new one. In reality, the new empty project is already open.

This is a very important detail that makes navigating the editor easier — all the windows needed for the work are opened using the function keys F1 to F12.

For example, you can open the pattern editor by pressing the F2 key — this is where musicians spend most of their time. Since the project is empty, the pattern editor doesn't yet have any data. For example, if you press the Q key, the editor will add "C-5 01". This roughly means: play the instrument note #1 with the parameters "C-5". But when you try to play the melody, there will be no sound because there is no instrument. The tracker simply doesn't know how to play that note. It is necessary to provisionally create the instrument.

Sample - a short excerpt of a digital instrument, voice, or other sound effects. Most trackers allow sample repetition, simulating a note through a prolonged sound. To view a list of samples in Schism Tracker, use the F3 key:

Schism Tracker does not have a library of samples or instruments. It is also not possible to create them within Schism Tracker.

We need to import ready-made files, such as WAV files. These are easily found on search engines by searching for "music sample download". Or you can use samples from any

tracker that has its own sample library. For example, MadTracker. A simple set of MadTracker samples can be downloaded here.


By default, all samples are inactive, and the "play" button appears in dark red. To load a sample from the file, simply press the Enter key and select the file. When adding a sample, Schism Tracker automatically asks if you want to create an instrument that corresponds to that sample. You should answer yes.

After adding a sample to the instrument list (F4), the list looks something like this:

Now you can begin writing the melody itself. To do so, open the pattern editor (Press F2).
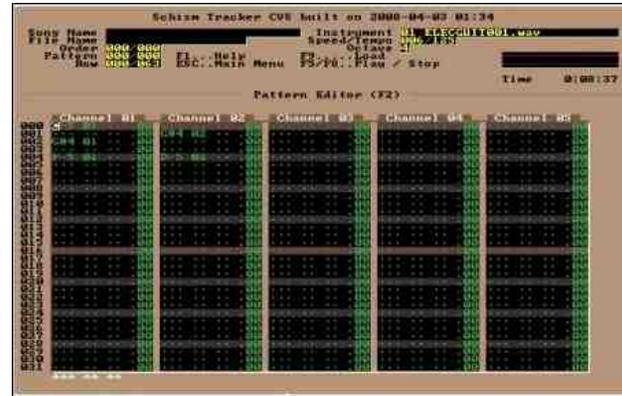
Notes played on the main keyboard. Try to understand everything! In fact, the uniqueness of the proposed sponsored tracker technique is that, with it, you can compose your music simply by listening to the sounds of an instrument and choosing the appropriate sound. For example, a popular Russian song, "The Swordfish Was Born in the Forest," for Schism.

Tracker could look something like this (right):

When working on the melody, make frequent use of keyboard shortcuts. The Ctrl + Backspace combination discards all changes to the composition (undo function), Alt + Backspace undoes the last change (undo function), and clicking + or - changes the current pattern.

If you want to replace an incorrect music note, simply position the cursor over it and insert the correct music note.

| Pattern 0		Pattern 1	
Chan 0	Chan 2	Chan 0	Chan 2
G-4 02		A-4 02	F-4 04
			A-4 04
E-5 02	C-4 04	A-4 02	C-5 04
	E-4 04		
E-5 02	G-4 04	F-5 02	F-4 04
			G#4 04
D-5 02	G-4 04	F-5 02	C-5 04
	B-4 04		
E-5 02	D-5 04	E-5 02	E-4 04
			G#4 04
C-5 02	C-4 04	D-5 02	B-4 04
	E-4 04		
G-4 02	G-4 04	C-5 02	A-4 04
			C-5 04
C-4 02		G-5 02	E-4 04
G-4 02		E-5 02	E-4 04
			F-4 04
E-5 02	C-4 04	E-5 02	A-4 04
	E-4 04		
E-5 02	G-4 04	D-5 02	G-4 04
			B-4 04
F-5 02	F-4 04	E-5 02	D-5 04
	A-4 04		
A-5 02	C-4 04	C-5 02	C-4 04
			E-4 04
G-5 02	C-4 04		G-4 04
	E-4 04		
	G-4 04		
	C-4 04		
G-5 02			

The current cursor position should be cleared using the Del key. The Del key not only clears the current position but also increases all values on the next line. Editor options can be accessed by pressing F2, and pattern options by pressing Ctrl + F2. Reproduce this pattern using the F6 key (next page, top left).

You can save the track via the main menu (Esc), selecting "File Menu" - "Save Current".

Or you can simply press F10. This will open a window similar to the one we saw at startup:
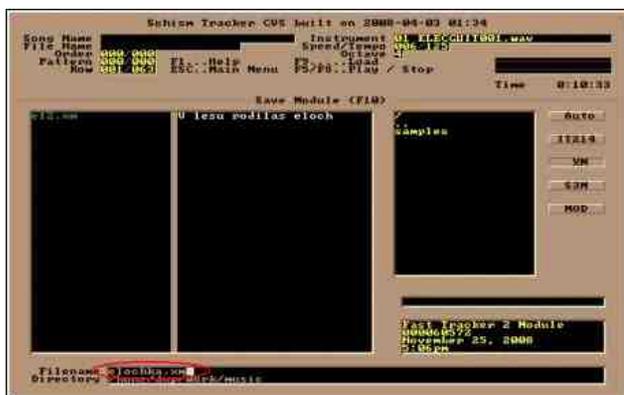

Here, you will need to enter a filename and select its type (Schism can select the type automatically).

Next, you can select the music variables: the title, playback speed, tempo, and other details. The music variables window can be opened by pressing the F12 key (center, top).

But even after the current action, our work doesn't play when we press the F5 key. This is because the composition can consist of several

patterns, and the Tracker needs to know the order in which they should be played. The order can be set in the schedule list (F11).
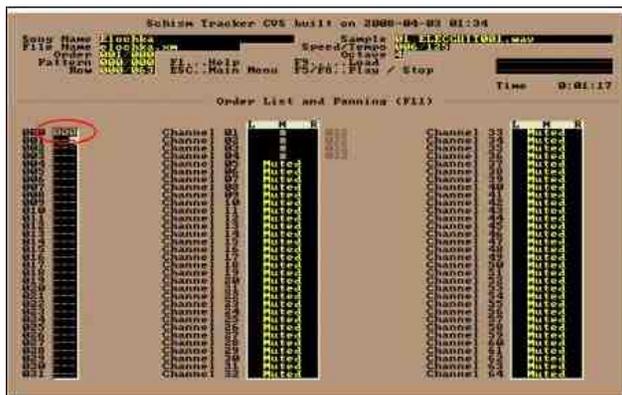
By the way, to save your current progress, you can use the standard keyboard shortcut Ctrl + S. Save frequently! Now, any player will be able to play your music. Schism Tracker will also be able to play it in its full version (right, top).

Well friends, I've written a brief introduction on how to use the Schism Tracker software. To learn more, if you're interested in delving deeper into this program, I suggest reading the official

program manual, which is 69 pages long, written in 2007 and available for download here: https://github.com/churris-x/trackers/blob/master/schism%20tracker%20user%20manual.pdf

Okay?

I hope you're enjoying this series, and that you can learn how to make your own music without having to spend a fortune or learn extremely complicated theories. A big hug and see you next time!

The PCLinuxOS Magazine Created with Scribus
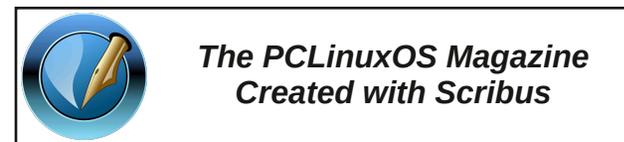
Creating A Memorial Booklet With Typst

by David Pardue (kalwisti)

I recently produced a memorial booklet for the 50th reunion of my high school class. The Reunion Committee planned a service to honor the memory of our deceased classmates, and wanted a program booklet for the ceremony. Among the variety of tools available — such as Scribus, Adobe InDesign, Canva, LaTeX — I have never used Scribus or InDesign (and I did not have enough time to learn those programs before our deadline). I have basic skills with Canva; although it was straightforward to create a funeral booklet, I struggled to make a decent two-column layout with automatic text overflow.

Since the memorial booklet is more text-oriented than graphics-heavy, I thought LaTeX and Typst would be good candidates. I knew that LaTeX could handle this task, based on previous experience, but I wanted to try and replicate it with Typst. Typst ably produced two attractive booklets, so I would like to share my work, in case you need to create similar documents.

Design Considerations

I am neither a graphic designer nor a trained typographer. However, based on my research, the (typographic) goal for these booklets is to aim for crisp, clean and conservative design. Avoid using fonts with too much personality, and stay away from unconventional text alignments.

Avoid the temptation to "overdesign": limit your use of graphics and color(s). Avoid excessive fonts; a common tip is to use one serif font in tandem with a simple, readable sans-serif font. Avoid too much clutter. The key advice is that you should not get overly creative with something as serious as a funeral program.

