

Install Linux Mint on a Windows Computer

Seven steps, checked against Linux Mint 22.3

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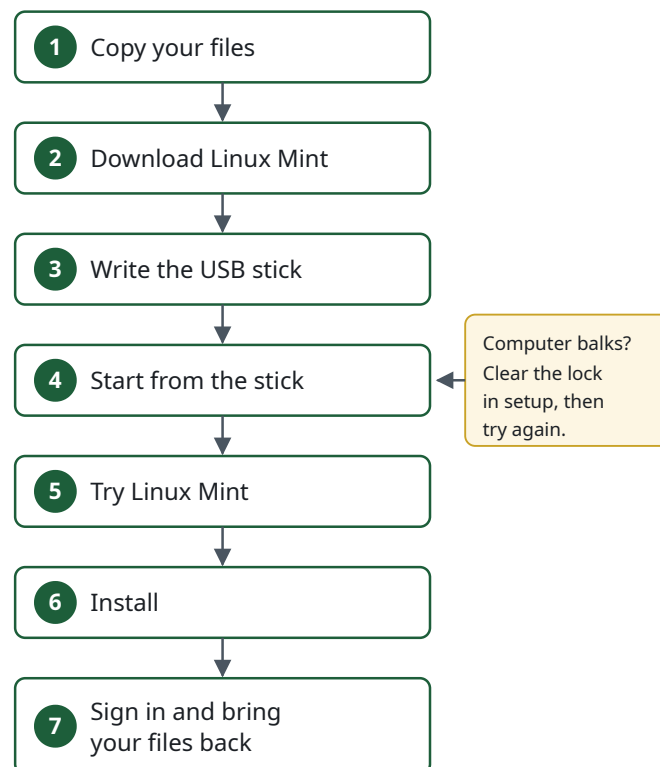
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Microsoft stopped updating Windows 10 on October 14, 2025, and Microsoft's engineers left many working computers off the list for Windows 11. Linux Mint installs on those computers and keeps them on security updates. This guide takes you from Windows to Linux Mint in seven steps, and one computer takes about an hour.

The install erases Windows and every file on the disk, so in step 1 you copy your files to another drive first.

What you need

- The Windows computer you want to move to Linux Mint, plugged into power.
- A USB stick of 8 GB or more. Writing Linux Mint to it erases whatever it holds.
- A second USB drive or an external disk for a copy of your files.
- Your network: a cable, or the Wi-Fi name and password.
- Windows, to make the USB stick in step 3. Use this computer before you start, or any other Windows computer.



The install path. If the computer balks at step 4, clear the lock in setup and try again.

1. Copy your files

In Windows, open each folder you use: Documents, Pictures, Desktop, Downloads, Music and Videos. Copy them to the second drive. Then open a few files from the drive to prove the copy worked, and set the drive aside until step 7.

2. Download Linux Mint

Go to linuxmint.com and download Linux Mint 22.3, the Cinnamon Edition. The Linux Mint team writes, "If you are unsure which desktop to choose start with the Cinnamon edition." The download arrives as one file of about 3.1 GB, an ISO image that holds the whole operating system.

3. Write the USB stick

A plain copy of the ISO file leaves the stick unable to start a computer. A small program writes it the right way.

1. Download **Rufus** from rufus.ie and open it.
2. Under **Device**, pick the USB stick. Compare its size and name with the stick in your hand. Rufus erases whatever drive you pick, and the check keeps it away from your backup drive.
3. Click **SELECT** and choose the Linux Mint ISO file.
4. Click **START** and let Rufus finish.

Linux Mint's own guide shows the same job with a program called [Etcher](https://linuxmint.com/docs/usb/etcher.php), if you prefer it.

4. Start the computer from the stick

Before you leave Windows, take care of two settings.

