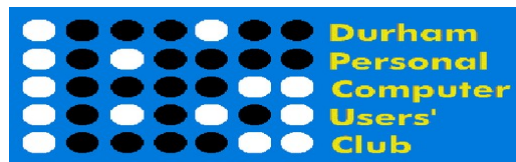


Jan 2024

PC MONITOR

Durham Personal Computer Users' Club Newsletter



DPCUC General Meeting

Our Club meets monthly on the second Thursday of each month.
All meetings are currently held using Zoom.

We hope some day in the future to be able to meet in person again.

Please visit the Club Web Page for all the latest links and information

<http://www.durhampc-usersclub.on.ca/>

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Next Meeting

Ring and IOT Home Security

by Anne Delong

On ZOOM – Thursday, Jan 14 2024, 7:00PM

FYI

- By Dan Delong

Analogue



This company describes itself this way; “*We make products to celebrate and explore the history of video games with the respect it deserves.*” Although several **Analogue** models appear to have ‘sold out’, **Pocket**, the Game Boy look-alike, is still available. This device plays old/new game cartridges using its own operating system (which is available to future game developers). The HD, 1080p screen, while capable of clear images, maintains the classical jagged edges of vintage games. [\$250USD]

<https://www.analogue.co/>

Samsung Galaxy M15 – soon

Samsung is manufacturing a less expensive, yet full-featured, phone, with great battery life, fast charging, top notch cameras, an audio plug, lots of memory, and Android 14 (with 4 years of upgrades). It should be in stores for February, possibly April. The Galaxy M15 has been sold first in Vietnam and India, for a price equivalent to \$254CAD. Expect a higher price, when it gets here.

<https://usdmobiles.com/device/samsung-galaxy-m15-5g/>

TSMC 3 nanometre chips now; what’s next?

TSMC, located in Japan, makes chip wafers for Apple, Intel, and AMD

Intel announced a recent 4B\$ purchase of these wafers, with 10B\$ more coming in the 2025 year. These denser chips run on less power, and can include on-board memory.

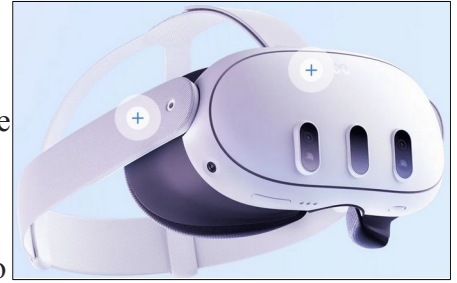
<https://www.extremetech.com/computing/intel-to-drop-14-billion-on-tsmc-3nm-wafers-in-2024-and-2025-analyst>

Plans to scale down to 2 nanometres will increase the **on-chip transistor count to 200 billion**; with the intention to develop 1 nanometre wafers with **1 trillion for chiplets** – (whatever that is).

<https://gadgettendency.com/more-than-200-billion-transistors-for-a-monolithic-chip-and-more-than-1-trillion-for-chiplets-tsmc-spoke-about-future-technical-processes/>

Mixed Reality Meta Quest 3

“Meta” means “Facebook re-born”, hence, this “mixed reality” headset’s prefix. It is a follow-up to **Meta Quest 2**, with different controllers, among other changes. Reviewers like the headset's “pass through” improvements. Without this feature, the integration of the real world and a virtual world—termed “mixed reality” - would not be possible. **Quest 3** learns to ‘see’ the room you are playing/sitting in, and “mixes” this physical environment with the virtual game environment, which often includes imaginative characters and virtual objects. Currently, this product seems to be the best VR “bang for the buck”.



[Best Buy lists the 128GB VR set for \$650CAD, and the 512GB VR set for \$850 CAD.]

(One user found these goggles useful for inspiring physical workouts.)

While some games are included with this hardware purchase, others required a **Quest Plus** subscription... about \$100CAD/year. Games are downloaded to the headset from the store.

