Slackel 7.5

Mayank Sharma finds this distribution combines Slackware and USB distros with two use-cases: older computers and portable installations.

There are several reasons why Slackware, the oldest, actively developed distro, still has a huge user and install base. However, user-friendliness isn't its forte, which has given birth to distros like Salix that produce custom tools and scripts to tame Slackware and make it usable for the desktop user. Slackel helps bring those tools to the actively developed Slackware -current branch.

On paper, Slackel produces multiple editions, each with a different desktop environment. However, since the last couple of releases, the developer has only put out the flagship Openbox-based edition, giving the MATE and KDE editions a skip. But Slackel is essentially a one-man distro, so we can't really complain, especially since the developer puts out these snapshot releases at regular intervals.

In fact, we're impressed that despite its limited staff Slackel is one of the few distros that's still available for both newer 64-bit and older 32-bit machines. This enables you to install the distro on the latest UEFI-equipped machines, as well as on decades old Pentium, Celerons, and get a comparable experience on both.

Slackware for newbies

One of our popular use cases for the distro is to carry it around on a bootable USB disk; it can be installed on an external USB drive or a portable SSD disk. This portable installation behaves just like a regular installation, and you can interact with it and maintain it as such.

The developer claims that the advantage of doing an installation rather than working through a persistent partition, as is usually the case with portable distros, is that distros with persistence bog down the installation after fleshing out the installation with programs. However, with the installation on the removable media, the portable installation will remain just as peppy.

The installer is one of the tools that Slackel has borrowed from Salix. It's basic, but gets the job done. There's no partitioner however, so you'll need the included *Gparted* tool to prep partitions for installation.

The installer supports three installation modes. Core installs Slackle without a desktop; Basic throws in a handful of essential utilities, while Full prepares a fully functional ready-to-use desktop.

In terms of appearance, Slackel veers clearly in the direction of being functional. It follows the traditional desktop metaphor, but it's based on Openbox so don't expect conveniences that you'd expect from a modern desktop environment, like a searchable applications

Thanks to being based on Slackware –current, Slackel is essentially a rolling release distro, with snapshots such as the current release serving as entry points for new users.

menu. The desktop has a Conky system monitor on the desktop, and in this release the developer has removed the *wicd* utility and instead uses *NetworkManager* as the default application for handling network connections.

According to the developer, Slackel follows the one application per task philosophy, and its program spread covers most desktop use cases. The distro uses a mix of Slackware -current, slackbuild, Salix and Slackel repos, and between these you'll find the necessary software to flesh out your installation with the help of the bundled graphical package management tool.

In terms of documentation, the distro has a quick-start guide, which it recommends to all first-time users. Help, on the other hand, is dispensed through forum boards, which see an active participation from the distro's lead developer.

While the distro can be operated by non-Slackware users, and ease of use is one of its primary goals, we wouldn't thrust it upon newbies. Instead, the distro is a wonderful option for users who've clocked a few miles with Linux, and want a functional, portable distro that'll perform well on all kinds of hardware. **LXF**

VERDICT

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LICENCE: Several

FEATURES	8/10		EASE OF USE	8/10
PERFORMANCE	9/10		DOCUMENTATION	7/10

Slackel works for anyone looking for a fast distro that works across all types of hardware, and that you can carry with you.

» Rating 8/10