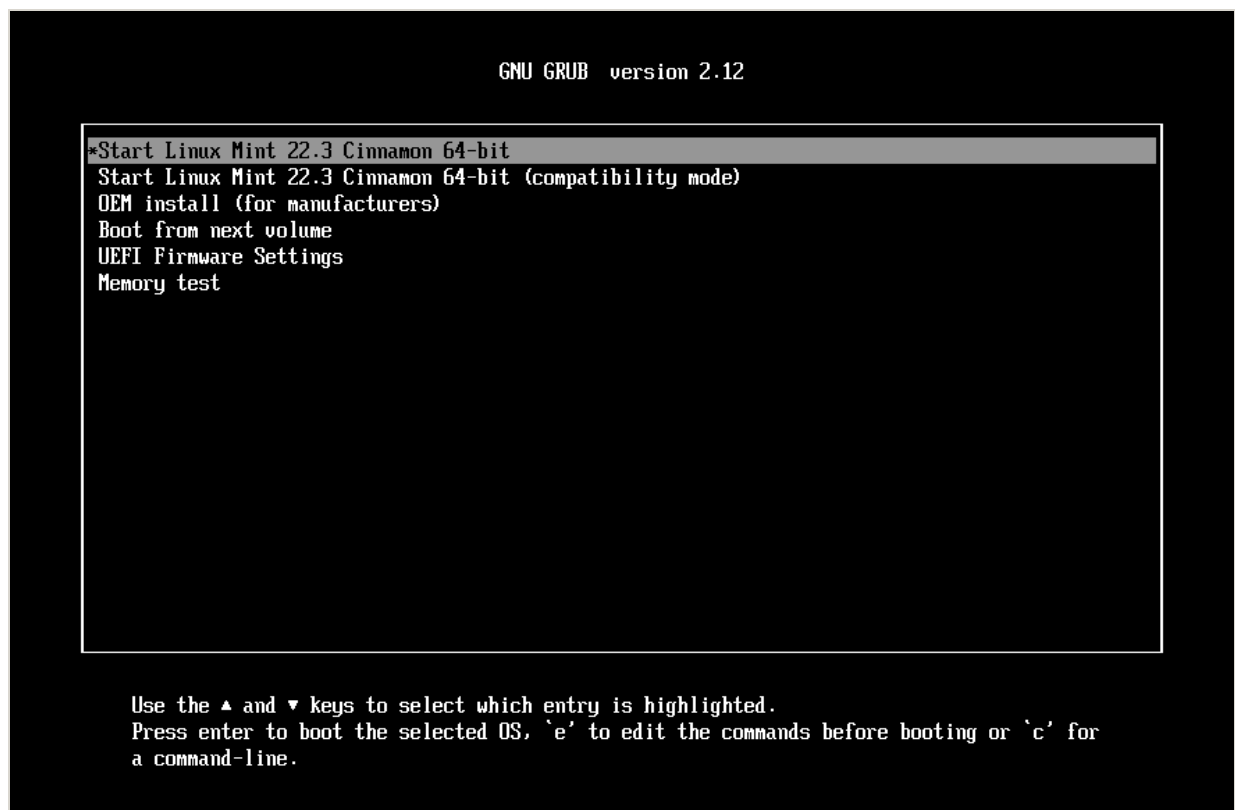
- **BitLocker.** Sign in at account.microsoft.com/devices, find this computer, and write down its recovery key if Microsoft lists one. If **Control Panel** shows **BitLocker Drive Encryption**, open it and click **Suspend protection**. You can read why in the fourth lock below.
- **Secure Boot.** If Microsoft's engineers left this computer off the list for Windows 11, plan to turn Secure Boot off in setup before you start from the stick. You can read why and how in the second lock below.

Plug the stick into the computer and restart it. As the maker's logo appears, tap the boot-menu key about once a second until a small menu opens. Choose the USB stick. The menu names it by its brand, sometimes after the word UEFI.

Maker	Boot menu	Setup screen
Dell	F12	F2
HP laptops	Esc, then F9	Esc, then F10
Lenovo ThinkPad and ThinkCentre	F12	F1
Lenovo IdeaPad, Yoga and Legion	The Novo button, then Boot Menu	F2, or the Novo button
Acer	F12, once you turn on F12 Boot Menu in setup	F2
ASUS laptops	Esc, on many models	Hold F2 as you press power

Most computers print the keys on the screen for a moment as they start. If the logo flashes past, you can open the setup screen from Windows: in Windows 10, go to **Settings, Update & Security, Recovery**, and under **Advanced startup** click **Restart now**. Then choose **Troubleshoot, Advanced options, UEFI Firmware Settings** and **Restart**.