[New purchases now get 6 months of Quest Plus.]

<https://www.meta.com/ca/quest/quest-3>

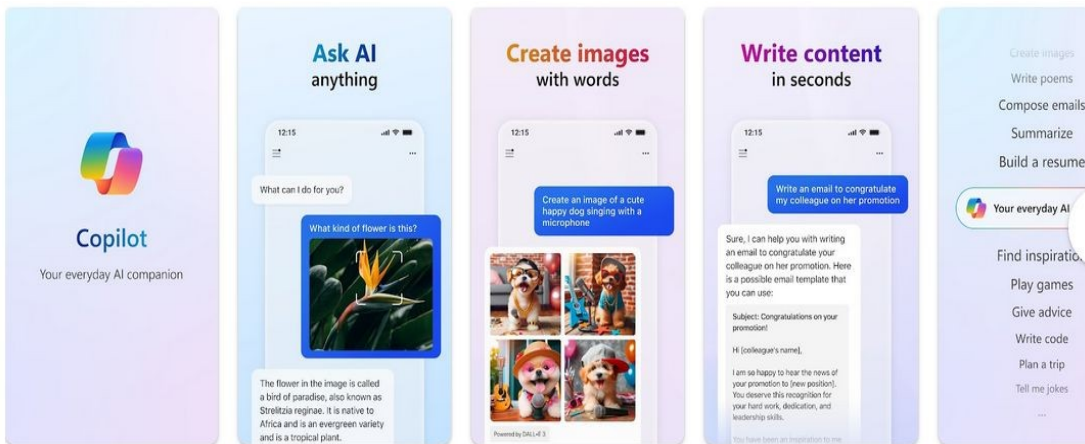
Apple will soon sell a much more expensive and versatile set of **Vision Pro Goggles**, with similar pass-through, but with a full suite of apps ,controlled by eye movement and virtual touches; this includes games, Web browsing, and simultaneous dictation. **Vision Pro** users will no longer need a monitor screen at all, as the virtual screen can be any size, at any distance, including a huge, immersive panoramas. The internal cameras take HD stills, and videos.

[\$3,500USD]

Meta has some catching up to do!

<https://www.apple.com/apple-vision-pro/>

Copilot for Android



When I found the **Microsoft Copilot app** in the Google Play Store, it simply opened **Bing** (already installed on my phone) with an option to switch on **Chat GPT 4**.

[I guess the app did not need installation, since both my Google and Microsoft accounts already existed on this phone. Copilot is now out for iPhones and iPads.]

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.microsoft.copilot>

Remote app uninstall for Android devices

This blog (*link is below*) announces changes to **Google Systems...** affecting security updates and new features. The most interesting, and latest, roll-out will allow all devices on the same Google account to interact with each other... to install and uninstall **Play Store apps** remotely. This includes phones, tablets, TVs, autos, watches, and Chrome computers.

[When available in our area this updated change will be found in **Manage apps & devices > Manage.**]

<https://support.google.com/product-documentation/answer/11412553?hl=en>

Carrie Marshall—tech writer

Techradar contributor, Carrie Marshall, recently added an article concerning the financial difficulties experienced by most streaming services (excluding Netflix). She predicts mergers, as the only saving grace for those now operating in the red. The current economy seems to have led consumers to rescind subscriptions to many sideline streaming service, leaving Netflix as dominant,... and profitable.

[*The link, below, leads to this article and several others, in the field of technology, from her base in Scotland.*]

<https://www.techradar.com/author/carrie-marshall>

Google Starline 3D conferencing

The **Starline** project began in 2021, using special lighting and multiple high resolution cameras. The aim—to create an immersive, 3D, video chat experience—was successful. But, it was complex and costly. Since then, much has changed. With just a few commonplace web cameras, high speed Internet, decent lighting, and a large HD monitor for both conference participants, the 3D experience now works just as well as the first experiments. New compression methods and predictive AI, have made this possible. The link, (below) shows just one of many examples of this new technology.

https://youtu.be/obuyCkotJ_s

Google Duet AI – an enhanced GSuite

Businesses and organizations can try **Duet AI** for 14 days at no cost. This is an evolving suite of services from Google that includes video meetings (with recording), domains (with branding), emails (many), storage (lots), security (updated), and task collaboration.

