
Linux Documentation Project (LDP) FAQ

Rahul Sundaram <rahulsundaram AT yahoo DOT co DOT in>

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Revision History

Revision 1.4	2004-05-31	RS
Added a few more FAQ's and minor modifications from Emma Jane Hogbin and updated to Creative Commons Attribution-Sharealike 2.0 License per TM.		
Revision 1.3	2003-11-15	EM
Minor editorial update		
Revision 1.2	2003-11-09	TM
Small corrections		
Revision 1.1	2003-11-07	RS
Minor update		
Revision 1.0	2003-02-24	TM
Initial Release, reviewed by LDP		

Abstract

An introductory FAQ for users who come across the LDP and want a short introduction to it.

Q: What is LDP?

A: LDP is a loosely knit team of volunteers who provide documentation for many aspects of Linux. There are several forms of documentation: Guides, HOWTOs, man pages, and FAQs.

Q: What is a Guide?

A: A guide is typically a longer book with broader coverage of a subject; for instance, the Network Administration or User Guide. The intent is to understand the whole subject, as opposed to performing only one task. If you want to have a broader look at some aspect of Linux, then the guides should be very handy.

Q: What is a HOWTO?

A: A HOWTO is usually a step-by-step guide that describe, in detail, how to perform a specific task. For example, you can use the Linux Installation HOWTO to help you install Linux on a system, but it does not cover how to set up a Web server so that you can focus on a particular task.

Q: What is a man page?

A: A man (Manual) page is a standard form of help that is available for many Linux applications and utilities. You can view man pages by using the **man** command. Many of the GNU utilities have a more detailed form of help, called info pages. You can view info pages by using the **info** command.

Q: What is an FAQ?

A: An FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) is a list of questions that are usually available in mailing lists. An FAQ is used to avoid answering repetitive questions that are asked by new users. For example, the Linux FAQ answers questions like, “What is Linux?” and “How is Linux pronounced?”

Q: Where can I get all of these documents?

A: Most Linux distributions include LDP documents, so there is a high chance that they are already available for you if you've installed Linux. The latest versions that are available at the LDP Web site, <http://www.tldp.org>.

Q: How are the documents licensed?

A: LDP has documents that are available only under a free license, like the GNU Free Documentation License. This means that you are allowed to distribute, modify, and do what ever you want to do to the documents, as long as you do not change the copyright and licensing terms.

Q: Are all of the topics that are in the LDP related to Linux?

A: Yes. There are several other applications, languages, and operating systems that are covered at the LDP. LDP accepts the document if it is of any interest to general Linux users. For example, the Linux+Windows HOWTO explains, in detail, how your Linux system can coexist with Windows. Documents that do not relate directly to Linux won't be accepted.

Q: Who contributes to LDP?

A: Application developers, who usually provide help files with their programs, often submit their documentation to LDP. Increasingly, new users solve their Linux issues and document their work to help others in the community.

Q: Why should I contribute?

A: Authors who want to help others by providing some documentation can do so through LDP. The documents should be under a free license, such as the GNU free documentation license, which ensures that everyone is benefited through your documents. Here are some of the major benefits when you contribute through LDP:

- LDP hosts the document and ensures that it is available in many formats, including text, html, and pdf, so that Linux users can view it in a platform-independent manner.
- LDP documents are available as part of many distributions and, hence, your documents reach a large community of Linux users.
- Many of the Linux users who read your document may give you comments, suggestions, or even provide additional content that ensures the document is reliable and updated whenever necessary.
- You may be providing some crucial help to users who come across the same issues that you have solved on your own.
- It is a form of contribution to the Linux and open source community which depends on volunteers for its growth.
- You may also publish any of LDP documents, including your own, and get monetary benefits from the whole process.

Q: How can I contribute?

A: If you know a particular topic well, first search the LDP Web site, <http://www.tldp.org>, for related documentation. If something is already available, you can contact the author through e-mail, which will probably be available within the document, and coordinate your work together. You can take care of the documents that are not maintained. If the topic is an entirely new one, subscribe to the Discussion mailing list at <discuss@en.tldp.org>, propose the topic to your peers first, and then gather feedback. After you receive feedback and complete the draft, you can submit the document by using the instructions that are in the LDP Author Guide, <http://www.tldp.org/LDP/LDP-Author-Guide>. Be sure to advise LDP that you followed the steps that are listed in the LDP Author Guide. This avoids having someone come back later and tell you that this subject was not acceptable (which is rarely the case). Contact the HOWTO coordinator who is listed at the LDP Web site if you require any expert help. When you follow the above steps, you are ensured the following benefits:

- If any other person is interested in contributing, you can team up.
- The topic that you wish to cover may already be available as part of some other documentation that you are not aware of; you may want to e-mail the list so that you can avoid repetitive work.
- You can receive guidance in the form of help, tools, and other resources that can speed up your writing.

Because LDP is an informal organisation of volunteers, you do not need any kind of membership to contribute. Everyone is encouraged to help in whatever way they can.

Q: In which format should I write the documentation?

A: In any format you would like! Documents will be maintained in DocBook XML or LinuxDoc and will be converted for you by a volunteer. You may choose to use an editing suite (like OpenOffice.org) to write the DocBook for you. There are also scripts available to convert LyX and ASCII documents to DocBook.

Q: DocBook is too hard to learn for a LyX user like me. Why do you use it?

A: It's not just LyX users that say this, but here's the answer... There are hundreds of documents in our collection. We have one set of scripts to convert each of these documents into human-readable formats (HTML, PostScript and PDF). We use these scripts not only to save time, but also to keep our collection visually similar, as requested by many of our readers (read <http://ask.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=04/03/30/0041253> for more information). DocBook is a very descriptive markup language specifically designed to describe technical documentation. Always under active development, DocBook is used to output a variety of formats, including HTML pages, slide shows, PDF and PostScript for printed materials. We are always interested in hearing about scripts or tools for converting text to DocBook. Please read the Author Guide [<http://tldp.org/LDP/LDP-Author-Guide/html/x2docbook.html>] and contribute your ideas to the "Discuss" mailing list. LyX users should also read <http://www.teledyn.com/help/XML/lyx2db/t1.html> for more information.

Q: How should I submit documentation?

A: For your convenience, this process is summarized in our Author Guide [<http://www.tldp.org/LDP/LDP-Author-Guide/html/process.html>].

Q: Will my document be reviewed before it is accepted to the collection?

A: All new documents are reviewed according to the LDP Reviewer HOWTO [<http://tldp.org/HOWTO/LDP-Reviewer-HOWTO/>]. Each document will go through three reviews: technical, language and meta-data. You can read about these reviews in the LDP Reviewer HOWTO.

Q: What if I have question that hasn't been answered here?

- A:** If your question hasn't been answered in this FAQ, please send e-mail to the Discussion list (<discuss@en.tldp.org>) after subscribing to it. More information is also available at <http://www.tldp.org/mailinfo.html>. If someone on the Discussion list answers the question and you feel that it should be included here, send a copy of both the question that you asked and the answer that you received to the author of this document. The author's e-mail address is listed at the top of this page.