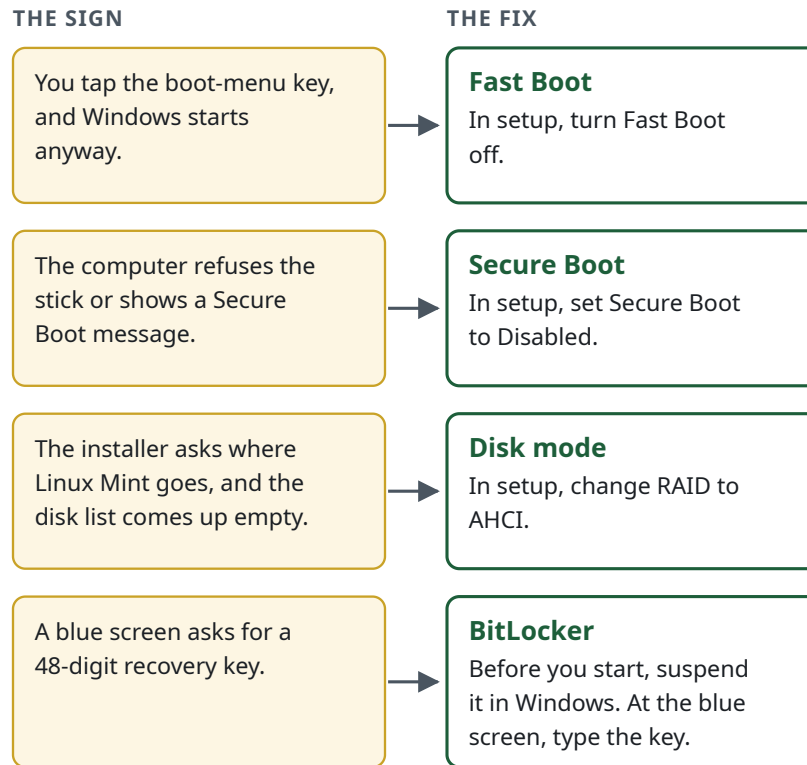
The stick shows a short menu with **Start Linux Mint 22.3 Cinnamon 64-bit** at the top. Press **Enter**, and a minute or two later the Linux Mint desktop opens.



The menu on the USB stick. Press Enter on Start Linux Mint.

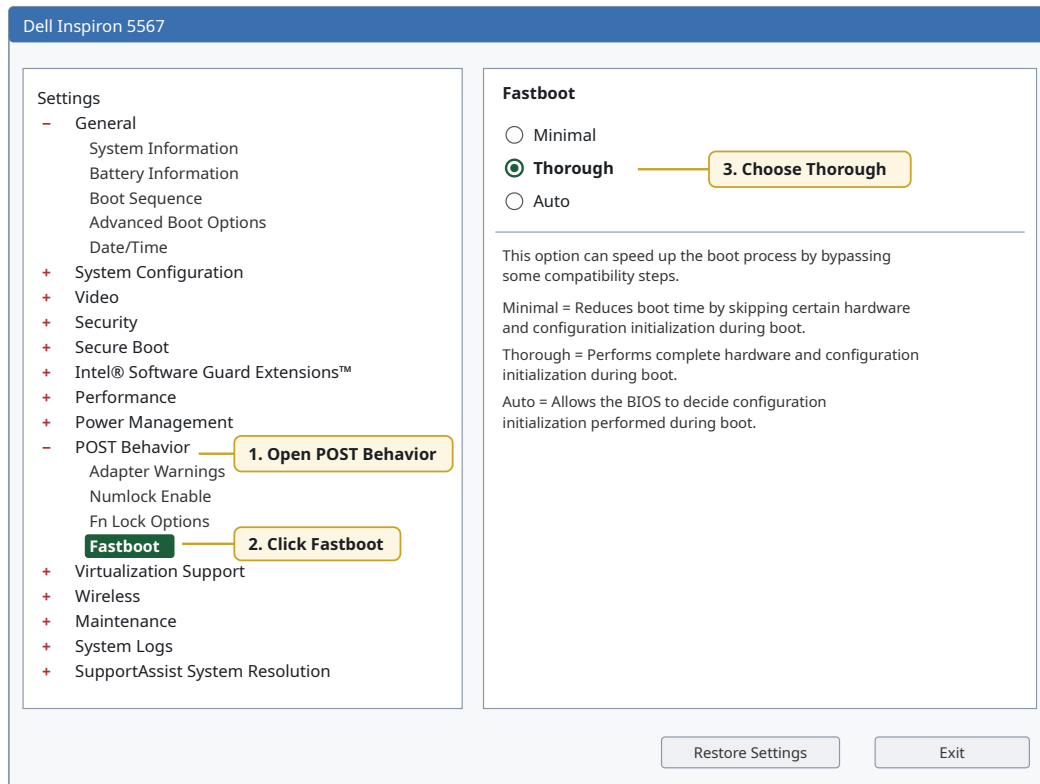
If the computer balks: the four locks

Four settings can block the stick. Each one shows itself with a sign, and you fix the one that shows. You change three of them in the setup screen, the menu the maker builds into the computer; the setup key in the table opens it. Change the one setting, save, restart and try the boot menu again.



The four locks, each sign with its fix.

