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[Skype Review](#)

Quality voice chat software for Linux

The phone is a very useful tool; it helps people communicate one with another. But, every minute on the phone costs money, it's not a free service and, if you call someone that lives in another state or outside the country, expect to pay even more. Isn't there something that allows talking for free for as long as you wish? There is Skype. **Skype and Linux** Depending on your Linux distribution, Skype can run in a few seconds after you finish the download from the official website. RPM packages are available for SuSE 9 and newer versions, for Fedora Core and for Mandriva 10.1 and newer. Debian wasn't forgotten, there is a .deb package for Debian and other distros based on it. Users that have another distro weren't forgotten, there are two packages: a dynamic one that requires QT 3.2 and one that includes the QT library. Using Skype on OpenSuSE 10.0 wasn't a complicated thing, you can download it from the official website and then issue a simple console command: `rpm -i skype-1.2.0.18-suse.i586.rpm`. After the installation has been successfully performed, you can immediately start the program; depending on the window manager that you're using, you can find it in the main menu and start it by just clicking its icon. KDE was running on that particular OpenSuSE system and Skype showed up in the "other" sub-category of Internet applications in the K menu. When Skype started, it showed a little two-paged wizard: Create a new account (for new users) and Log into Skype (for existing users). You create a new account if you never used Skype before, or you Log into Skype if you used Skype before and you already have an account. Creating a new account is a very short process, you don't have to wait a lot of time or go through a complex sign up procedure, just choose the account name, a password and tell Skype an email address where your password can be sent in case you forget it and you're ready to talk with other users. If you were wondering if a friend has a Skype account, you can search for Skype users (the Tools menu, Search for Skype users option) and find out. In case you found that person, you can add your friend to your contact list and wait for the other person to accept your request. Making a call is very easy, you just have to type into that little box above the green call button the skype name or, in case you bought credits, a phone number that's outside of the Skype network and then press the green call icon. If the person that you want to call is already on your contacts list, things get even easier, you just have to select that contact in your list and press the green call icon. Obviously, the red icon hangs up "the phone". If there's a need for a short period of silence, the hold button from the call menu can be used to temporarily interrupt the voice chat session. You might have a small surprise when the person that you wanted to talk with says "I can't hear you at all!!", if that's the case, you might want to check if the microphone is muted or if it is at minimum volume. You can do this by using one of the mixer control software that come with KDE, in case you're using OpenSuSE with KDE, or adjust the volume by using a different mixer that you might have on your distro. Skype allows more than just talking via voice chat, it also has a classic instant messaging part, the user can send text messages, even smileys are supported and can be used in text chat. Privacy is enforced by options like voice chat calls and text chat filtering which prevents unwanted calls and text messages, either by accepting calls and text chat only from contacts or from authorized users. **The Good:** It's a freeware application which is available for multiple platforms and the fact that you can make cheap phone calls to phone numbers that aren't part of Skype by using the SkypeOut service. Calling to phone numbers outside of Skype is just a half of the story, you can also have a real phone number for your Skype account by using the SkyIn service. The interface of the software isn't complicated and it is pretty obvious what each setting does, if it isn't there are the online help and F.A.Q.

.The Bad:On this tested version of Skype for Linux, the Hold function couldn't be used. Obviously, this is a bug, which should have been fixed. The latest version of Skype for Windows is 2.0, which also allows video chat, while the latest Linux version is still 1.2. The Linux version seems to be less feature rich and lacks certain options that can be found in the Skype for Windows. The graphical interface isn't as polished as the MAC OS version.

The truth:It is a very useful piece of software that has many features while being easy to install and use. Being able to have many phone numbers for many cities/states/countries when using the SkypeIn service and being able to make very cheap phone calls world wide represent two important advantages. Being able to make free phone calls of any duration and the fact that the users of the most popular operating systems and devices can use this service are two greater advantages.