"Celebration of Life" Booklet

Let's begin with an (anonymized) Celebration of Life booklet. I have publicly shared my project from the Typst web app; it is a read-only link, which means that you can view the files within the project and can download the PDF which it generates (image top, right).

https://typst.app/project/
rZq9RCkcAWCazxHveFjySh

The task of creating a funeral program falls during a time of grief, extreme stress, and it often has to be completed on fairly short notice. Please remember that there is no "one size fits all" solution; the booklet should be as unique as the honoree. For instance, the amount of religious content will vary from person to

person, as will the number of photos included and the quantity of text.

The Order of Service can be whatever works best for the family of the deceased. Among the points to consider: Is the service religious or secular? Will there be prayers, a minister,

special poem(s), different speakers, a video tribute, or music selections?

This four-page booklet is patterned after a free Canva template called "Beige Simple Memorial Services Program." I like its tasteful, restrained design. If you want to explore other possibilities, under Templates, type the search terms "memorial booklets" or "funeral program."

I will explain some elements of the Typst code that you might wonder about.

First, the paper size is "us-statement" (aka half letter size [5.5" x 8.5" or 140 mm x 216 mm]). This will be discussed further in the "Page Geometry and Imposition" section of my article.

Second, the floral ornaments were produced by using Typst's box function to include the leaf image (.png), then placing the boxes inside the header and footer area. The spacing function (" #h(1fr) ") fractionally spaces/separates the leaves to each end of the header and footer:

header: [#box(image("orn-leaves-green.png", width: 15%)) #h(1fr) #box(image("orn-leaves-green-rotated.png", width: 15%))],

footer: [#box(image("orn-leaves-green.png", width: 15%)) #h(1fr) #box(image("orn-leaves-green-rotated.png", width: 15%))],

I used GIMP to rotate the leaves on the right half of the page, for a bit of asymmetrical contrast. I also found a free online tool to easily change the color of the original .png icon from black to green.

Feel free to search for different printers' ornaments or fleurons, and customize the design to suit your taste.

The page frame/border is done with the **"background"** parameter and Typst's rectangle function. The **"100% - 2.25cm"** discounts the margin given in the **width** and **height** values. The **"radius"** parameter controls how rounded the corners are. The **"stroke"** color can be changed as you wish. The **"fill"** color can be switched, and you can experiment with the **"transparentize"** parameter (which makes a color more transparent by a given factor).

background: rect(width: 100% - 2.25cm, height: 100% - 2.25cm, stroke: gray, radius: 7pt, fill: gray.transparentize(95%)),

This sample uses Libre Baskerville as the primary font [serif] with a smidgen of Linux Biolinum [sans serif] for contrast. However, I encourage you to change the font(s) to suit your needs.

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Created with Scribus*
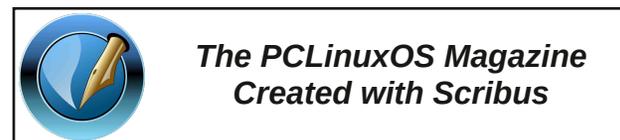
Memorial Booklet

Below is a montage of the (anonymized) eight-page memorial booklet that I created for my class reunion. I have publicly shared the project from the Typst web app with a read-only link:

https://typst.app/project/rIIICiwoISlKFwhKOMj5Hx

Note: Three interior pages were omitted from the screenshot to save space.

The paper size is "us-statement" (aka half letter size [5.5" x 8.5" or 140 mm x 216 mm]). This will be discussed further in the "Page Geometry and Imposition" section of my article.

As with the Celebration of Life booklet, the ornaments were added by using Typst's box function to include the fleuron image (.png), then placing the boxes inside the header and

footer area. The spacing function ("#h(1fr)") fractionally spaces/separates the fleurons to each end of the header and footer:

header: [#box(image("fleuron-3-purple.png", width: 15%)) #h(1fr) #box(image("fleuron-3-purple.png", width: 15%))],

footer: [#box(image("fleuron-3-col-blue.png", width: 15%)) #h(1fr) #box(image("fleuron-3-col-blue.png", width: 15%))],

The ornaments in the header are purple to match Southside's school color. The footer ornaments are columbia blue, to echo Rockledge's school color. I used a free online tool to change the original fleuron color (black) to purple and columbia blue.

This is a jointly held reunion, so we decided that for better readability, the list of deceased classmates should be separated by school. For each high school, the list is organized alphabetically by surname. I decided to use Typst's small capitals function to add some contrast to the surnames, e.g., **"#smallcaps[Smith]"**.

The place function allowed me to place the School Name in the center of the page, without having to exit from the two-column environment (thus avoiding unwanted extra vertical space): (center, top)


```
#set page(columns: 2)
#place(
top + center,
float: true,
scope: "parent",
text(1.2em, weight: "bold")[
Southside High School
],
)

= Gabrielle Mae #smallcaps[Austin]

#v(0.25cm)

Oct. 1, 1957 -- Jul. 12, 2016
```


To indent the dates after each name (which is a top-level heading), I set the **"first-line-indent"** parameter of Typst's par[agraph] function to **"all: true"** with 1.5 em as the amount of indentation. This helps make each classmate's name and life dates more of a discrete visual "block."

// Use 'all: true' to indent the first paragraph after
// headings and grids as well
#set par(first-line-indent: (amount: 1.5em, all: true))

I was impressed that Typst's algorithm for balancing text in the two-column layout worked well. Nevertheless, I checked carefully for awkward column/page breaks and found a few. If you need to manually trigger a break within a column, use the colbreak command **"#colbreak()"**.

Page Geometry and Imposition

A challenge with this project was that I had never created a folded, saddle-stitched booklet before. I did not grasp the principle of page imposition until I actually made a physical mockup of the booklet(s). I wasted numerous printouts, Scotch tape and spent time cutting paper sheets. Hopefully my trial and error will save you some headaches.

As mentioned earlier, the projects' page size is half letter (5.5" x 8.5" or 140 mm x 216 mm) because each printed sheet will be laid out in a 1x2 grid, duplex printed — or duplex photocopied. Then the sheets are folded in half and nested one inside the other, and stapled through the fold line with wire staples.

To clarify, the 1x2 grid mode (which is standard for booklets) will be laid out on standard US letter size paper: 8.5" x 11" or 216 mm x 279 mm. When the letter-size paper is printed out and folded in half, it will produce a booklet with 5.5" x 8.5" pages.

All bound booklets must have a page count that is a multiple of 4, for example: 4, 8, 12, 16, 20,

24, etc. Pages of a booklet are created by printing four pages (2 in the front and 2 in the back) on one sheet of paper and then folding that sheet in half.

You can try this "multiple of 4" rule yourself with some blank sheets of paper. When you fold a sheet in half, you get 4 pages. If you fold another sheet and nest it inside the first, you have 8 pages. And so on ...

Imposition

Imposition means "to rearrange pages so they will come in correct order when you print, fold and nest." For a clear video demonstration of imposing an eight-page booklet, I recommend that you watch the first 10 minutes of a tutorial produced by Eric Forest. It is well worth your time.

Below are simple graphics illustrating how the eight-page memorial booklet would be imposed:
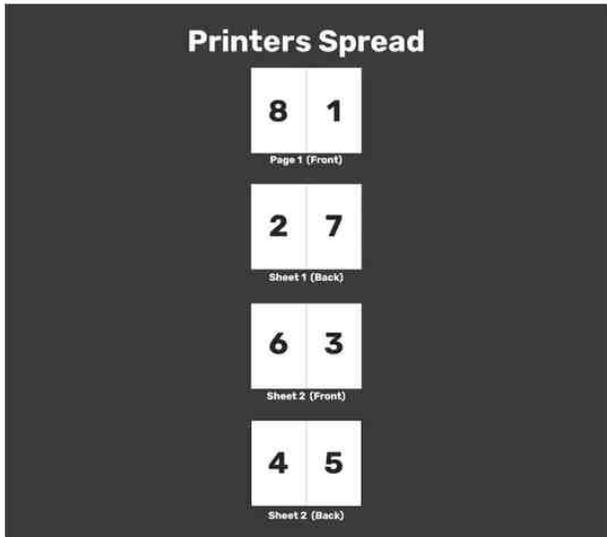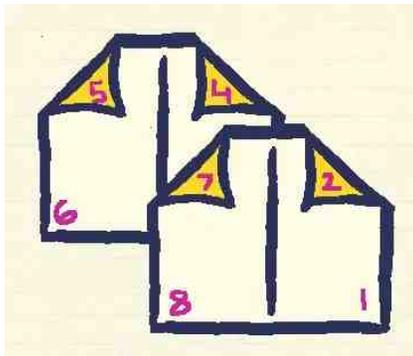
The correct page imposition order for the Celebration of Life booklet is:

- 4,1
- 2,3

Bookbinder JS

Before printing the booklet, we must impose its pages. Fortunately, there is an excellent Web-based tool to accomplish this. Bookbinder JS is a Javascript-based app for formatting PDF files for bookbinding, i.e., imposition.

