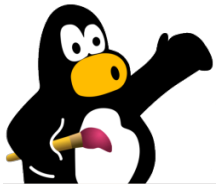


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TuxPaint Review

Open Source Drawing Software for Children

Ever since I started reviewing software for Linux, I've never said anything about applications designed exclusively for children. We can't ignore the fact that nowadays, kids are more in touch with computers than they had been a decade ago. In my opinion, in most cases this is a bad thing, but there are also some advantages in spending time in front of the computer. Let's see how an open source software can develop your children's creativity. For this purpose we chose a drawing application, called Tux Paint. First of all, you should know that it is designed for children three years old and up. In fact, I've seen online albums done by teenagers and adults, and the results were amazing. So, if you have talent, I guess anything is possible. This program's interface is very intuitive and easy to use, and that's why anyone can use it. Tux Paint makes use of several amusing sounds effects, therefore, kids will not get bored, as the jingles really help maintaining an entertaining environment. In your right, you will find the tools, and in the left part different actions related to each tool. The icons are large and intuitive, so kids will not encounter problems in associating them with what they do. For almost any clicked button, a comment can be seen at the bottom of the screen. It is the Linux penguin that gives hints and information. It can really help your kid, if he pays attention to it. In Tux Paint, loading and saving is done differently from other applications. You never see the filename of the path where files are stored. This is nice, because small children can get confused. This software shows only the thumbnails of previously saved photos. When creating a new image, you should know that the drawing board has a predetermined size, so the kid doesn't have to set anything. Moreover, for these operations no dialogs are used. Printing a picture is a two clicks operation, and the second click is for the dialog box that appears here. Tux Paint can be set to disable printing or to allow printing once every few minutes. This is great, because some children might get over excited by this cool printing feature and, by the time the parents notice, who knows how many pictures full of color get the kid has already printed. Another safety feature of this software is the possibility to run it in full screen mode. This way, you can make sure your work files will not get deleted or modified by accident when the children decides he found something more interesting in the root folder or something like that. This quit button can also be disabled, so this feature can actually work in some cases. Anyway, keep in mind that, at some age, your kid might find more interesting stuff to do, than just paint. I remember this was definitely my case, and it also applies to most of the people I know. There is a config program for Tux Paint that allows altering "the software's behavior", using an easy to use graphical user interface. Tux Paint is available in several languages and also for most operating systems, so it doesn't matter where are you from or what OS are you using. The only thing that matters is that you have a kid or your friends have one, and you should try to make him as happy as you can, offering him, for example, Tux Paint in order to use his imagination. **The Good** The interface is both kid-friendly and amusing, so it will certainly "paint" a smile on your child's face. The parental control features are something that will allow adults to rest somehow assured when their child is using the computer. **The Bad** A few more outline examples would have been good. Perhaps, some advanced features could be grouped in a button, so this software can push the creativity even further. I had two "ten year old advisors" and, it seems that they liked it a lot, but they both said that Tux, the mascot, should have been animated. **The Truth** Tux Paint is definitely the best drawing application for children. I saw the reaction of a ten year old friend of mine who usually plays strategy games, and I realized that this software can really make your children happy. *Check out some screenshots below:*