

Replace Windows with *Linux Mint*.

Install Linux Mint as the only system on your laptop, from a USB drive. Six steps take you from making the USB to a working desktop with Wi-Fi. We did this on an HP laptop; on other computers, some keys and menu names differ.

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This erases the laptop. Installing this way deletes Windows, your files, your programs and the recovery partition on the disk you choose. Back up anything you want to keep before you start.

The six steps

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Before you start

Gather these first:

- ☐ The laptop and its power adapter. Keep it plugged in the whole time.
- ☐ A USB drive of 8 GB or more. Everything on it will be erased.
- ☐ The Linux Mint installer file, called an ISO: [download Mint 22.3 Cinnamon here](https://linuxmint.com/download.php) ([mint.arynwood.com/#download](https://linuxmint.com/download.php)) or from [linuxmint.com](https://linuxmint.com/download.php) (<https://linuxmint.com/download.php>).
- ☐ [balenaEtcher](https://etcher.balena.io/) (<https://etcher.balena.io/>), a free program that writes the ISO onto the USB.
- ☐ A backup of your important files, on another drive or online.
- ☐ Optional: an Ethernet cable, in case Wi-Fi needs a driver after installing.

Unplug any other USB drives and external disks, so you can't choose the wrong one later.

STEP 1 OF 6

Make the installation USB

- 1 **Download the ISO.** It is about 3 GB, so it can take a while, and there is no fixed time. Let it finish completely. If it is very slow or fails, try another official mirror from [Mint's download page](https://linuxmint.com/download.php) (<https://linuxmint.com/download.php>).
- 2 **Check the download.** Compare its checksum with the one on [our download page](https://linuxmint.com/download.php) ([mint.arynwood.com/#verify](https://linuxmint.com/download.php)), or follow [Mint's verification guide](https://linuxmint.com/download.php) ([https://linuxmint-installation-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/verify.html](https://linuxmint.com/download.php)). This confirms the file is complete and unchanged.
- 3 Open **balenaEtcher**, choose **Flash from file** and pick the Mint ISO.
- 4 Choose **Select target** and pick your USB drive. Check its size so you know it is the USB.
- 5 Click **Flash!** Etcher writes the USB, then checks it (validating). Wait until both are finished before you unplug it.

Good to know: copying the ISO file onto the USB does not work. It has to be written with Etcher.

STEP 2 OF 6

Start the laptop from the USB

On an HP laptop, a startup menu lets you start from the USB just this once, without changing any settings.

- 1 Plug in the Mint USB and restart the laptop.
- 2 Right away, tap **Esc** again and again until the **HP Startup Menu** appears.
- 3 Press **F9** for **Boot Device Options**.
- 4 Use the arrow keys to highlight the USB. If it is listed twice, choose the entry that says **UEFI**.
- 5 Press **Enter**.

Other brands use different keys. If **Esc** and **F9** do nothing, look up your computer maker's key for the boot menu.

Ended up in a settings screen instead?

A screen titled **InsydeH2O Setup Utility**, with tabs such as **Main**, **Security**, **System Configuration** and **Exit**, is the laptop's BIOS settings. To get to the startup menu from there:

- 1 Press **F10** to save and exit, and confirm.
- 2 As the laptop restarts, tap **Esc**, then press **F9**.

If the USB isn't in the list, open **System Configuration** → **Boot Options**, turn on **USB Boot**, press **F10** to save, and try again. Menu names vary by model.

Another way: from Windows

If Windows still starts normally:

- 1 Open **Start** → **Power**.
- 2 Hold **Shift** while you click **Restart**.
- 3 Choose **Use a device**, then the USB. It may be called **EFI USB Device**.

To open the BIOS settings this way instead, choose **Troubleshoot** → **Advanced options** → **UEFI Firmware Settings** → **Restart**, if your laptop offers it.

STEP 3 OF 6

Open the Mint live desktop

The USB shows a menu. Here is what each option does:

Start Linux Mint 22.3 Cinnamon 64-bit	Choose this. The normal start.
Start Linux Mint ... (compatibility mode)	Try this if the normal start freezes or shows a blank screen.
OEM install (for manufacturers)	For computer makers. Skip it.
Boot from next volume	Tries another drive. Not needed here.
UEFI Firmware Settings	Goes back to the BIOS settings.
Memory test	Tests the laptop's memory (RAM).