Bookbinder JS works well and it is free. Annesi Bindings created a video tutorial which covers the basics of using this app (from minute 4:26 until minute 5:59). (image top, right)
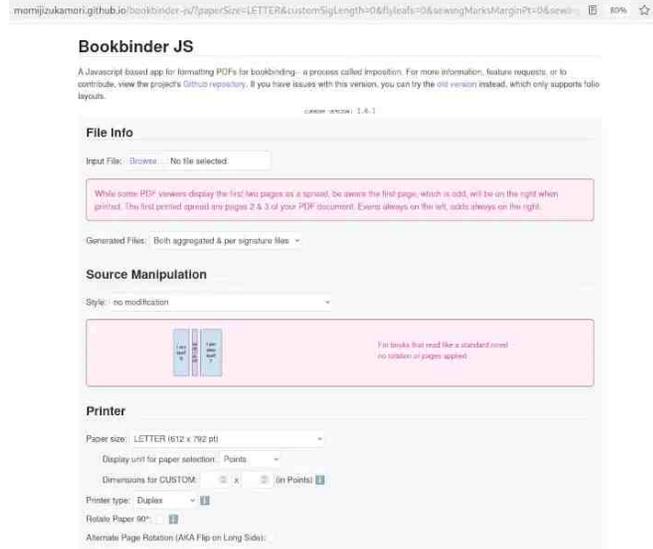
Printing the Imposed PDF

Once the PDF file has been imposed, it can be printed. Based on my experience, printing the booklet may be quirky and involve some trial and error. This may depend on the model of printer that you are using. (My tests were done with our trusty Brother HL-2070N, a monochrome laser printer, that is around 18 years old.)

I encountered an issue where the ornaments/fleurons look fine on screen in my PDF file, but were partially cut off when I printed the document. Online searches indicated that the most likely causes were either (a.) page-scaling options or (b.) the printer's non-printable margins.

As regards Scaling options: Printing at *"Actual size"* with a header very near the edge can push it into the non-printable border. Using the *"Fit"* or *"Shrink oversized pages"* option usually keeps the header visible.

Regarding the printer's non-printable margins: Most desktop printers cannot print to the very edge of a page, so any header designed too close to the top can be cut off even when settings seem correct.

I resolved the problem by adjusting the Page Scaling option in my PDF viewer/reader. With Evince (see screenshot below) and Atril:

Under the **Page Handling** tab > look for the **Page Scaling** option and choose **"Fit to Printable Area"**.
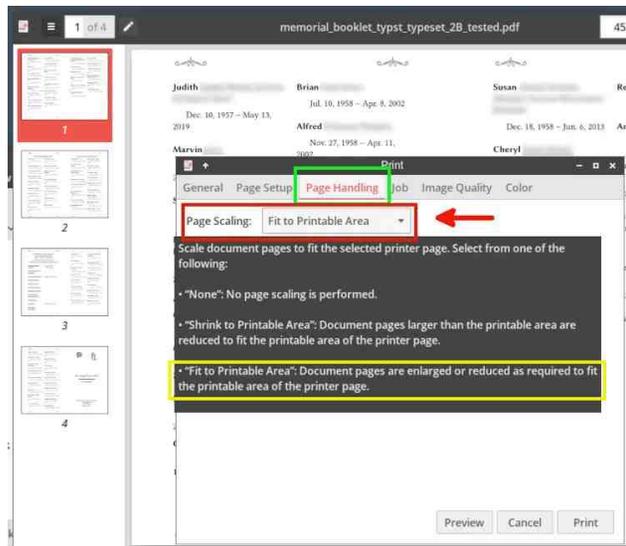
Conclusion

I sincerely hope that you do not experience the loss of a loved one anytime soon, but if you do, these Typst projects can perhaps serve as the foundation for creating an attractive memorial booklet. Although Typst is not intended to be a graphic design tool, it has demonstrated its versatility in producing different types of documents with high-quality typesetting.

Additional Resources

Annesi Bindings, "How I Arrange and Print Pages for Bookbinding" YouTube, 26 Nov. 2024 (9 min., 37 sec.)

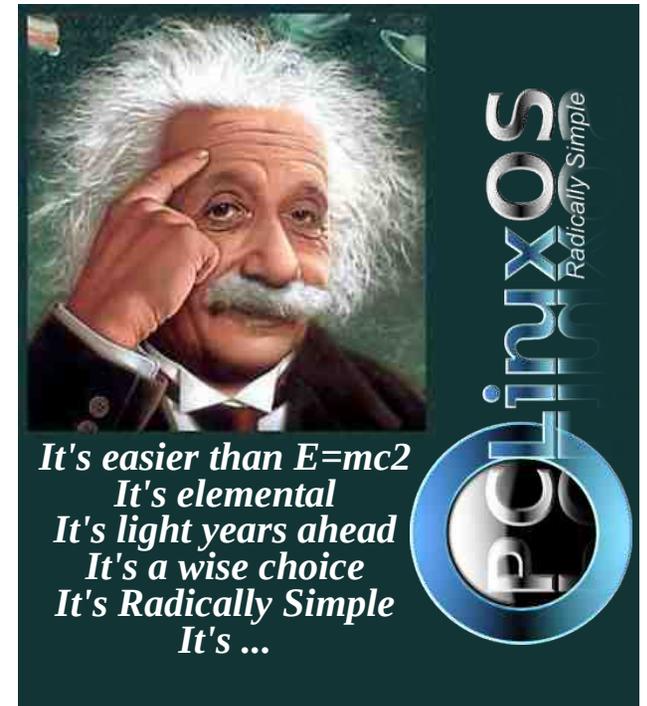This video covers the basics of using the Bookbinder JS web app (4:26 – 5:59).

Forest, Eric, "Preparing Booklets for Printing, 3 Ways" YouTube, 12 Oct. 2022 (55 min., 53 sec.)

The presenter clearly explains/demonstrates how to impose an 8-page booklet, as well as the possible different workflows involved [with Adobe InDesign] (0:00 – 10:15).

Schaefer, Ingo, "Seitenreihenfolge-Rechner" ('Page Order Calculator')

This handy tool calculates the page imposition order for booklets. (Unlike Bookbinder JS, it does not actually perform the imposition.) The calculated page order is based on duplex printing.

- Under **Bindung** ['Binding'] > choose the **Rückensteckheftung** ['Spine stitching'] option,
- Fill in the **Seitenanzahl** ['Number of pages'] box and press Enter.
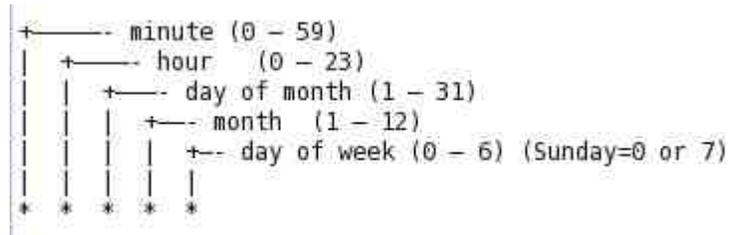- The calculator will output the correct imposition order.

It's easier than E=mc2
It's elemental
It's light years ahead
It's a wise choice
It's Radically Simple
It's ...

Wiki Pick: Cron Jobs

Crontab Configuration Under Linux

Cron is a time-based job scheduler in Unix-like computer operating systems. The name cron comes from the word "chronos", Greek for "time". Cron enables users to schedule jobs to run periodically at certain times or dates. It is commonly used to automate system maintenance or administration, though its general-purpose nature means that it can be used for other purposes, such as backing up important data.

Each cronjob has the following syntax:

```
+------- minute (0 - 59)
| +------- hour    (0 - 23)
| | +------- day of month (1 - 31)
| | | +------- month    (1 - 12)
| | | | +-- day of week (0 - 6) (Sunday=0 or 7)
| | | | |
| | | | |
* * * * *
```

Command To Be Executed

STEP 1: Now, Open terminal as a root/normal user and enter the following

crontab -e 1 * * * * /bin/echo "Congratulations...!"

This will echo "Congratulations…!" every minute, and you can see this message in the user's mailbox. Save and exit the file.

STEP 2: Restart the cron daemon to make it effective, use the following command **service crond restart**.

What Does The Line Actually Mean?

crontab -e means to edit the user's cron file. Your cron file(s) is/are located at /var/lib/spool/cron.

The '**1 * * * *'** is the time base. 1 is the number of minutes to be run. The following '* * * *' are wild cards meaning ALL so we are running this command every one minute of every hour, of every day of the month, every month of the year, and every day of the week.

If the command line is not your cup of tea, there are several good GUI programs for setting up your cron job.