[**For example** a \$200/yr business account gets 150 participants with 2TB storage, while a \$300/yr business account gets 500 participants and 5TB storage.]

The AI components come into play when composing text, creating slides, searching for emails, and analyzing finances.

[*Subscriptions to this service appear similar to Office 365, with its new AI enhancements.*]

<https://workspace.google.com/solutions/ai/>

eVince small nuclear

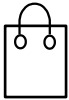


By 2029, Westinghouse may sell these garage-able, 12 foot long nuclear reactors to remote communities because they last 8 years (or more), are easily transported, and can supply both home heating and electricity at the same time. Corrosion issues, with respect to heat transfer tubing, has been solved, in **eVince reactors**, such that no water is needed for removing heat or for driving a steam turbine. Canada now makes the kind of fuel pellets used in such a high temperature reactor environment, known as safe **TRISCO fuel**.

*[If long sought after fusion reactors fail to meet future power needs, eVince units may surpass fusion, wind and solar. If not any of these, might **thorium based nuclear power** gain popularity?]*

<https://interestingengineering.com/innovation/microreactor-no-water-for-operation>

Cell Phone Bans in Schools



What can be done when elementary and high school students stop learning in school, preferring the virtual world, as pushed to them by their phones? **Ontario's** policy on cell phones forbids their use during instructional time, yet staff have no means to enforce this policy. Students who are caught during school time, turn over the phone for the day, but some just avoid class altogether, spending a lot of time sequestered in washrooms, checking and responding to hundreds of daily notifications.

Quebec has banned phones, starting this new year.

Well over half of the states south of the border are spending millions on **Yondr** pouches, to keep phones inaccessible at school. These cloth pouches hold a single phone when away from home, and are locked and unlocked with a special magnetic key. **Yondr** also sells a signal blocking box, for home use by parents. Parents just call the school in cases of emergency, whereupon the phone may be unlocked at the school office. Exceptional students, who need a phone for medical monitoring, are allowed keep their phone active at all times.

Interestingly, lunch hours left many students wondering what to do with themselves during this phone free time, until they signed up for an extra curricular activity, and found out how much better these activities could be, compared to being attached to a phone.

*[Remember, **Yondr** phone pouches always stayed with the phone owner. This feature is somewhat relaxing for students.]*

<https://montreal.citynews.ca/2023/10/05/quebec-education-minister-clarifies-directive-banning-cell-phones-in-classrooms/>

FluentPet



These tiles may look like a child's toy, but they are locations for attaching record-able speech buttons, through which cats and dogs learn to 'talk' to their owners. Actually, the 'talking' works both ways... pet-to-owner and owner-to-pet. A starter kit (*on left*) with six buttons, runs a little over \$100 CAD. Many amazing example videos, on the **FluentPet** website, show owners and pets communicating about a variety of subjects, including wants and fears. Some owners have expanded their pet's vocabulary considerably by placing dozens of these pressure buttons ('*paw pressers*') on the floor. Each press causes the button to speak a recorded word. Some of these pets have learned a rather large vocabulary.

<https://fluent.pet/en-ca>

The Nothing Phone 2 is 'Something'!



Three years ago, **Nothing Ear sticks/buds** hit the market. In the second year, the **Nothing Phone 1** appeared, along with an improved **version 2** of the ear buds. Year three introduces the **Nothing Phone 2**, with design and functionality like no other high end phone. Yes, it has all the features of the latest better known brands: - 50 Megapixel dual front camera, 32 Megapixel front camera, Android 14, bracketed low light photos, 4K video with stabilization, and more. The difference will be in custom 'tweaks' to Android, re-making the user interface. It is the only phone with individually programmed (and user programmable) light bars on the backside. Lighting pattern change, depending on the type of notification coming in (mails, messages, social medias). Or, perhaps, a bar is already linked to a count down timer app, or the battery charge/discharge app, or to show the progress of some other action.