Highlight **Start Linux Mint** and press **Enter**. A Mint desktop opens, running from the USB. Nothing on the laptop has changed yet, so you can look around first.

STEP 4 OF 6

Install Mint (this erases Windows)

- 1 On the desktop, double-click **Install Linux Mint**.
- 2 Choose your language and keyboard layout.
- 3 Connect to the internet if you can. If you want to play common video and music formats, tick the box to install multimedia codecs.
- 4 At **Installation type**, choose **Erase disk and install Linux Mint**.
- 5 **Stop and check the disk.** Look at its size and model. It must be the laptop's own disk: not the USB, and not a backup drive. Don't go by a name like `/dev/sda` alone. If you can't tell which disk it is, stop here.
- 6 Click **Install Now**. Read the summary of disk changes before you accept it.
- 7 Choose your time zone, then enter your name, a computer name, a username and a password. Remember the password: you'll need it for updates and drivers.
- 8 Wait for the installation to finish.

You don't need to format the disk first. **Erase disk** creates everything Mint needs. Only choose it when you want Mint to replace everything on that disk.

STEP 5 OF 6

Restart into Mint

- 1 Click **Restart Now**.
- 2 Remove the USB when the screen asks you to, then press **Enter** if asked.
- 3 The laptop starts Mint from its own disk. If the USB menu appears again, take the USB out and restart.

Keep the USB. Don't erase or reuse it yet. If Wi-Fi needs a driver, the USB can supply it while you're offline. Drivers you added while trying the live desktop don't carry over, so set them up in the installed Mint.

STEP 6 OF 6

Check drivers and connect to Wi-Fi

Open the network menu in the bottom-right corner of the screen. If you can see Wi-Fi networks, connect and go to the final checks.

No Wi-Fi? The installation didn't fail. Some Wi-Fi adapters need an extra driver:

- ① Open **Menu** → **Administration** → **Driver Manager**. Enter your password and let it scan.
- ② If it says **You appear to be offline**, plug the same Mint USB back in. You don't start from it; Driver Manager reads drivers from it.
- ③ Click **Mount installation media** (the wording may differ slightly), enter your password and wait.
- ④ Select the driver it offers for your hardware. Ours offered a **Broadcom wireless driver**. Yours may offer a different one, or none. Only choose a driver it offers for your laptop.
- ⑤ Click **Apply Changes**. Leave the USB plugged in and wait until it finishes. This can take several minutes or more.
- ⑥ Eject the USB and restart the laptop.
- ⑦ Open the network menu, choose your Wi-Fi network and connect.

Mounting the USB doesn't turn Wi-Fi on by itself: the driver has to be installed with **Apply Changes**, then the laptop restarted. If Driver Manager can't install it from the USB, connect with an Ethernet cable or your phone's USB tethering, then open Driver Manager again.

Wi-Fi still missing?

First, the quick checks

- ☐ Airplane mode is off.
- ☐ If the laptop has a wireless key or switch, it is on.

Then open Terminal with **Ctrl** + **Alt** + **T** and run:

```
inxi -Nn  
rfkill list
```

These show your network adapter, its driver, and whether wireless is blocked. If you ask someone for help, share this output instead of guessing at a driver.

Broadcom driver installed, but still no Wi-Fi: Secure Boot

This happened on our HP. Driver Manager showed **Broadcom STA DKMS** installed, yet only a disconnected wired connection appeared, and installing the driver again didn't help. To find out why, we ran:

```
sudo modprobe wl
```

That is a lowercase **w** and a lowercase **l**. Type your password when asked; nothing appears on screen while you type it. It answered:

```
modprobe: ERROR: could not insert 'wl': Key was rejected by service
```

That means **Secure Boot** refused to load the driver, because it isn't signed with a key the laptop trusts. You have two choices:

- **Keep Secure Boot on** and enroll the driver's signing key, through the Machine Owner Key (MOK) process.
- **Turn Secure Boot off** in the laptop's settings. This is what we did. It also removes Secure Boot's protection, which checks that startup software and drivers are signed.