Webmin is a simple way to set up cron. It is also in the Repository.
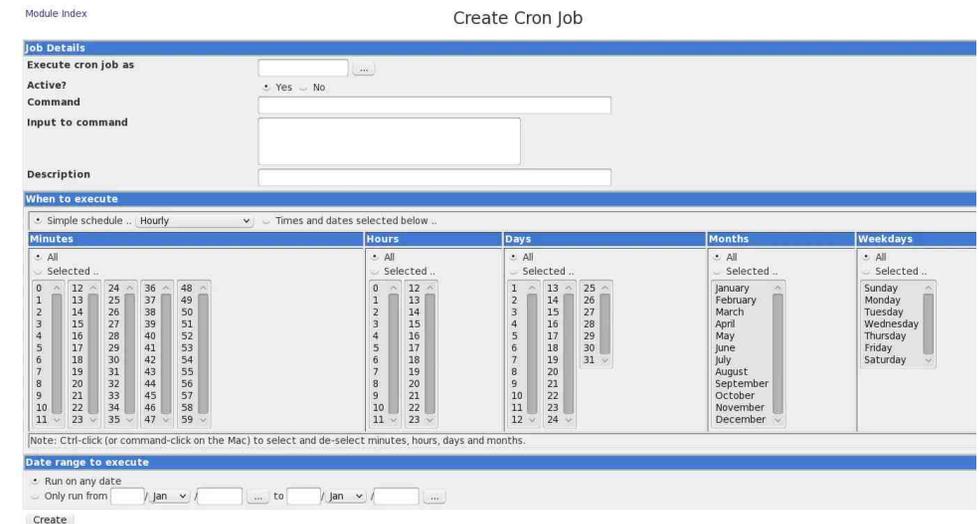
Editor's Note: Another program that makes setting up and editing cron jobs via a GUI is Gnome Schedule, which is also in the PCLinuxOS repository. Is it old? Yes. Does it work? Absolutely! For KDE users, KCron is another GUI solution for managing your cron jobs.

So what can cron be used for besides sending out silly little messages every minute, you ask? You can use it for almost anything. Only your mind is the limit of the things cron can do.

Automate a daily backup, send yourself reminders, create and keep your own repository up to date. The possibilities are virtually endless. If you can dream it, cron surely can do it!

You can view the original PCLinuxOS Knowledgebase Wiki article here.

Good Words, Good Deeds, Good News

compiled by Meemaw

Dog Alerts Owners To Woman In Danger

Dan and his wife walk their dog Gozier every morning. One morning they went, even though it was 15F out, and partway through their walk, Gozier started barking and pulling on his leash. His behavior was strange to Dan, and he started looking around.

He saw a woman lying on the front porch of her house in a white robe, so he and his wife went over to check, and she was unconscious and unresponsive, with no shoes and no coat. They alerted the owner of the house, who didn't recognize her. They then called 911 to get her some help. The EMT's discovered that her temperature had fallen to 78F. She spent a week in the hospital to recover.

The white robe made it difficult to see her from the road, but a neighbor's camera showed her crawling on her hands and knees at about 4:15 am. Dan said they probably wouldn't have noticed her if Gozier hadn't started acting so strange and barking. The town had a ceremony later to honor Gozier.

Officers Rescue Elderly Man From Pond

Florida police receive a report that a car has run into a pond. Response at the scene shows that an elderly man is inside the car. Along with two bystanders, three officers ran to help free him. He said the door locks weren't working, and he couldn't get out. Officers broke the window to get in and helped the man out.

"Officers later learned the elderly driver may have fallen asleep at the wheel before veering off the roadway and into the water," the department's Facebook post reads. "Without hesitation, all three officers, along with two citizen witnesses, entered the pond and worked together to safely remove the driver from the partially submerged vehicle. Their quick actions, teamwork, and unwavering commitment to protecting our community prevented what could have been a tragic outcome," the department said".

Lost Dog Survives 43 Days in the Mountains

Colorado resident Steven was going skiing, so he dropped eleven-year-old Rocky off with a pet sitter. Rocky broke out of his harness and headed for the mountains. Steven came back to join in the search, calling Summit Lost Pet Rescue for help in his search, but they couldn't find Rocky. The group set up trail cameras and comfort stations with some of Rocky's favorite scents in the hopes that he would be drawn to them, but they didn't find him, other than a few sightings.

Steven had to leave after eight days of searching, but Summit's director Ciullo assured him that they would keep searching and notify him if they found Rocky. The fact that he had been sighted proved he was still alive.

Six weeks later, they were notified about a lost dog, which they trapped. They soon confirmed it was Rocky, and contacted Steven to fly in and reunite with his friend.

When he was rescued, Rocky was in pretty bad shape and had lost a lot of weight. Ciullo said, "He's a survivor. He went from 50 pounds down to 26 pounds, but he didn't starve and wasn't killed after 43 days. He went against all the odds."

The nonprofit shared photos and videos of Rocky and his master when they were reunited, stating, "We are so grateful the neighbor saw Rocky on her Ring cam on Day 43 of him

missing and notified Summit County Animal Control and Shelter!"

Veterans Art Center Gets New Roof

A veterans art center in Grand Junction, Colorado is finally getting a new roof, and the repairs the building needs, thanks to some generous community members.

The building was purchased in 2013 and the personnel raised $20,000 through donations, a fundraiser, and a grant to make the necessary repairs. Unfortunately, the contractor they gave the money to for the deposit left with the money and never made any repairs. The contractor was finally arrested, but the center didn't get any money back. Cindy, the CEO of the art center, was devastated.

When the community heard about the loss, companies came together to make the repairs. Full Curl Roofing did the work, along with help from Delta Metals, American Roofing Supply, Rocky Mountain Reps Inc., and Versico Roofing Systems.

The CEO is beyond pleased to be able to get back to serving those who gave so much to their country. "The whole idea is to give veterans and their families a place to come, work on art and heal at no charge. And it's working," she told reporters.

Neighbors Come Together To Rescue Dog

Neighbors in Arley, Alabama noticed two stray dogs, and animal lover Eric posted on social media that the black dog had a bucket stuck on his head which he could not shake off.

The dog, who has since been named Buck, was accompanied by a Belgian Malinois, named Milo, and the two appeared to be inseparable. Neighbors got together to search, and didn't find

them right away. They were concerned that Buck couldn't eat or drink with the bucket. When they finally found them, they trapped them both, so Buck could be helped.

Milo was a bit aggressive at first, but as the bucket was cut off Buck's head, both dogs calmed down. They took them to a shelter. Buck was treated for a sinus and ear infection, and Milo was treated for an injured hip and cuts. Shelter personnel intend to find a home where both dogs can go.

Social media users praised Eric for his efforts and those of the community, with one person writing, "May God Bless You for helping the helpless!! Thank you!!"

Screenshot Showcase

Posted by parnote, March 18, 2026, running Xfce.

Tip Top Tips: Find Exact Install Date & KDE6 Simple Tips

Editor's Note: Tip Top Tips is a semi-monthly column in The PCLinuxOS Magazine. Periodically, we will feature – and possibly even expand upon – one tip from the PCLinuxOS forum. The magazine will not accept independent tip submissions specifically intended for inclusion in the Tip Top Tips column. Rather, if you have a tip, share it in the PCLinuxOS forum's "Tips & Tricks" section. Occasionally, we may run a "tip" posted elsewhere in the PCLinuxOS forum. Either way, share your tip in the forum, and it just may be selected for publication in The PCLinuxOS Magazine.

This month, we have not one, but **two**, tips from the PCLinuxOS forum.

Our first tip is from **Ramchu**, and will list the exact date and time of the installation of PCLinuxOS on your computer.

To find the exact date of your installation in a terminal run **stat -c %w** /.

```
[me@localhost ~]$ stat -c %w /
2025-08-03 12:46:00.000000000 -0500
```

As you can see, August 3, 2025, was the date I installed onto my, at the time, new computer (well, new to me, anyways).

****

Our second tip is from **kalwisti**, and lists some simple KDE 6 customization tips he has collected (he thanks the person he got the tip from at the end of each of the three tips he lists). He originally posted a "teaser" of this tip in the PCLinuxOS forum, and linked his PDF document for a full explanation. We've reprinted the entire PDF of his tip here.