[\$870CAD]

<https://ca-en.nothing.tech>

Fairphone FairBuds

Makers of the environmentally friendly, and owner fixable, Fairphones, have release similar, **over-the-ear headphones**, with easily replaced speakers, ear cups, and battery, among other parts. [250 Euros]

<https://shop.fairphone.com/fairbuds-xl>

As a reminder, the **FairPhone 5** is now out. [700 Euros]

This phone is also easy to repair and comes with a 5-year warranty, a removable battery, an OLED screen, 5G, dual SIMs, 50MP dual rear lenses, 4K video, and Android 13 (with 5 updates extending to year 2031).

[However, I tested the return value of my near perfect Motorola g(8) plus phone. It is now worth zero, according to FairPhone.]



Google Gemini Capabilities

Google claims to have built the best AI assistant – **Gemini 1.0**, with Advanced Ultra, Pro, and Nano version, as of the December 31 announcement. Comparisons with Chat GPT-4V are illustrative of this claim.

One of the video examples, on this blog page, input scans of a student's handwritten solutions to math problems from a test/homework assignment. Gemini then reported on the accuracy of each answer. For incorrect answers, Gemini can be asked to show steps needed to write the correct answer, followed by similar practice questions. This is like having your own math tutor.

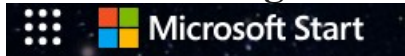
<https://blog.google/technology/ai/google-gemini-ai/>

Sodium ion batteries to power EVs

A Chinese car maker, in conjunction with Volkswagen, will make the move to non-lithium batteries; that is, sodium batteries. This, despite their lower power density. However, they function better in cold climates, and they are less costly to make. The range (for a smallish car) will be about 250 km on a charge, with no mention of recharge rate.

[The first EV with a lithium-free sodium battery hits the road in January \(engadget.com\)](https://www.engadget.com/2024/01/01/first-ev-with-a-lithium-free-sodium-battery-hits-the-road-in-january/)

MSN is no longer a reliable news source.



As our bug session leader, Hugh, often points out, those of us using MSWindows may think we have control of our computers, yet, time after time, forced updates and new user terms remove that control. For example, some updates re-instate **Edge** as the default browser. When this happens, the home page for Edge populates with **MSN news items**. In the past, these articles had been chosen by paid human editors, as coming from reliable sources. However, in recent years, AI has taken on this responsibility; and, it is making a mess of news.

How? Fake news sites have been able to draw the attention of AI algorithms. Their false reporting then appears legit to millions of viewers, because it is seen on a 'trusted' MSN page. Due to my location (not in the USA) I can see only the Canadian feed. Americans must be particularly concerned about consuming untruthful news, with election fever rising on the horizon. But, it may be too late! This new AI treatment of news delivery has been going on for years.

[Perhaps Microsoft has been tweaking MSN's AI recently; for I saw only three obviously fake sources today, mixed in with a lot of sponsored advertising, and opinions from The Sun and The National Post (both right wing).]

<https://youtu.be/mGHqz-BJz84>

DPCUC President's Notes

by Peter Camilleri

Well it's a bright, fresh new year. I hope all of you have enjoyed a happy holiday season.

Around this time of the year, I have traditionally mentioned the club elections are coming up in May and that participation is essential for the DPCUC to continue. For now, I'll simply say consider how you can help.

The club executive has to deal with three main issues, presented here in order of how much effort we normally put into each:

1. Finding speakers and/or topics for discussion at the general meetings.
2. Trying to figure how if/how we will ever be able to return to in-person general meetings.
3. Legal and administrative stuff associated with running a club in the province of Ontario.

