Debian Jr. Quick Guide

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23 March 2003

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Contents

Chapter 1

About this document

1.1 Terminology

In writing this document it took some effort to come up with a term that adequately describes those people who help the children use their Debian Jr. systems, who may be a more experienced (usually older) sibling or friend, a parent, a relative, or a teacher. This person may be highly proficient with Debian, or a novice, discovering as much about their system as the children are, and merely staying one step ahead to help bring them forward. After considering a number of alternatives, we settled on "guide". Thus, throughout this document we use this term (in lowercase, as distinct from "the Quick Guide") to refer to this role. Where we need to refer specifically to the children's systems administrator, we use "sys admin" instead, although ideally the sys admin is a guide too.

1.2 Audience

The intended audience for this document, then, is those who would like to guide children using Debian Jr., particularly those who are new to it and are planning to install it. You are encouraged to read this document with the sys admin (if that is not also your role), as many parts of it are of particular interest to the sys admin.

1.3 Suggested reading

If you are installing Debian for the first time, this document should be read as a companion to Debian's Installation Manual (`http://www.debian.org/releases/woody/installmanual`).

This covers basic Debian installation concepts, such as running `tasksel`, which are key to a successful Debian Jr. install.

We try to give as detailed instructions and examples as we can without straying from being a "Quick Guide", assuming very little about the user's familiarity with performing a Debian installation. So we hope that this document, paired with the Installation Manual, can be used together to carry off a successful install. But for those who seek more detailed help, a number of other supporting documents are referenced throughout the rest of this text.

Finally, the Social Contract (http://www.debian.org/social_contract) is key to understanding why we have embarked on this project at all. We hope that you will catch the spirit of this document, become excited by it, and by using Debian Jr. will not only benefit from what it has to offer as a system, but will also realize the benefits of entering into the global free software community which we serve.

Chapter 2

Introduction

Debian Jr. (`http://www.debian.org/devel/debian-jr`) is an internal project to make Debian an OS that children of all ages will want to use. Our initial focus will be on producing something for children up to age 8. Once we have accomplished this, our next target age range is 7 to 12. By the time children reach their teens, they should be comfortable with using Debian without any special modifications.

Debian Jr. provides a collection of packages for children and their guides. Beyond merely providing entertainment, the packages we have selected cover a broad range of areas, from those which help the child visualize what is inside their operating system (`lavaps`, `xcruise`) to music, art, writing and programming (`xmms`, `gimp`, `abiword` and `python`) as well as some games and desktop toys. We hope that child and guides alike will have fun, learn together, and make creative use of this excellent free software.

Ultimately, we owe the free software authors and maintainers the thanks for what they have given the world. Our work is to gather their work together into the Debian distribution, making it readily available to children and their guides. Once we select a package, we care for its quality, listening to the users, sending wishlists, bug reports, and fixes to Debian and upstream maintainers. It is this constant dialog between users and developers that ensures that the free software and our users continue to be our priorities, as we have promised in our Social Contract (`http://www.debian.org/social_contract`).

Chapter 3

Getting started

Now that you know what Debian Jr. is all about, you are probably dying to get it installed and play around. (For the kids of course.) Review the following sections with your sys admin and then go ahead and install it.

Chapter 4

Prerequisites

Debian Jr. was first released in Debian 3.0 “Woody”. Therefore, to run it, you must at least have a Debian Woody system.

Debian Jr. will add approximately 320M to a base Woody install. In addition to this, some space is required for X, a window manager, and some other programs of your choosing, as well as space for home directories and system overhead. The recommended minimum hard drive size is therefore 700M, with 1G being preferred. Of course, smaller installations are possible if you choose fewer components to install.

Chapter 5

Installation

5.1 Choosing the installation method

You need to choose whether to use the Debian Jr. Task Installer, which installs the majority of Debian Jr. components in one step, or whether to select and install individual components. If you use the Task Installer, review the installed components afterwards to see if there are others you would like to add to the ones installed by default.

5.2 Installing with the Task Installer

1. To start the install, use the Task Installer (`tasksel`). If you are installing Debian Jr. as part of a fresh Debian install, then this is the Simple Package Selection (`http://www.debian.org/releases/woody/i386/ch-init-config.en.html#s-preselectio`) step after you have booted your new Debian system for the first time. Otherwise, as root, run `tasksel` from the command-line.
2. Select "Debian Jr." from the "End User" section. (If you don't see this entry in the list of available tasks, you may have the problem addressed by 'Tasksel issues' on page 17.)
3. Next, select the "X Window System" task.
4. You may want to select a desktop environment task (Gnome or KDE). However, these each take up a fair amount of disk space and tend to be more resource intensive. For example, if you have a 486 with 32M of memory or less, you would probably be better off running a lightweight window manager instead.
5. When you exit `tasksel`, the Debian Jr. task will be installed, along with any other task selections you made.

