

Top 10 Linux Easter Eggs

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Not a Definitive List...

Linux has a history of including some fun "easter eggs" in its software. In this article, we'll tell you about some fun commands and options to lighten up your day. Not all of them are "easter eggs", but we think you'll enjoy them none-the-less.

Text Editors

Vim and Douglas Adams

Those of you familiar with [Douglas Adams](#), writer of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, will appreciate a relevant help option included in the vim text editor.

If you haven't already, install vim. In Ubuntu/Debian, you can type:

```
sudo apt-get install vim
```

In CentOS/Fedora, you can type:

```
sudo yum install vim
```

Open the editor from the command line:

```
vim
```

Type the following to access a special vim help menu:

```
:help 42
```

```
What is the meaning of life, the universe and everything?  *42*
```

```
Douglas Adams, the only person who knew what this question really was about is  
now dead, unfortunately.  So now you might wonder what the meaning of death  
is...
```

Type the following, twice, to exit vim:

```
:q
```

```
:q
```

Emacs Games

Not to be outdone, Emacs, the text-editor famous for including everything but the kitchen sink, includes a surprising number of games that can be accessed from within the editor itself.

First, install emacs. On Ubuntu/Debian, this would be:

```
sudo apt-get install emacs
```

On CentOS/Fedora, execute this command instead:

```
sudo yum install emacs
```

You can find out what games are available by checking out this directory:

```
cd /usr/share/emacs/*/lisp/play
ls
```

5x5.elc	decipher.elc	gametree.elc	meese.elc	spook.elc
animate.elc	dissociate.elc	gomoku.elc	morse.elc	studly.elc
blackbox.elc	doctor.elc	handwrite.elc	mpuz.elc	tetris.elc
bruce.el	dunnet.elc	hanoi.elc	pong.elc	yow.elc
bubbles.elc	fortune.elc	landmark.elc	snake.elc	zone.elc
cookie1.elc	gamegrid.elc	life.elc	solitaire.elc	

To execute them, open Emacs:

```
emacs
```

Next, type the `Esc` key, followed by `x` (for execute), and then type the name of the game you wish to start:

```
Esc-x
pong
```

To quit Emacs when you are finished, type `Ctrl`, followed by `x`, and then `Ctrl` and `c`:

```
Ctrl-x
Ctrl-c
```

Apt Commands

Apt-get Cows

On Ubuntu and Debian, the `apt-get` package manager has had an embedded easter egg for a long time

now.

If you type the help command for apt-get, you will get a hint:

```
apt-get help
```

```
. . .
. . .
-c=? Read this configuration file
-o=? Set an arbitrary configuration option, eg -o dir::cache=/tmp
See the apt-get(8), sources.list(5) and apt.conf(5) manual
pages for more information and options.
        This APT has Super Cow Powers.
```

The last line tells us that the easter egg is active in this version of apt. Type:

```
apt-get moo
```

```
      (__)
      (oo)
    /-----\
   /  |      |  \
  *  /\---/\
     ~~      ~~
...."Have you mooed today?"...
```

Aptitude Cows?

With apt-get's affinity for cows, users may be curious as to whether aptitude, another apt tool, also implements a fun easter egg.

We can check the help like before:

```
aptitude help
```

```
. . .
. . .
-u          Download new package lists on startup.
            (terminal interface only)
-i          Perform an install run on startup.
            (terminal interface only)
            This aptitude does not have Super Cow Powers.
```

Well that is disappointing. Let's try it anyways though:

```
aptitude moo
```

There are no Easter Eggs in this program.

A fairly straight forward answer. But persistence is important. Let's add some verbosity:

```
aptitude -v moo
```

There really are no Easter Eggs in this program.

And again...:

```
aptitude -vv moo
```

Didn't I already tell you that there are no Easter Eggs in this program?

If you keep adding more "verbosity", you will eventually get this:

```
aptitude -vvvvvv moo
```

All right, you win.

```

      /-----\
     /-----\
    /-----\
   /-----\
  /-----\
 /-----\
/-----\
-----\
-----\

```

It doesn't look like too much. Let's add another "v":

```
aptitude -vvvvvvv moo
```

What is it? It's an elephant being eaten by a snake, of course.