If you have any thoughts or suggestions on points 1 or 2, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the executive. We are all anxious to hear from you.

And again; never forget; Please, Pray for Peace in Ukraine.

[Peter Camilleri, President DPCUC.](#)

Linux in the News

by Alex Morrison



Scribus 1.6 Open-Source Desktop Publishing App Released as a Major Update **0 Comments**

Scribus 1.6 free, open-source, cross-platform, and powerful desktop publishing software is now available for download.

MX Linux Raspberry Pi Edition Officially Released for Raspberry Pi 5 and 4 SBCs

1 Comment

MX Linux Raspberry Pi edition is now available for download supporting Raspberry Pi 4, Raspberry Pi 400, and Raspberry Pi 5 boards.

HandBrake 1.7.2 Improves Automatic Selection of Dolby Vision Level

0 Comments

HandBrake 1.7.2 open-source video transcoder software is now available for download with the automatic selection of Dolby Vision Level and the performance of the app on Linux systems.

Zorin OS 17 Emerges as a Pinnacle of Desktop Beauty

Experience the revamped Zorin OS 17 with Universal Search, Spatial Desktop, and smoother multitasking for a powerful desktop experience. Here's more on that!

LibreOffice 24.2: Best New Features

LibreOffice 24.2 is currently under beta testing. From this release onwards, the team will change the versioning scheme to YY.MM is based on year and month. Earlier, it used to be a simple increment to the major and minor versions, which was a little difficult to refer to.

How to Check Whether a Particular Package Is Installed on Linux

In this tutorial, we will explore the importance of package management and provide a comprehensive guide on how to check whether a package is installed using a package manager on Linux systems.

Linux – MX-Linux 23.1

By Alex Morrison



I have a spare test PC. An I3 desktop that I use to test different distributions.

So this month I decided to test the latest release of MX-Linux. I have used MX-Linux in the past so thought I would give it another test to see if it is worth running.

The previous system on my test PC was Manjaro 23.1. I think it is just a strange coincidence that it had the same version number as MX-Linux.

I downloaded the KDE version of MX-Linux as the KDE desktop is my personal preference.

Next I burned the ISO image downloaded to a USB using my main system [PCLinux] and a tool called ddcopy.

I booted the USB on my test PC to see if it worked as a live system first and detected all hardware.

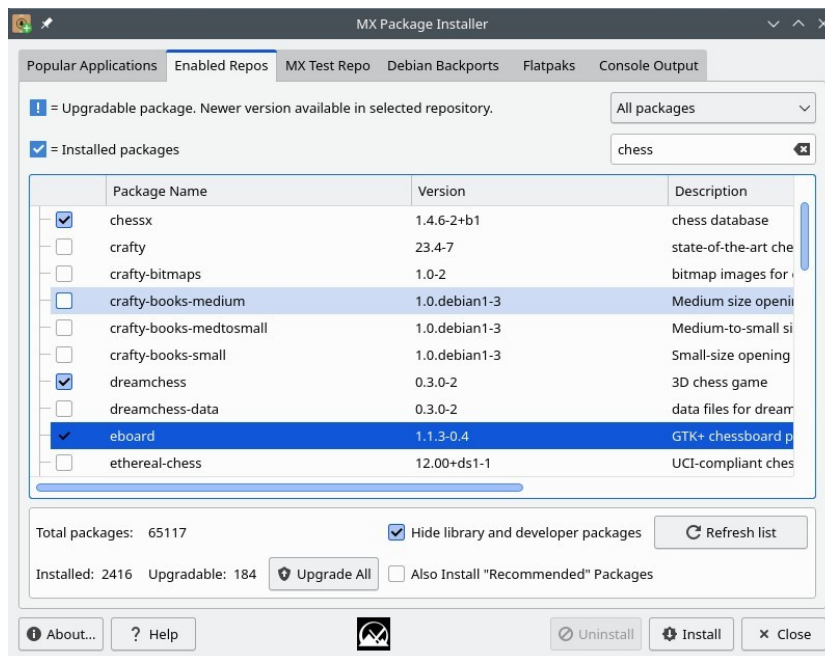
Most of the test systems auto detect my TP Link WiFi USB device. MX-Linux did not see it. However MX-Linux was able to auto detect my Alpha WiFi USB device while most other systems do not!