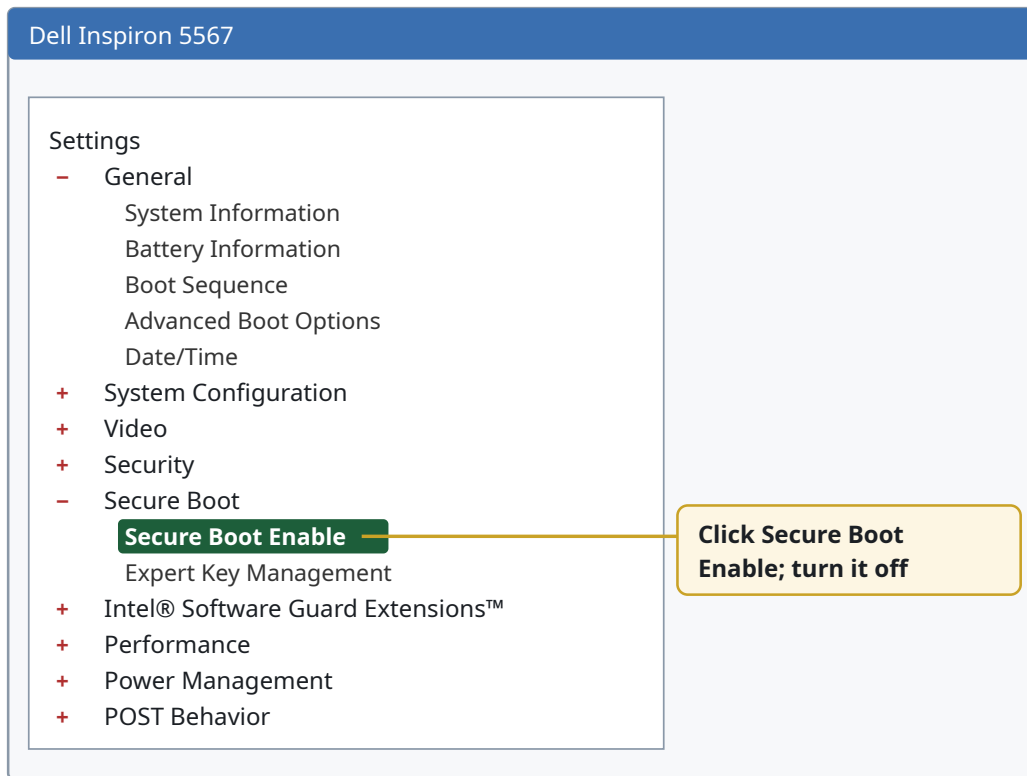
On a Dell like our Inspiron 5567, setup opens as a list of headings on the left. Click the + beside a heading to open it, and click a setting to show its choices on the right. When you finish, click **Exit** at the bottom right.



Dell's setup screen, drawn from a photo of our Inspiron 5567. Open POST Behavior, click Fastboot, and choose Thorough.

Fast Boot. You tap the boot-menu key, and Windows starts anyway, because the computer starts faster than your keystroke reaches it. In setup, find **Fast Boot** and turn it off. Dell names it **Fastboot**, under **POST Behavior**, with three choices: pick **Thorough**, which performs every start-up check.

Secure Boot. The computer refuses the stick, or shows a message about a Secure Boot violation. The Linux Mint team prints the fix in its guide: in setup, set **Secure Boot** to **Disabled**. On the Dell, open **Secure Boot** and click **Secure Boot Enable**. On a computer Microsoft's engineers left off the Windows 11 list, turn it off before you start, as step 4 says, even if the stick starts with it on. Microsoft's 2011 certificate for Linux expired in June 2026, and Canonical's engineers, who sign the start-up program Linux Mint uses, sign their updates with Microsoft's 2023 certificate. A computer whose setup holds the 2011 certificates and no later ones, like the Dell Inspiron 5567 in our lab, can refuse those updates and stop starting.



