CHAPTER 7

Booting Ubuntu for the First Time

Now that Ubuntu is installed, you’ll no doubt want to get started immediately, and that’s what Part 3 of this book is all about. In later chapters, we’ll present specific details of using Ubuntu and getting essential hardware up and running. We’ll also show you how to personalize the desktop so it works in a way that’s best for you on a day-to-day basis. But right now, the goal of this chapter is to get you doing the same things you did under Windows as quickly as possible.

This chapter explains how to start up Ubuntu for the first time and work with the desktop. It also shows how some familiar aspects of your computer, such as using the mouse, are slightly enhanced under Ubuntu.

Starting Up

If you’ve chosen to dual-boot with Windows, the first Ubuntu screen you’ll see is the boot loader menu, which appears shortly after you switch on your PC. If Ubuntu is the only operating system on your hard disk, you’ll see a brief one-line message pointing out that if you press a key, you can access this boot menu. You won’t need to do so unless you want to access the recovery mode boot settings. In fact, if Ubuntu is the only operating system on your computer, you can skip to the next section of this chapter.

**Note**  The boot loader is actually a separate program called GRUB. This program kicks off everything and starts Ubuntu.

The boot loader menu you see when your PC is set to dual-boot has three or four choices, as shown in Figure 7-1. The top one is what you need to boot Ubuntu. The Ubuntu option will be selected automatically within 10 seconds, but you can press Enter to start immediately.
You should find that you also have an entry for Windows, located at the bottom of the list, and labeled with whichever version of the operating system you have installed. To boot into Windows, simply use the cursor keys to move the selection to the appropriate option and then press Enter.

You should also see an entry ending in “(recovery mode).” This is a little like Safe Mode within Windows. If you select recovery mode, Ubuntu will boot to a text mode menu with three options:

**Resume—Resume normal boot:** This option allows you to boot normally, as if you didn’t need to fix anything at all. However, the big difference with this option compared to a graphical boot is that Ubuntu boots in text mode, which means that you are able to see system messages scroll past as Ubuntu is starting up. If you have problems with booting Ubuntu, you can run in recovery mode and choose this option to find error messages in the boot process.

**Root—Drop to root shell prompt:** This option boots with conservative system settings and then presents you with a command-line prompt in administrator mode (you run as the root user—see Chapter 29 for more information on the root user account). The typical usage of the administrator prompt is to change passwords of users if they forget their passwords, free up disk space to run normally, and uninstall buggy software to bring back system stability. The system commands that can be