I sometimes have trouble remembering how to configure certain things in KDE Plasma 6, so I prepared this cheat sheet for myself. I decided to share it here, in case it might be helpful for other users. I've added screenshots and links to the original posts in the PCLinuxOS Forum (since they are scattered in different places).
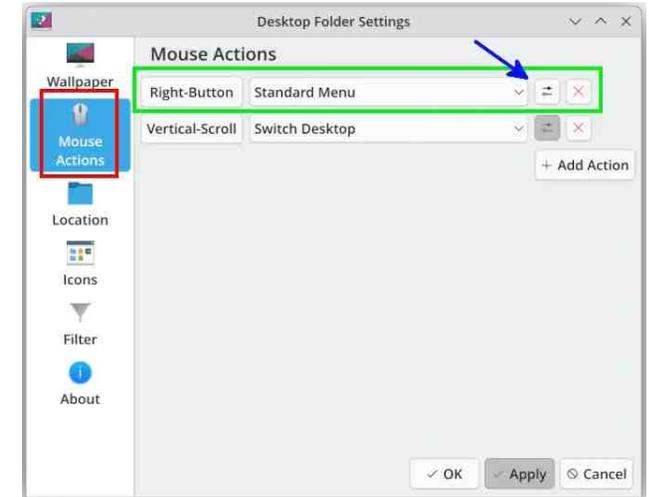
Add "Show Logout Screen" to Right-Click Menu

Right-click on an empty part of your desktop.

Click on the **Desktop and Wallpaper** option:
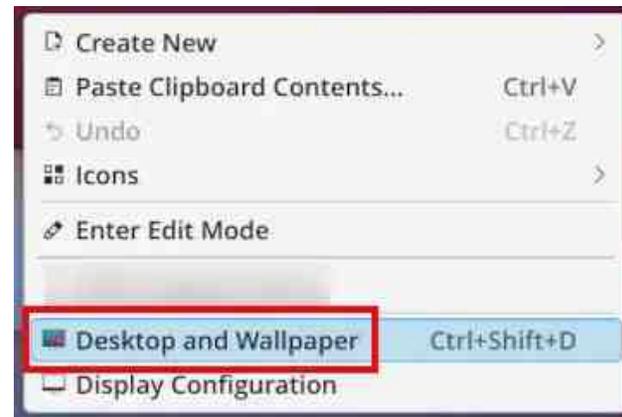
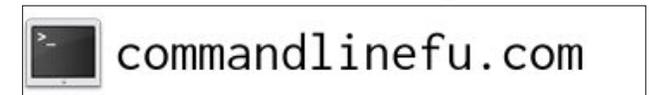A dialog window will open. In its left pane, click on the **Mouse Actions** option.

In the line entry for **Right-Button**, click on the Configure button.

A new dialog window will open. Look for the **Show Logout Screen** option and click to place a checkmark/tick beside it.

Click the **OK** button to close the dialog window.

Click the **OK** button to close the parent window.

After completing this procedure, the **Show Logout Screen** entry will appear when you right-click on your desktop.

Thanks to **Just19** for this tip.

Remove Unwanted Widgets from System Tray

If your Plasma 6 panel is cluttered with too many widgets (as shown below), you can remove unwanted widgets from the system tray.

Right-click on the panel.
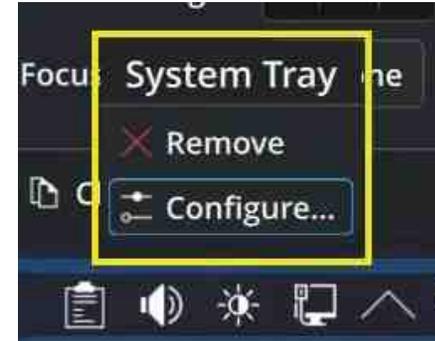
Click on **Show Panel Configuration**.

You will see something like the screenshot below.

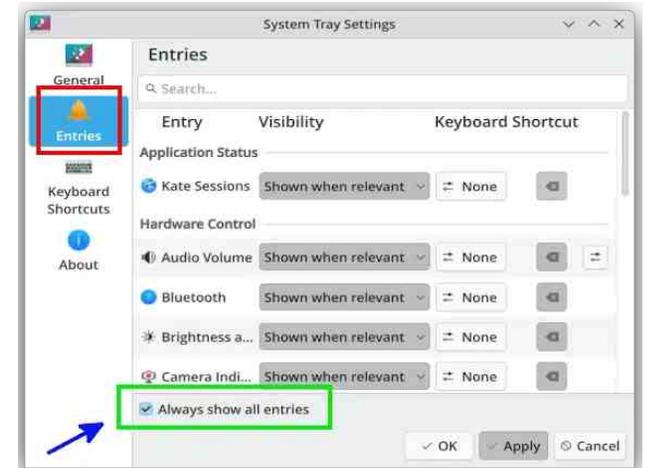Move your mouse and hover over the system tray. You will see a popup menu labeled **System Tray**.

Click on this menu's **Configure** option.

A new dialog window will open.

In its left pane, click on the **Entries** option [with the Bell icon].

At the bottom of that window's right pane, uncheck/untick the entry **Always show all entries**.

Click the **Apply** button.

Next, set entries you don't use at all to **Disabled**.

Now, set all entries you use, but don't want on the desktop when the function isn't active, to **Hidden**.

The screenshot below shows my system tray after I "pruned" unwanted widgets.
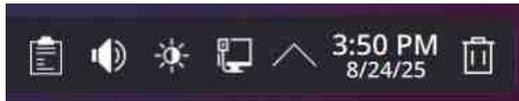
Thanks to **kalwisti** for this tip (originally posted in the old forum by **Texstar** and **tbs**).

Make the Panel Transparent

If you would like to make your panel transparent, there is a cool widget developed by **sanjay-kr-xo** that you can install. Here's how to do it.

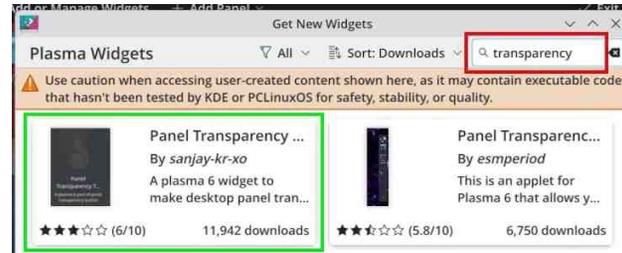Right-click on the panel and select **Add or Manage Widgets**.

Click on **Get New**, in the upper left corner of your screen.

Next, click on **Download New Plasma Widgets**.

In the Search box, type "*transparency*" and hit **Enter**.

The widget you want is called "Panel Transparency Toggle" by **sanjay-kr-xo** (shown above).

Hovering the mouse over that item will cause an **Install** button to appear. Next, click on the **Install** button.

Click on the **Exit Edit Mode** to return to your normal Plasma workspace.

Log out of your current session and back in, for the transparency change to take effect.

Afterwards, if your panel is not transparent, follow these following steps.

Right-click on the panel.

Select **Add or Manage Widgets**.

Find the Panel Transparency Toggle widget and click on it to activate transparency.

Hint: In the Search box, you can type "transparency". Or, in the Categories column, you can filter the widget listing by selecting Running.

Click on **Exit Edit Mode** to finish.

Thanks to **kc1di** for this tip.

Smart AI Policy Means Examining Its Real Harms & Benefits
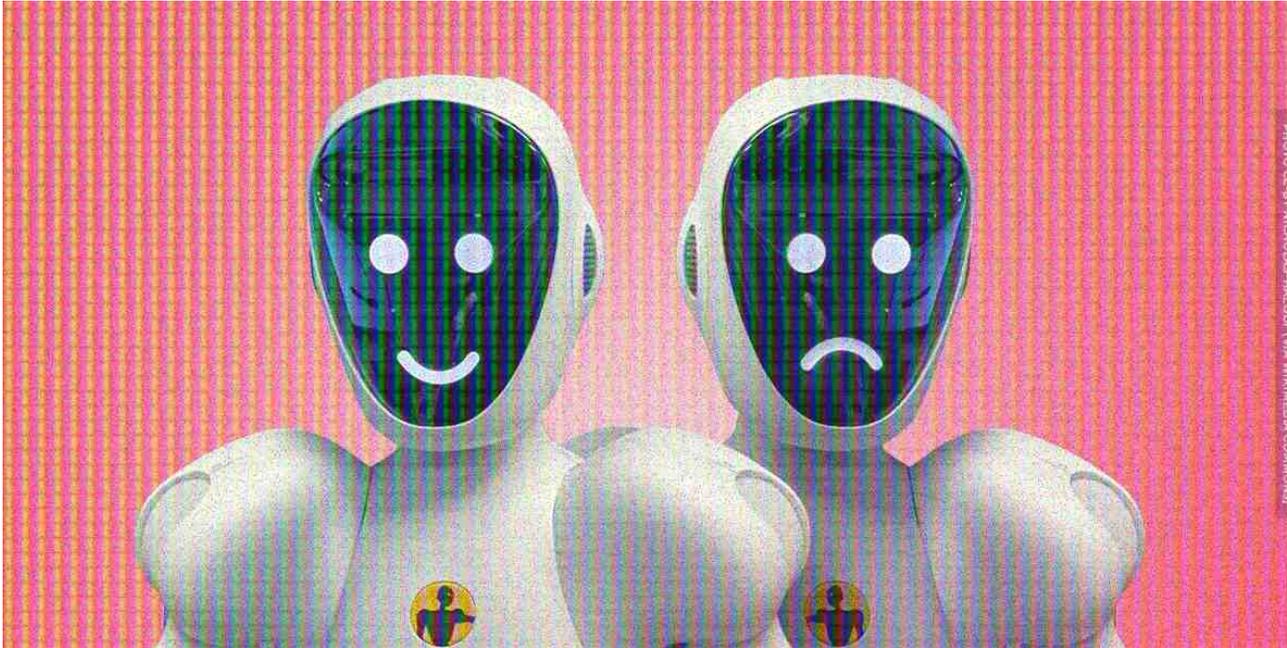
by Tori Noble, Katharine Trendacosta, and Kit Walsh
Electronic Frontier Foundation
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The phrase "artificial intelligence" has been around for a long time, covering everything from computers with "brains" — think Data from Star Trek or Hal 9000 from 2001: A Space Odyssey — to the autocomplete function that too often has you sending emails to the wrong person. It's a term that sweeps a wide array of uses into it — some well-established, others still being developed.