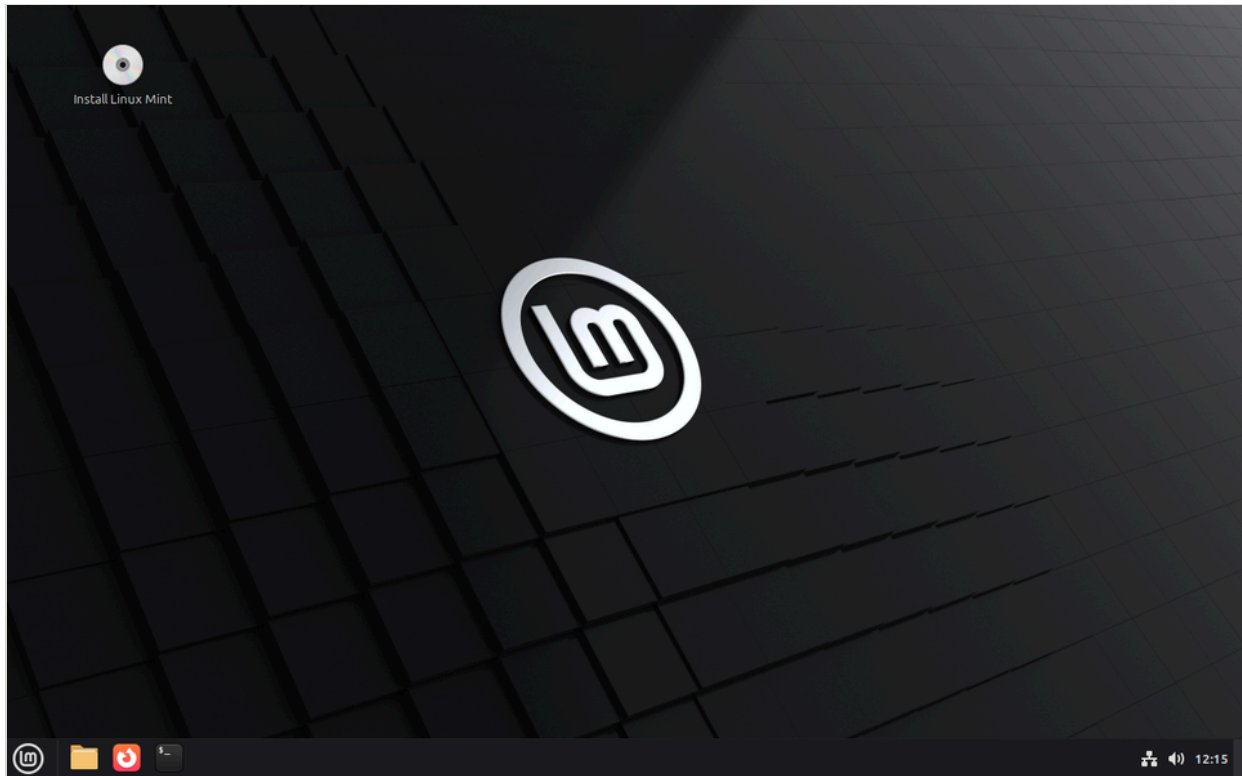
On the Dell, you find Secure Boot Enable under the Secure Boot heading. Drawn from a photo of our Inspiron 5567.

Disk mode. You find this lock inside the installer: it asks where Linux Mint goes, and the list of disks comes up empty. The maker set the disk to a mode called RAID, which Windows reads and the installer cannot. In setup, find the disk setting, which Dell names **SATA Operation**, and change it from **RAID** to **AHCI**.

BitLocker. Windows may lock its disk with BitLocker, and a change in setup can make it ask for a 48-digit recovery key on a blue screen. When you suspend BitLocker before you start, as step 4 shows, you prevent it. If the blue screen comes anyway, sign in at account.microsoft.com/devices from another computer or a phone, find this computer, and type its recovery key. The install erases BitLocker along with Windows.

5. Try Linux Mint

The stick opens a full Linux Mint desktop and leaves your disk alone. The Linux Mint team calls this the live session, and changes you make in it "are not written to the USB stick (or DVD) and they do not impact the system installed by the installer." Take a few minutes here. Connect to your network, play a sound, and open a web page, so you see how Linux Mint works with your computer before you erase Windows.



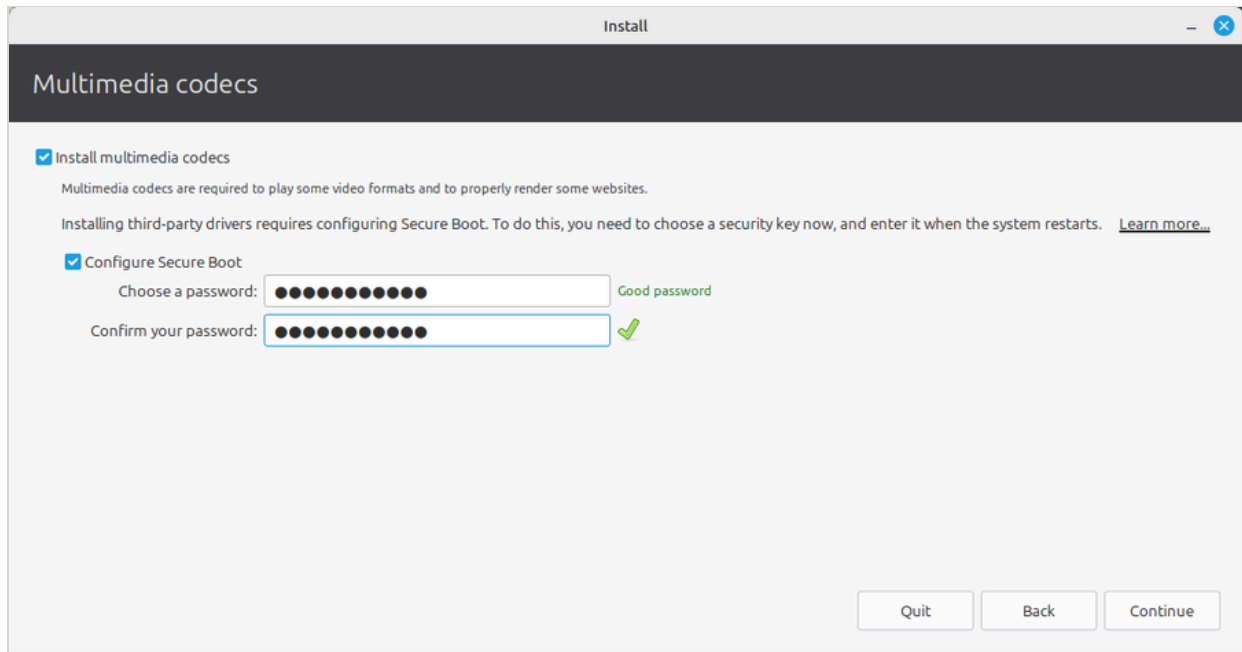
The live session runs Linux Mint from the stick. Double-click **Install Linux Mint**, top left, when you finish.