Both USB WiFi devices have excellent range and speed. During installation MX asks for a user password and a root password [root is like a Windows administrator].

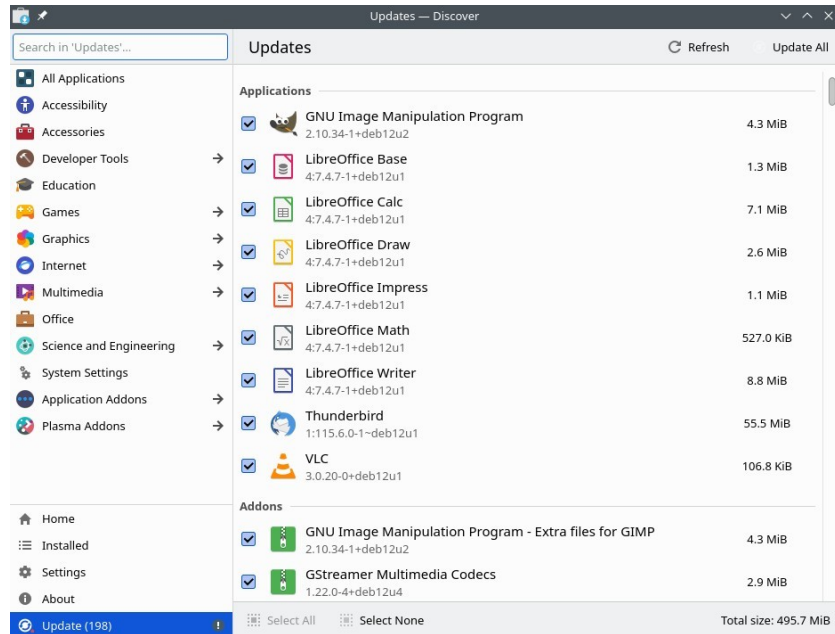
The package manager is an MX specific tool. I am more accustomed to Synaptic but the MX tool is similar.

MX has flatpak added to the package manager by default. That is useful for adding software that MX might not include.

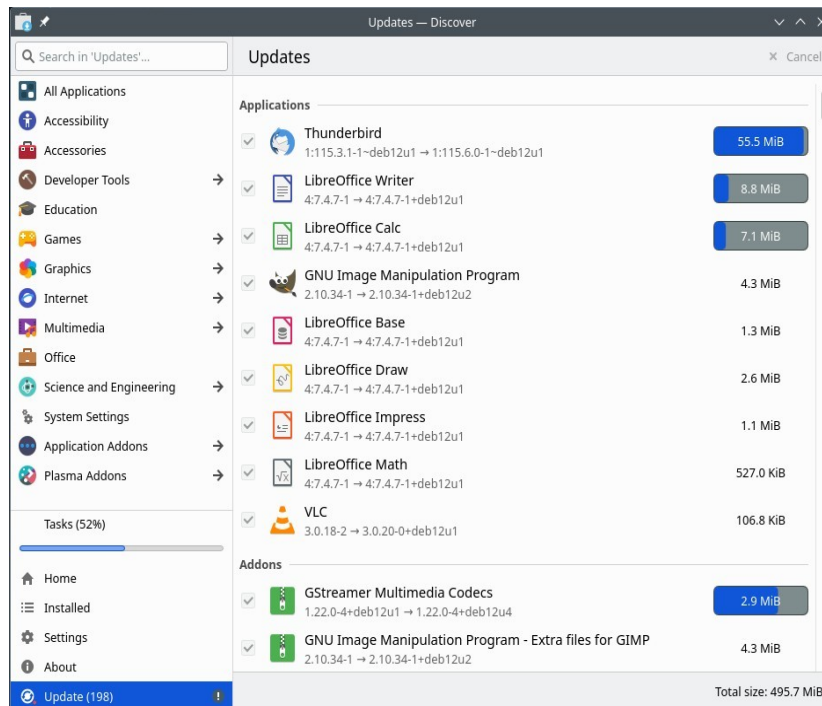
Here is a picture of the package manager in action. Search as I did for games and select the games you want then click install



Updates are handled by a program called Discover. Discover showed a number of possible updates.