This is a reference to the book [The Little Prince](#) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

Strange Options for Common Programs

There are some strange options available in some common programs that you may wish to check out.

Insult Users with Sudo

You can configure `sudo`, used to elevate the privileges of a command, to insult users when they type in an incorrect password.

To do so, edit the `sudoers` file with a tool called `visudo`, which edits and validates modifications to the `sudo` configuration file.

```
sudo visudo
```

Near the top, add a line that reads:

```
Defaults insults
```

Save and close the file.

Next, empty the cache that stores your password for a certain amount of time and then mistype your password for a sudo command:

```
sudo -k
sudo ls
```

```
[sudo] password for demo: # Type an incorrect password hereHave you considered
trying to match wits with a rutabaga?
[sudo] password for demo:
My pet ferret can type better than you!
[sudo] password for demo:
Wrong! You cheating scum!
```

Script Kiddie Output for Nmap

Nmap is a commonly used network exploration tool that can be used to perform security audits on your system.

Install it on Ubuntu/Debian with the following command:

```
sudo apt-get install nmap
```

On CentOS/Fedora, install it by entering:

```
sudo yum install nmap
```

Nmap provides you with the unusual option of being able to output its data in "script kiddie" format.

Let's see what the normal output looks like first, by running the command against the Nmap website itself:

```
nmap scanme.nmap.org
```

```
Starting Nmap 5.21 ( http://nmap.org ) at 2013-09-18 17:43 UTC
Nmap scan report for scanme.nmap.org (74.207.244.221)
Host is up (0.072s latency).
Not shown: 998 closed ports
PORT      STATE SERVICE
22/tcp    open  ssh
80/tcp    open  http
Nmap done: 1 IP address (1 host up) scanned in 1.40 seconds
```

Now, let's enable the alternate output with these options:

```
nmap -oS - scanme.nmap.org
```

```
$start|ng NMap 5.21 ( http://Nmap.org ) at 2013-09-18 17:45 UTC
Nmap $cAn r3p0rt F0r scanM3.nmaP.oRg (74.207.244.221)
Ho$t 1z Up (0.071z laT3ncy).
Not sh0wN: 998 cl0$Ed p0rt$
```

```
POrT    ST4TE $ERV!C3
22/tcp opEn  Ssh
80/tcp 0p3n  HtTp
Nmap d0n3: 1 iP AddrESz (1 h0$t Up) $canNed !n 1.34 secondz
```

Basically, it replaces certain letters with similar looking characters to emulate "hacker" language or [leet-speak](#).

Command-line Star Wars

There are two different network-reachable, command line Star Wars tributes accessible from your terminal.

ASCII Art Star Wars Through Telnet

Simon Jansen, Sten Spans, and Mike Edwards created a full Star Wars tribute in ASCII (text) animated art accessible through telnet. In layman's terms: you can watch a text version of Star Wars in your terminal!

First, download `telnet`, a precursor to SSH, if it is not already installed:

On Ubuntu/Debian:

```
sudo apt-get install telnet
```

On CentOS/Fedora:

```
sudo yum install telnet
```

All you have to do from here is point telnet to the correct server:

```
telnet towel.blinkenlights.nl
```

```

      R2-D2!
Where are you?

      /~\
      |oo )
#    _\=/_    #
  \ \  / _ \  / /
   \ \ / | / . \ \ \ /
    \ /  \ _ /  \ /
      | \ / |
      \ _ _ /
      | | |
      | | |
      [ ] [ ]
      | | |
      / _ \ _ \
```

When you've had enough, hold `Ctrl` and `]`. You will be given a prompt where you can type "close":

```
Ctrl-]
close
```

Star Wars Traceroute

A newer tribute to Star Wars has been achieved by [Ryan Werber](#) by naming the network hops to a specific address.