6. Install

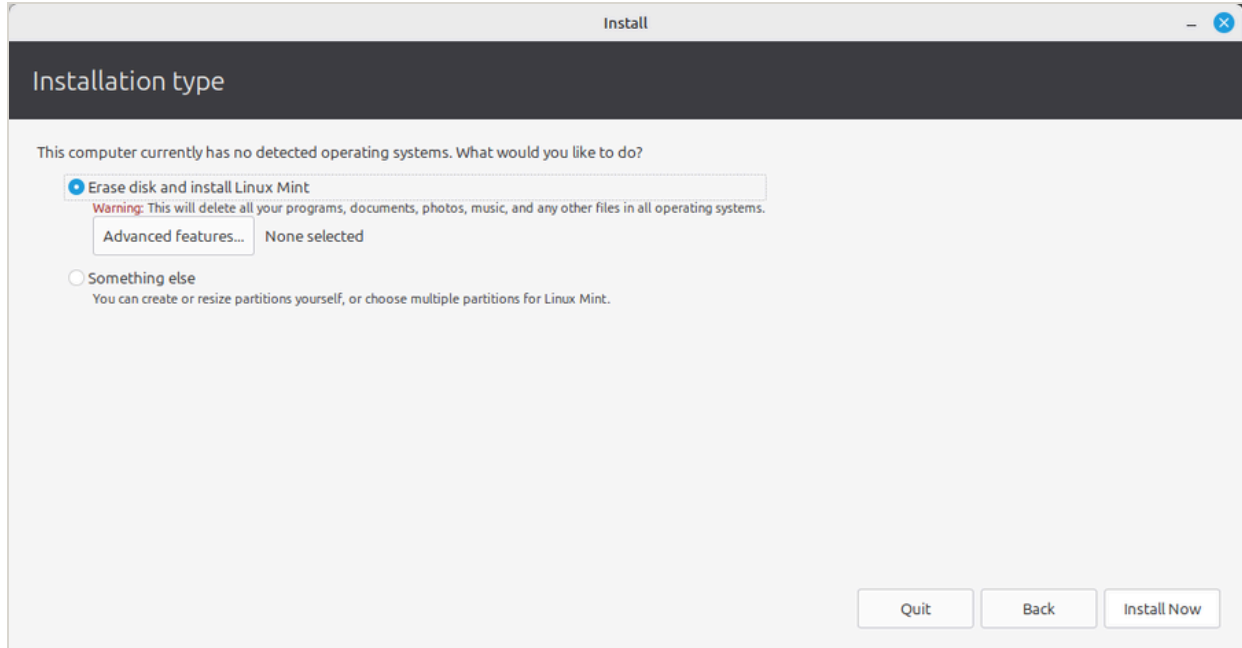
Double-click **Install Linux Mint** on the desktop and answer the screens in order. Click **Continue** after each one.

1. **Welcome.** Choose your language.
2. **Keyboard layout.** Choose the layout printed on your keys.
3. **Wireless.** On Wi-Fi, the installer asks for your network and its password. A cable skips this screen.
4. **Multimedia codecs.** Tick **Install multimedia codecs**, so the computer plays common audio and video files. If you left Secure Boot on, the screen also asks you to choose a password for Secure Boot. Pick one and write it down, because the computer asks for it once, on the first restart.
5. **Installation type.** Choose **Erase disk and install Linux Mint**. The Linux Mint team writes the rule for it: "If Linux Mint is the only operating system you want to run on this computer and all data can be lost on the hard drive." Click **Install Now**, and in the box that asks to write the changes to disks, click **Continue**. With that click, the installer erases Windows and gives Linux Mint the whole disk.
6. **Where are you?** Click your place on the map, or type a nearby city.

7. **Who are you?** Type your name. The installer fills in a computer name and a username from it, and you can keep both or change them to lowercase letters with no spaces or punctuation. Then type a strong password twice.