Only do this for that exact error. Most Mint installs never need it.

Turning off Secure Boot on our HP

- 1 Remove the installation USB and restart.
- 2 Right away, tap **Esc**, then press **F10** for BIOS Setup.
- 3 Open **System Configuration** → **Boot Options**, or the similar menu on your model.
- 4 Set **Secure Boot** to **Disabled**. Keep UEFI boot mode, and don't turn on Legacy Support.
- 5 Press **F10** to save and exit.
- 6 If the screen says **Operating System Boot Mode Change**, type the code shown on *your* screen and press **Enter**. Ours showed 8530; yours will be different, so don't copy ours. Pressing **Esc** cancels the change.
- 7 Let Mint start, then check the network menu. If there is still no Wi-Fi, run `sudo modprobe wl` again.

After this, the command finished without any message, which usually means the driver loaded, and we connected to Wi-Fi. The driver doesn't need the USB anymore.

Still not working? Collect this for whoever helps you. Not every Wi-Fi problem is Secure Boot.

```
inxi -Nn
rfkill list
nmcli device status
```

You're done when

- ☐ Mint starts from the laptop with the USB removed.
- ☐ Driver Manager has finished installing any drivers you chose.
- ☐ You restarted after installing drivers.
- ☐ Wi-Fi networks appear and the internet works, or you know exactly what is still wrong.

Keep the installation USB until all of these are true.

Troubleshooting

Windows starts instead of the USB	Restart, tap Esc right away, then press F9 and choose the USB.
The USB isn't in the list	Try another USB port, and check that USB Boot is on in the BIOS settings. If it still doesn't show, write the USB again with Etcher and let it validate.
The normal start freezes or the screen stays blank	Restart from the USB and choose compatibility mode .
The installer shows several disks	Compare size and model. Stop before accepting changes if you can't tell which is the laptop's own disk.
The BIOS refuses the USB with a security message	Write down the exact message, then read Mint's EFI help (https://linuxmint-installation-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/efi.html) before changing settings.
No Wi-Fi after installing	Use Driver Manager in the installed Mint, with the USB plugged in if you're offline, then restart. See step 6 .
"Key was rejected by service"	Secure Boot blocked the driver. See Wi-Fi still missing?

Questions

Does "Erase disk" securely wipe my old files?

No. It replaces the disk's layout and installs Mint, so Windows and your old files are gone from normal view, but some old data may still be recoverable with special tools. That is fine for keeping the laptop. Before you sell or give it away, use a wiping method made for that kind of drive (hard disk or SSD).

Do I need to format the disk first?

No. Choosing **Erase disk and install Linux Mint** creates the partitions Mint needs.

Do I have to turn off Secure Boot to use Mint?

No. Most installs never need it. It was the fix on our HP for one specific error, "Key was rejected by service", when its Broadcom Wi-Fi driver wouldn't load. Keeping Secure Boot and enrolling the driver's signing key is the other option.

What happened in our install

The HP startup menu and the Mint USB menu worked as described above. The ISO took longer to download than we expected. After installing, there was no Wi-Fi: we mounted the USB in Driver Manager and installed the Broadcom STA driver it offered, but Wi-Fi still didn't appear after restarting. `sudo modprobe wl` showed "Key was rejected by service". We turned off Secure Boot in the HP settings, typed the confirmation code it showed, and started Mint again. The driver then loaded, and Wi-Fi connected.

Sources

- Linux Mint, verify your ISO: linuxmint-installation-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/verify.html
- Linux Mint, create the bootable media: linuxmint-installation-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/burn.html
- Linux Mint, install Linux Mint: linuxmint-installation-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/install.html
- Linux Mint, hardware drivers: linuxmint-installation-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/drivers.html
- Linux Mint, EFI help: linuxmint-installation-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/efi.html
- HP, how to boot from a USB drive: hp.com/au-en/tech-takes/software/how-to/how-to-boot-from-usb-drive-on-windows-10-pcs.html
- HP, Secure Boot: support.hp.com/in-en/document/ish_6930187-6931079-16
- Ubuntu, Secure Boot: documentation.ubuntu.com/security/security-features/platform-protections/secure-boot/