If you run `traceroute`, a program that traces the path of packets to a remote host, you will see the intro to Star Wars in the network names along the way.

Simply type:

```
traceroute -m 254 -q1 obiwan.scryste.net
```

The route will begin to populate. After a few stops, you will begin to see the magic:

```
. . .  
. . .  
15 Episode.IV (206.214.251.1) 77.506 ms  
16 A.NEW.HOPE (206.214.251.6) 87.194 ms  
17 It.is.a.period.of.civil.war (206.214.251.9) 77.699 ms  
18 Rebel.spaceships (206.214.251.14) 78.171 ms  
19 striking.from.a.hidden.base (206.214.251.17) 87.624 ms  
20 have.won.their.first.victory (206.214.251.22) 86.249 ms  
21 against.the.evill.Galactic.Empire (206.214.251.25) 77.505 ms  
22 During.the.battle (206.214.251.30) 85.622 ms  
23 Rebel.spies.managed (206.214.251.33) 78.121 ms  
24 to.steal.secret.plans (206.214.251.38) 77.049 ms  
. . .  
. . .
```

After going through the introductions to Episodes IV, V, and VI, Ryan then continues with other avenues of entertainment:

```
99 Were.no.strangers.to.love (206.214.251.206) 77.472 ms  
100 You.know.the.rules.and.so.do.I (206.214.251.209) 78.054 ms  
101 A.full.commitments.what.Im.thinking.of (206.214.251.214) 78.512 ms  
102 I.just.wanna.tell.you.how.Im.feeling (206.214.251.217) 79.884 ms  
103 Gotta.make.you.understand (206.214.251.222) 79.427 ms  
104 Never.gonna.give.you.up (206.214.251.225) 77.032 ms  
105 Never.gonna.let.you.down (206.214.251.230) 78.909 ms  
106 Never.gonna.run.around.and.desert.you (206.214.251.233) 80.286 ms
```

Installing More Fun

There are a few programs that you probably don't need for any other purpose, but can be fun if you have some time.

Learn from your Typos

```
< hello, I'm a cow >
```

```
-----  
      \   ^__^  
      \  (oo)\_____  
          (__)\\       )\\/\  
              ||----w |  
              ||     ||
```

The fortune program spits out quotations, fortunes, jokes, nonsense that can be piped into cowsay:

```
fortune | cowsay
```

```
-----  
/ Q: What looks like a cat, flies like a \  
| bat, brays like a donkey, and          |  
|                                         |  
\ plays like a monkey? A: Nothing.      /  
-----
```

```
      \   ^__^  
      \  (oo)\_____  
          (__)\\       )\\/\  
              ||----w |  
              ||     ||
```

If you're not too fond of cows, you can get other characters as well:

```
fortune | cowsay -f tux
```

```
-----  
/ You never know how many friends you \  
| have until you rent a house on the  |  
\ beach.                               /  
-----
```

```
      \   \  
      .---.  
      |o_o |  
      |:_/  |  
      //    \ \  
      (|      | )  
      /'\_   _/\'\  
      \_____)=(____/
```

For a full list of the available characters, type:

```
cowsay -l
```

Cow files in /usr/share/cowsay/cows:

apt beavis.zen bong bud-frogs bunny calvin cheese cock cower daemon default
dragon dragon-and-cow duck elephant elephant-in-snake eyes flaming-sheep
ghostbusters gnu head-in hellokitty kiss kitty koala kosh luke-koala
mech-and-cow meow milk moofasa moose mutilated pony pony-smaller ren sheep

skeleton snowman sodomized-sheep stegosaurus stimpy suse three-eyes turkey
turtle tux unipony unipony-smaller vader vader-koala www

My personal favorite is the stegosaurus:

```
fortune | cowsay -f stegosaurus
```

[illegible]

As you can see, not very useful, but pretty fun.

Conclusion

This guide probably didn't impart any essential knowledge or improve your Linux abilities, but hopefully it helped you relax and perhaps even explore your system a little bit.

Let us know in the comments if you have any other good easter eggs or unusual, fun commands.