The codecs screen on a computer with Secure Boot on.



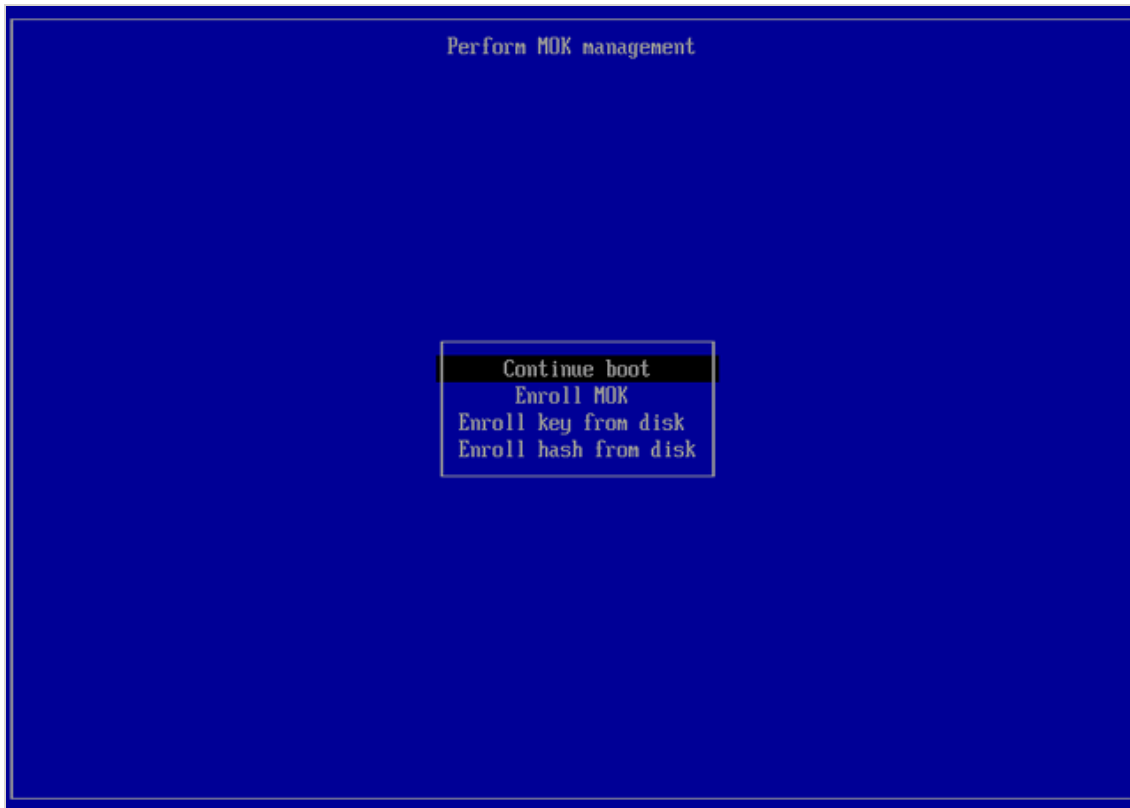
The installation type screen. On your computer, the first line names Windows, and the installer adds a choice to install alongside it. Choose Erase disk and install Linux Mint.

The image shows a window titled "Install" with a dark header bar containing the text "Who are you?". Below the header, there are several input fields and checkboxes. The first field is "Your name:" with the value "Sam Carter" and a checkmark. The second is "Your computer's name:" with the value "samlaptop" and a checkmark; below it is the text "The name it uses when it talks to other computers.". The third is "Pick a username:" with the value "sam" and a checkmark. The fourth is "Choose a password:" with a masked password and a checkmark; to its right is a strength indicator "Fair password" in orange. The fifth is "Confirm your password:" with a masked password and a checkmark. Below these are three radio buttons: "Log in automatically" (unselected), "Require my password to log in" (selected), and "Encrypt my home folder" (unchecked). At the bottom right are "Back" and "Continue" buttons.

Who are you? Your name, the computer's name, a username and a password.

The installer copies Linux Mint to the disk while a slideshow runs; in our lab it took about eight minutes. When it finishes, click **Restart Now**. Pull out the USB stick when the screen asks, and press **Enter**.