I click Update All [on the top right corner of Discover] and watch the updates installing.



MX-Linux works better now than the last time I tried using it.

One last image is a view of the desktop when I first boot up the system.

This should be familiar to all KDE users.

This image was captured with a program called Spectacle. I set it to capture after 3 seconds so I could show a few start menu options at the left side

This image was captured before I installed or updated anything. MX-Linux looks very nice!



Free Linux Wallpaper and a Happy New Year



Sudoku

January 2024

by Alex Morrison



EASY

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | | | | | 2 | | | 1 |
| | | | | 3 | | | | 9 |
| | 7 | 4 | | 9 | | 6 | | 2 |
| | | 3 | | | | | | |
| | | | | 8 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | 7 | 4 |
| | 1 | | 5 | | 8 | 2 | | |
| | 5 | | | 1 | | | | 9 |
| | 6 | | | 7 | | 1 | | |

Sudoku

The game boards on this page were produced using **Sudokuki** on PCLinuxOS 64 Bit running KDE Plasma.

The objective is to fill in the missing numbers ensuring that every 3 X 3 grid has the numbers 1 through 9 with no repeats and every full column or row has the numbers 1 through 9 again with no repeats.

If you have troubles solving the puzzles send an email to me and I will send you the solution.

Have fun! Alex

MED

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 7 | | | 5 | | | | 9 |
| | | | 4 | | | | | |
| | | 3 | | 8 | | | | 2 |
| | | 4 | 2 | 7 | | | | |
| | 6 | 7 | | | | 3 | | |
| | 5 | | | | | 9 | | 8 |
| | | | | 2 | | | 5 | 1 |
| 3 | | 2 | | | | 7 | | |
| | 9 | | | | 6 | | | |

HARD

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 5 | | | | | |
| | 1 | | | | | | 4 | |
| 9 | 6 | | | 3 | 7 | | | |
| | | | | | 9 | | 2 | 1 |
| 1 | | | | | | | | |
| | 4 | | | 6 | | 8 | | 5 |
| | | | 2 | | | | 7 | |
| 3 | | | | 9 | | 1 | | |
| | 8 | | | 1 | | 3 | | |

If you don't Like Sudoku puzzles – try these pages

<https://www.boatloadpuzzles.com/playcrossword>

<http://www.freegames.net/puzzle-games.html>

<https://www.cryptograms.org/play.php>

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS SIG's

Special Interest Groups are for members only.

SIG's are really free monthly seminars with question and answer sessions following the presentation(s)

Members of SIG's enjoy a feeling of community and share common goals and interests.

Most SIG's are informal and members who attend them set the agenda for the meeting based on their own needs.

New ideas for SIG groups are welcome.

Special Interest Groups

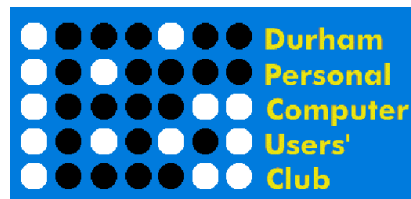
Durham Linux User Groups

Coordinator: Ed Goudge

Our Linux group meet on the first Thursday of every month.

All meetings are currently held using Zoom.

We hope some day to meet again in person.



**DPCUC
EXECUTIVE**

2022-2023

| | | | |
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HOME PAGE --- <http://www.durhampc-usersclub.on.ca/>

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