6. Unless you use the KDE or Gnome tasks, which include a window manager, you will need to install a window manager after `tasksel` is done. For example, Window Maker can be installed with this command:

   ```
   apt-get install wmaker
   ```

7. Please note that optional Jr. packages need to be installed separately, as described in the following section.

5.3 Installing components individually

5.3.1 Choosing a package installer

Debian Jr. components have names starting with “junior-”. These packages may be installed individually with `dselect`, `aptitude` or `apt-get`. Which one you use is rather a matter of taste.

If installing Debian Jr. as part of a fresh Debian install, `dselect` is run for you if you choose the Advanced Package Selection (http://www.debian.org/releases/woody/i386/ch-init-config.en.html#s-install-advance method after your first boot. Otherwise, as root, you can run `dselect` from the command line. The principal merit of this method is that it is the officially sanctioned one in the Installation Manual.

The new `aptitude` package installer is an increasingly popular alternative to `dselect`. Although the author does not use this installer, it appears to have a better user interface than `dselect` and provides similar functionality. This method is not an option during the Debian installation process, and is not installed on your system by default. So if you want to use it, you need to install it first with `apt-get install aptitude`.

The author’s bias is to use `apt-get`, due to the elegance of managing the package installation process via simple commands. So if you prefer a command-line interface, you may find this is your best choice. It is not as self-explanatory as `dselect` and `aptitude` are supposed to be, but the APT HOWTO (http://www.debian.org/doc/manuals/apt-howto/) will give you a good start with it.

5.3.2 Using dselect

If you are using `dselect`, simply locate all packages with names beginning ’junior-’, select the desired components, and install them. (For beginner help, see dselect Documentation for Beginners (http://www.debian.org/releases/woody/i386/dselect-beginner) included in the Debian installation documentation.)

5.3.3 Using aptitude

`Aptitude` groups packages that are in tasks under the "Tasks" heading. However, if you wish to install the extra 'junior-' packages not included in the task, you will find these by pressing '/' and then typing 'junior-'. After finding the first match, press '\' to find the next. (In this respect, finding a package is similar to `dselect` which uses the same keys for searching.)

5.3.4 Using apt-get

If you are using `apt-get`, list all the installed components, check this list against the available components, and then select and install each one in this way:

```
dpkg -l 'junior-*'
apt-cache pkgnames junior-
apt-get install junior-gnome junior-kde
```

In the example above, first `dpkg` is used to show the status of all `junior-` package. Then `apt-cache` is used to show all available components. Finally, `apt-get install` is used to install `junior-gnome` and `junior-kde`. These are extra components not present in the core Junior task.

5.3.5 Using list-junior

This is not really an installation option in and of itself. We have provided an example script in `junior-doc` to generate a list of installed and available Debian Jr. components as an HTML page. This list can then be viewed with your preferred web browser to help explore Debian Jr. and decide which components you wish to install, using one of the above methods. The list contains links to packages.debian.org so you can browse the latest versions and see what they contain.

The `list-junior.sh` script needs two packages to be installed before it can be run, so first `apt-get install grep-dctrl wdiff`. Then, in a directory where you want the HTML page to be generated, type:

```
sh /usr/share/doc/junior-doc/examples/list-junior.sh
```

When the script completes, with any luck there will be a list-junior.html page in the current directory which you can browse with your favourite web browser.

Caveat user: This script is really a quick-and-dirty kludge and needs to be redone more robustly, so if it doesn't work for you, please be patient, we will make it into a proper program, complete with arguments, switches, man page and all those niceties in a future release.

Chapter 6

What now?

So you have a successfully installed Debian Jr. system. What now? The sys admin will want to create children's accounts with adduser, and ensure that the window manager you have selected for them starts on their accounts by default.

Now, take a little tour of it yourself. Have a look at the window manager's menus. From here, you will be able to find virtually every program installed with Debian Jr. Try them out. Tailor the configurations to suit the children's needs. Once you are satisfied with the initial state of their accounts, have the children log in and start being their guide.

This is where our work leaves off and yours begins. There are many ways that Debian Jr. could be improved. There is a lot of grunt work in getting a system ready for any set of users with specific needs. Perhaps you will put some effort into this and would like to see your hard work benefit other Debian Jr. users. Please drop us a note on our debian-jr@lists.debian.org (`http://lists.debian.org/debian-jr/`) mailing list, where users and developers discuss these issues together. Comments from your experience using Debian Jr. are valuable to us.

Chapter 7

Can you help?

If you feel you have something to contribute to the Debian Jr. project, please visit our web site at http://www.debian.org/devel/debian-jr to find out more about us, including how to contact us and join the development effort.

Chapter 8

Problems

8.1 Tasksel issues

If you are not able to see Debian Jr. in `tasksel`, it is probably because of a `tasksel` bug (#114721 (http://bugs.debian.org/114721)). Run `dselect` and choose `[U]pdate` option to update `dselect`'s package list. When it is finished, exit and run `tasksel`. All tasks should now appear, including Debian Jr.

Chapter 9

Reporting bugs

Please see `http://bugs.debian.org` for instructions on reporting bugs. Filing well written bug reports is an important means of communication between users and developers. Your bug reports help to ensure the highest quality in our packages.