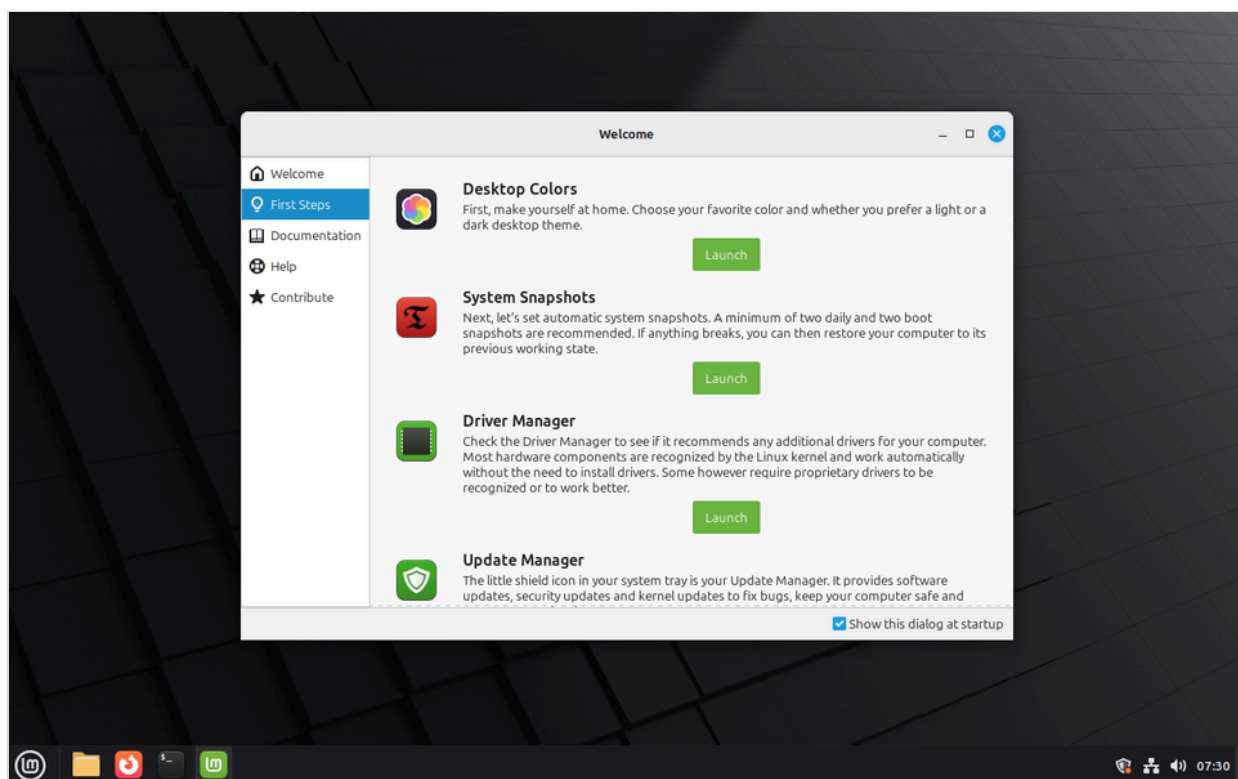
If you left Secure Boot on, a blue screen titled **Perform MOK management** comes up once, before Linux Mint starts. It lets the computer accept the key Linux Mint uses for its drivers. Choose **Enroll MOK**, **Continue** and **Yes**, type the Secure Boot password from the codecs screen, and choose **Reboot**. With Secure Boot off, you skip this screen.



The blue key screen on the first restart, with Secure Boot on. Choose Enroll MOK.

7. Sign in and bring your files back

The computer starts Linux Mint from its own disk and shows the login screen with your name on it. Sign in with your password, and a Welcome Screen opens. Click **First Steps**. Run the **Update Manager** first, so the computer has every update before you use it; from then on, you find its shield icon beside the clock. Then set up **System Snapshots**, which lets you return the computer to an earlier snapshot if an update goes wrong.



First Steps on the Welcome Screen. The shield beside the clock opens the Update Manager.

Plug in the drive from step 1 and copy your folders back into your Home folder, which opens from the yellow folder icon on the taskbar. Open a few files to make sure they came through.

Find help

[End of 10](#) lists volunteer groups that help Windows 10 owners move to Linux, and [repair cafés](#) hold free community repair events. The [Linux Mint forums](#) answer questions about Linux Mint itself.

Sources

- Windows 10 end of support, October 14, 2025: [Microsoft Lifecycle](#).
- Linux Mint 22.3 and its editions: linuxmint.com/download.php.
- Live session, installer screens and Secure Boot fix: the [Linux Mint Installation Guide](#).
- Opening setup from Windows 10: Microsoft, "[Enable virtualization on Windows](#)."
- Boot menu and setup keys: support pages from [Dell](#), [HP](#), [Lenovo](#), [Acer](#) and [ASUS](#).
- Secure Boot certificates: LWN, "[Secure Boot certificate expiration is here](#)," July 1, 2026; Canonical, "[Microsoft UEFI CA rotation: what it means for Ubuntu users and vendors](#)."

- Screens: Linux Mint 22.3 Cinnamon, captured in our lab, and the setup screen of our Dell Inspiron 5567, drawn from Tom Adelstein's photos, October 2026.

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