Recent news shows us a rapidly expanding catalog of potential harms that may result from companies pushing AI into every new feature and aspect of public life — like the automation of bias that follows from relying on a backward-looking technology to make consequential decisions about people's housing, employment, education, and so on. Complicating matters, the computation needed for some AI services requires vast amounts of water and electricity, leading to sometimes difficult questions about whether the increased fossil fuel use or consumption of water is justified.

We are also inundated with advertisements and exhortations to use the latest AI-powered apps, and with hype insisting AI can solve any problem.

Obscured by this hype, there are some real examples of AI proving to be a helpful tool. For example, machine learning is especially useful for scientists looking at everything from the inner workings of our biology to cosmic bodies in outer space. AI tools can also improve accessibility for people with disabilities, facilitate police accountability initiatives, and more. There are reasons why these problems are amenable to machine learning and why excitement over these uses shouldn't translate into a perception that just any language model or AI technology possesses expert knowledge or can solve whatever problem it's marketed as solving.

EFF has long fought for sensible, balanced tech policies because we've seen how regulators can focus entirely on use cases they don't like (such as the use of encryption to hide criminal behavior) and cause enormous collateral harm to other uses (such as using encryption to hide dissident resistance). Similarly, calls to completely preempt state regulation of AI would thwart important efforts to protect people from the real harms of AI technologies. Context matters. Large language models (LLMs) and the tools that rely on them are not magic wands — they are general-purpose technologies. And if we want to regulate those technologies in a way that doesn't shut down beneficial innovations,

we have to focus on the impact(s) of a given use or tool, by a given entity, in a specific context. Then, and only then, can we even hope to figure out what to do about it.

So let's look at the real-world landscape.

AI's Real and Potential Harms

Thinking ahead about potential negative uses of AI helps us spot risks. Too often, the corporations developing AI tools — as well as governments that use them — lose sight of the real risks, or don't care. For example, companies and governments use AI to do all sorts of things that hurt people, from price collusion to mass surveillance. AI should never be part of a decision about whether a person will be arrested, deported, placed into foster care, or denied access to important government benefits like disability payments or medical care.

There is too much at stake, and governments have a duty to make responsible, fair, and explainable decisions, which AI can't reliably do yet. Why? Because AI tools are designed to identify and reproduce patterns in data that they are "trained" on. If you train AI on records of biased government decisions, such as records of past arrests, it will "learn" to replicate those discriminatory decisions.

And simply having a human in the decision chain will not fix this foundational problem. Studies have shown that having a human "in the loop" doesn't adequately correct for AI bias,

both because the human tends to defer to the AI and because the AI can provide cover for a biased human to ratify decisions that agree with their biases and override the AI at other times.

These biases don't just arise in obvious contexts, like when a government agency is making decisions about people. It can also arise in equally life-affecting contexts like medical care. Whenever AI is used for analysis in a context with systemic disparities and whenever the costs of an incorrect decision fall on someone other than those deciding whether to use the tool. For example, dermatology has historically underserved people of color because of a focus on white skin, with the resulting bias affecting AI tools trained on the existing and biased image data.

These kinds of errors are difficult to detect and correct because it's hard or even impossible to understand how an AI tool arrives at individual decisions. These tools can sometimes find and apply patterns that a human being wouldn't even consider, such as basing diagnostic decisions on which hospital a scan was done at. Or determining that malignant tumors are the ones where there is a ruler next to them — something that a human would automatically exclude from their evaluation of an image. Unlike a human, AI does not know that the ruler is not part of the cancer.

Auditing and correcting for these kinds of mistakes is vital, but in some cases, might negate any sort of speed or efficiency arguments made in favor of the tool. We all understand that the more important a decision is, the more

guardrails against disaster need to be in place. For many AI tools, those don't exist yet. Sometimes, the stakes will be too high to justify the use of AI. In general, the higher the stakes, the less this technology should be used.

We also need to acknowledge the risk of over-reliance on AI, at least as it is currently being released. We've seen shades of a similar problem before online (see: "Dr. Google"), but the speed and scale of AI use — and the increasing market incentive to shoe-horn "AI" into every business model — have compounded the issue.

Moreover, AI may reinforce a user's pre-existing beliefs — even if they're wrong or unhealthy. Many users may not understand how AI works, what it is programmed to do, and how to fact-check it. Companies have chosen to release these tools widely without adequate information about how to use them properly and what their limitations are. Instead, they market them as easy and reliable. Worse, some companies also resist transparency in the name of trade secrets and reducing liability, making it harder for anyone to evaluate AI-generated answers.

Other considerations that may weigh against AI uses are its environmental impact and potential labor market effects. Delving into these is beyond the scope of this post, but it is an important factor in determining if AI is doing good somewhere and whether any benefits from AI are equitably distributed.

Research into the extent of AI harms and means of avoiding them is ongoing, but it should be part of the analysis.

AI's Real and Potential Benefits

However, harmful AI technologies can sometimes be, in the right hands and circumstances, they can do things that humans simply can't. Machine learning technology has powered search tools for over a decade. It's undoubtedly useful for machines to help human experts pore through vast bodies of literature and data to find starting points for research — things that no number of research assistants could do in a single year. If an actual expert is involved and has a strong incentive to reach valid conclusions, the weaknesses of AI are less significant at the early stage of generating research leads. Many of the following examples fall into this category.

Machine learning differs from traditional statistics in that the analysis doesn't make assumptions about what factors are significant to the outcome. Rather, the machine learning process computes which patterns in the data have the most predictive power and then relies upon them, often using complex formulae that are unintelligible to humans. These aren't discoveries of laws of nature — AI is bad at generalizing that way and coming up with explanations. Rather, they're descriptions of what the AI has already seen in its data set.

To be clear, we don't endorse any products and recognize initial results are not proof of ultimate success. But these cases show us the difference between something AI can actually do versus what hype claims it can do.

Researchers are using AI to discover better alternatives to today's lithium-ion batteries, which require large amounts of toxic, expensive, and highly combustible materials. Now, AI is rapidly advancing battery development: by allowing researchers to analyze millions of candidate materials and generate new ones. New battery technologies discovered with the help of AI have a long way to go before they can power our cars and computers, but this field has come further in the past few years than it had in a long time.

AI Advancements in Scientific and Medical Research

AI tools can also help facilitate weather prediction.

AI forecasting models are less computationally intensive and often more reliable than traditional tools based on simulating the physical thermodynamics of the atmosphere. Questions remain, though about how they will handle especially extreme events or systemic climate changes over time.

For example:

* The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has developed new machine learning models to improve weather prediction, including a first-of-its-kind hybrid system that uses an AI model in concert with a traditional physics-based model to deliver more accurate forecasts than either model does on its own. To augment its traditional forecasts, with improvements in accuracy when the AI model is used in concert with the physics-based model.

* Several models were used to forecast a recent hurricane. Google DeepMind's AI system performed the best, even beating official forecasts from the U.S. National Hurricane Center (which now uses DeepMind's AI model).

Researchers are using AI to help develop new medical treatments:

* Deep learning tools, like the Nobel Prize-winning model AlphaFold, are helping researchers understand protein folding. Over 3 million researchers have used AlphaFold to analyze biological processes and design drugs that target disease-causing malfunctions in those processes.

* Researchers used machine learning to simulate and computationally test a large range of new antibiotic candidates hoping they will help treat drug-resistant bacteria, a growing threat that kills millions of people each year.

* Researchers used AI to identify a new treatment for idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a progressive lung disease with few treatment options. The new treatment has successfully completed a Phase IIa clinical trial. Such drugs still need to be proven safe and effective in larger clinical trials and gain FDA approval before they can help patients, but this new

treatment for pulmonary fibrosis could be the first to reach that milestone.

* Machine learning has been used for years to aid in vaccine development—including the development of the first COVID-19 vaccines — accelerating the process by rapidly identifying potential vaccine targets for researchers to focus on.

AI Uses for Accessibility and Accountability

AI technologies can improve accessibility for people with disabilities. But, as with many uses of this technology, safeguards are essential. Many tools lack adequate privacy protections, aren't designed for disabled users, and can even harbor bias against people with disabilities. Inclusive design, privacy, and anti-bias safeguards are crucial. But here are two very interesting examples:

* AI voice generators are giving people their voices back, after losing their ability to speak. For example, while serving in Congress, Rep. Jennifer Wexton developed a debilitating neurological condition that left her unable to speak. She used her cloned voice to deliver a speech from the floor of the House of Representatives advocating for disability rights.

* Those who are blind or low-vision, as well as those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, have benefited from accessibility tools while also discussing their limitations and drawbacks. At present, AI tools often provide information in a more easily accessible format than traditional web search tools and many websites that are difficult to navigate for users that rely on a screen reader. Other tools can help blind and low vision users navigate and understand the world around them by providing descriptions of their surroundings. While these visual descriptions may not always be as good as the ones a human may provide, they can still be useful in situations when users can't or don't want to ask another human to describe something. For more on this, check out our recent podcast episode on "Building the Tactile Internet."

When there is a lot of data to comb through, as with police accountability, AI is very useful for researchers and policymakers:

* The Human Rights Data Analysis Group used LLMs to analyze millions of pages of records regarding police misconduct. This is essentially the reverse of harmful use cases relating to surveillance; when the power to rapidly analyze large amounts of data is used by the public to scrutinize the state there is a potential to reveal abuses of power and, given the power imbalance, very little risk that undeserved consequences will befall those being studied.

* An EFF client, Project Recon, used an AI system to review massive volumes of transcripts of prison parole hearings to identify biased parole decisions. This innovative use of technology to identify systemic biases, including racial disparities, is the type of AI use we should support and encourage.

It is not a coincidence that the best examples of positive uses of AI come in places where experts, with access to infrastructure to help them use the technology and the requisite experience to evaluate the results, are involved. Moreover, academic researchers are already accustomed to explaining what they have done and being transparent about it — and it has been hard won knowledge that ethics are a vital step in work like this.

Nor is it a coincidence that other beneficial uses involve specific, discrete solutions to problems faced by those whose needs are often unmet by traditional channels or vendors. The ultimate outcome is beneficial, but it is moderated by human expertise and/or tailored to specific needs.

Context Matters

It can be very tempting — and easy — to make a blanket determination about something, especially when the stakes seem so high. But we urge everyone — users, policymakers, the companies themselves — to cut through the hype. In the meantime, EFF will continue to work against the harms caused by AI while also making sure that beneficial uses can advance.

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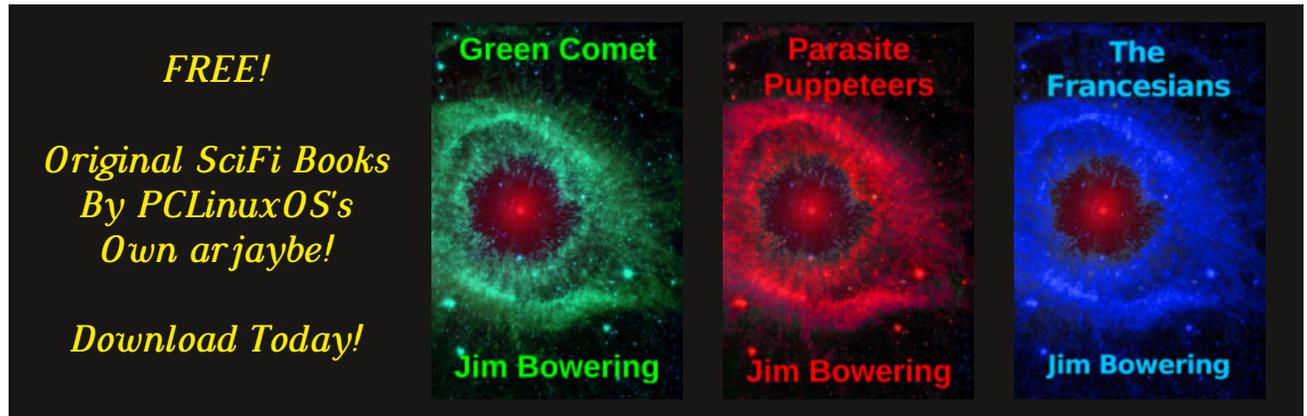
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Screenshot Showcase

13:50

Posted by francescoinblack, March 4, 2026, running IceWM.

PCLinuxOS Recipe Corner Bonus

from the kitchen of youcantoo

Air-Fryer Fish Tacos

TIPS: Substitute tilapia with snapper, mahi mahi, grouper, flounder, halibut or cod. Of course, if you have a local fresh fish you'll want to use, that's great, too!

The USDA recommends cooking fish to 145F (62.8C). Visually, the fish should be opaque and the flesh should flake easily.

NUTRITION:
Serving size: 1 Taco

Calories: 178   Carbs: 22g
Sodium: 269mg   Protein: 16g

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS:

3/4 cup reduced-fat sour cream
1 can (4 ounces) chopped green chiles
1 tablespoon fresh cilantro leaves
1 tablespoon lime juice
4 tilapia fillets (4 ounces each)
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 large egg white, beaten
1/2 cup panko bread crumbs
Cooking spray
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon each white pepper, cayenne pepper and paprika
8 corn tortillas (6 inches), warmed
1 large tomato, finely chopped

DIRECTIONS:

Place sour cream, chiles, cilantro and lime juice in a food processor; cover and process until blended. Set aside.

Cut each tilapia fillet lengthwise into 2 portions. Place flour, egg white and bread crumbs in separate shallow bowls. Dip tilapia in flour, then egg white, then crumbs.

Preheat the air fryer to 400F. In batches, arrange fillets in a single layer on a greased tray in an air-fryer basket; spritz with cooking spray. Cook until fish flakes easily with a fork, 10–12 minutes, turning once.

Combine seasonings; sprinkle over fish. Place a portion of fish on each tortilla; top with about 2 tablespoons sour cream mixture. Sprinkle with tomato. If desired, top with additional cilantro.

Tough times don't last, but tough people do.

Image by Sasin Tipchai from Pixabay

PCLinuxOS Puzzled Partitions

SUDOKU RULES: There is only one valid solution to each Sudoku puzzle. The only way the puzzle can be considered solved correctly is when all 81 boxes contain numbers and the other Sudoku rules have been followed.

When you start a game of Sudoku, some blocks will be pre-filled for you. You cannot change these numbers in the course of the game.

Each column must contain all of the numbers 1 through 9 and no two numbers in the same column of a Sudoku puzzle can be the same. Each row must contain all of the numbers 1 through 9 and no two numbers in the same row of a Sudoku puzzle can be the same.

Each block must contain all of the numbers 1 through 9 and no two numbers in the same block of a Sudoku puzzle can be the same.

SCRAPPLER RULES:
1. Follow the rules of Scrabble®. You can view them here. You have seven (7) letter tiles with which to make as long of a word as you possibly can. Words are based on the English language. Non-English language words are NOT allowed.
2. Red letters are scored double points. Green letters are scored triple points.
3. Add up the score of all the letters that you used. Unused letters are not scored. For red or green letters, apply the multiplier when tallying up your score. Next, apply any additional scoring multipliers, such as double or triple word score.
4. An additional 50 points is added for using all seven (7) of your tiles in a set to make your word. You will not necessarily be able to use all seven (7) of the letters in your set to form a "legal" word.
5. In case you are having difficulty seeing the point value on the letter tiles, here is a list of how they are scored:
  0 points: 2 blank tiles
  1 point: E, A, I, O, N, R, T, L, S, U
  2 points: D, G
  3 points: B, C, M, P
  4 points: F, H, V, W, Y
  5 points: K
  8 points: J, X
  10 points: Q, Z
6. Optionally, a time limit of 60 minutes should apply to the game, averaging to 12 minutes per letter tile set.
7. Have fun! It's only a game!
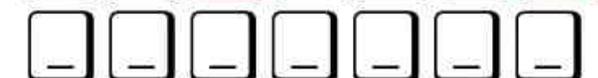
Download Puzzle Solutions Here

Triple Word

Double Word

Possible score 300, average score 210.

April 2026 Word Find
April Fool's Day

```
Y G C S B S U O R E T S O P E R P O N H Y Z Y Y X Z Z Q O M
P W V M I S C H I E V O U S C U T Z Z C S J R F I E L H S G
R D C W W J I H N L W Y Q Z B I C G Y U A W E S O J T K N O
V S P G K F C Y W U V Y S K X H C C O J A D L B F G P Q R C
U I R U S E A Y H X S U R P R I S E T E Y V O Y Z K R P U G
E O W A D E R X O M I G V V W F G C A P J Q O B M P Q A U M
U D Z L A C I M O C G X F E J A T P I J I N F A N T I L E Q
N S A W V Q Z N D O E K C E R W B H L D O E M P N P L V H R
W X O D I W Y M W K T M H T D A J W Z O Q H O J I I L U O Y
I M I D V Z I B I J Q U U A E P I Z Q Z Y E T Z B N M J R R
T Z Z P Z Q V A N C N O M R C H P I A A D M O L Z O Y Z S E
T E E D L Q D Y K R B Q P B E T W N H K V W E O R U E Z M K
I S O L U G V N I O X D D E P Q Y H S C U B X O R O Y D N C
N F W I B N Q D X P U J E L T Q B H I U P R U R J Q X A O O
G J R B M A I I G P H S T E I K H D D L G S V R U T U J H M
N K T R Y C G J E S T E R C O P E O L N A W M P Y K O O K T
Y I R S U J J T F Z Y S A A N C K E I N Z R T B Q O H A I S
H M D L L M G P F T L R E H J F H S H W Z U I S K S I P A G
Z Y O V W N O D S Q G X H O K L U I C N E P Z O I I K R A Z
L U J E X C Z Z M H A Z T M Z M S N C E H V G L U K R I A O
S N M X H W E V C J M P H S A K X C N A X D O R X S V L Q F
J Y A W E N U I G O H L G Y L F T T R Y N O K W K D N F O C
D O A N S S N D Q N B D I V R D Y R P E F E Q P Z D K O P I
H L U P R A N K S T E R L A D R B L R Z K K R O I D P O F D
Q W T V L L Y E S K F X O G E Y W T W P G O T Y D S N L E D
S G O V L H Z F S Q T G F K A B S U R D Q Q J T A U C S C A
G H Z X U J U A P N J D C H J D D S E K O O M J R U G D S L
W R O T D H A L U D O I N L I O Y Q Q Z R G A V U K M A P C
G B B A C U J T S S R N P R A C T I C A L J O K E R R Y G P
B B B K K M S Z G T E U N L N I E W P U G Q R B Y I S Y C R
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ABSURD	AMUSING
APRIL FOOL'S DAY	CELEBRATE
CHICANERY	CHILDISH
CHUMP	COMICAL
DECEPTION	DUPE
FOOLISH	FUNNY
GAG	GULLIBLE
HILARIOUS	HOAX
HOODWINK	HUMOROUS
INFANTILE	JESTER
JOKER	KOOKY
LIGHTHEARTED	MISCHIEVOUS
MOCKERY	NONSENSE
OUTRAGEOUS	PRACTICAL JOKER
PRANKSTER	PREPOSTEROUS
QUIRKY	RIDICULOUS
RUSE	SPOOF
STUNT	SURPRISE
TOMFOOLERY	TRICKERY
UNWITTING	ZANY

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April 2026 Crossword
April Fool's Day
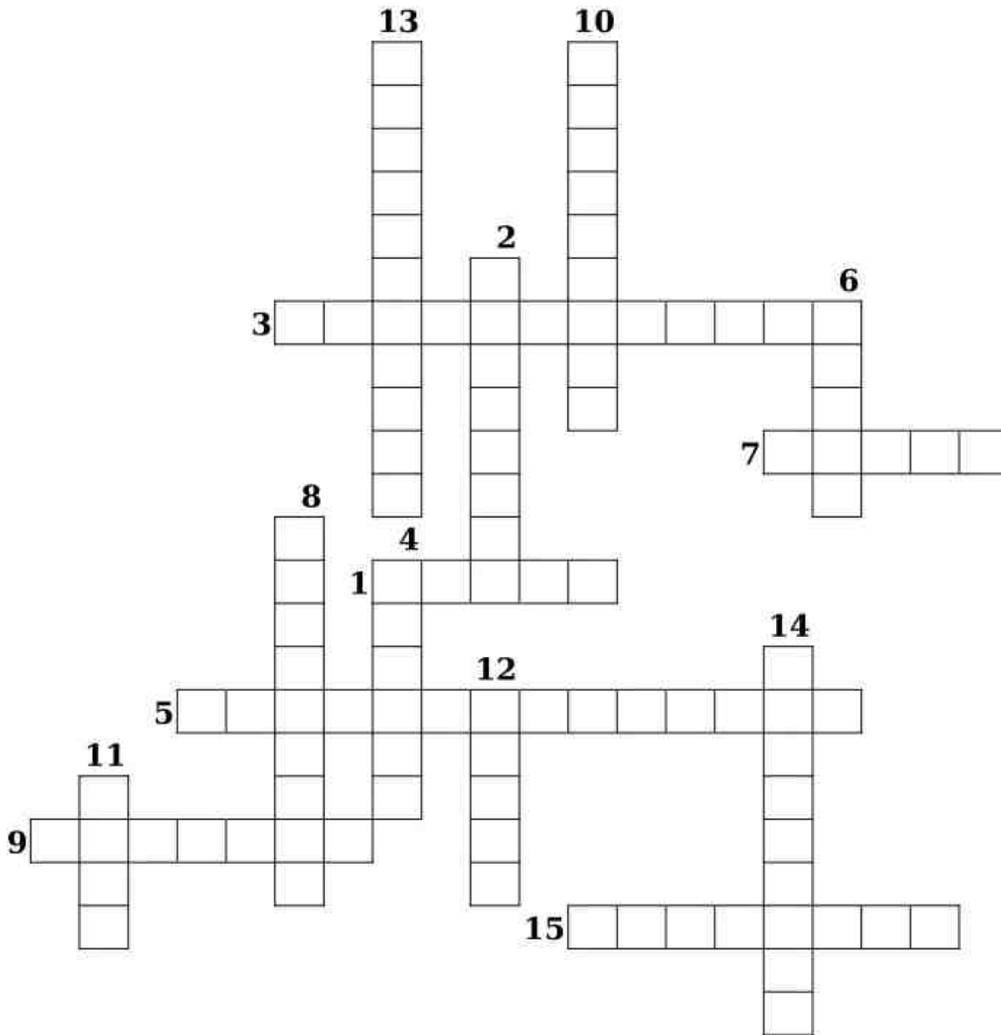
1. An insolent person who seeks to make a show of cleverness.
2. To deceive or trick someone by deception, or to cover or hide something.
3. Something that is utterly and glaringly foolish; unreasonably absurd; perverted.
4. A comic performer who entertains with various skills, such as song, music, storytelling, and jokes.
5. A person who plays pranks or tricks usually intended to make the victim appear foolish.
6. A deception or ruse.
7. Someone who is crazy, eccentric, or foolish.
8. Deception by trickery.
9. The act of ridiculing or deriding someone or something with contempt or humor.
10. A mischievous or malicious person who plays tricks, practical jokes, etc., at the expense of another.
11. A falsehood generally intended to fool and to entertain.
12. A gullible person.
13. Behaving in a way that is slightly bad or annoying, often in a playful manner, and typically not intended to cause serious harm.
14. The act of causing someone to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid.
15. Someone who is easily deceived or cheated.

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Mixed-Up-Meme Scrambler

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What the comedian gave the heckler ...
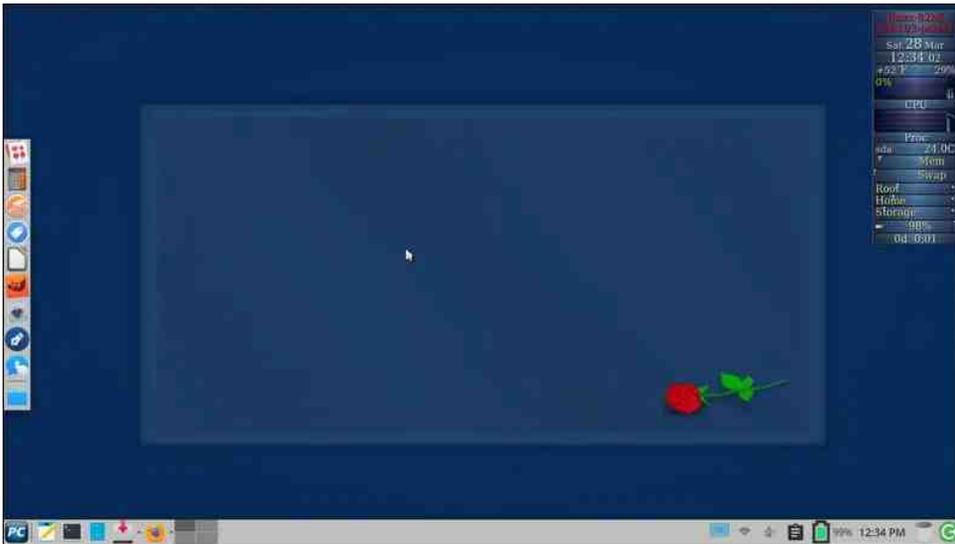
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Posted by kc1di, March 1, 2026, running KDE.

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