

## Install Linux Mint on MacBook (2013-2017) Step-by-Step Guide

**Good News:** The MacBooks listed in this guide (2013-2017) do NOT have the Apple T2 security chip. This makes installing Linux significantly easier compared to newer MacBooks.

### Which MacBooks Are Compatible?

Model	Years	T2 Chip?	Compatible?
MacBook Air	2013-2017	No	Yes
MacBook Pro 13"	2013-2016	No	Yes
MacBook Pro 15"	2013-2016	No	Yes
MacBook Pro 13" (Touch Bar)	2016-2017	No	Yes
MacBook Pro 15" (Touch Bar)	2016-2017	No	Yes

### Important: T2 Chip Models (NOT Compatible for this guide)

The T2 security chip was introduced in **2018**. MacBooks from 2018 and later have T2, which makes Linux installation much more difficult. This guide does NOT cover:

- MacBook Pro 2018 and newer
- MacBook Air 2018 and newer
- MacBook 2017 and newer (12" Retina)

### Understanding Apple Security Chips

#### T1 vs T2 vs Apple Silicon

Chip	Year	Used In	Linux Support
T1 (Security Chip)	2016	MacBook Pro 2016-2017 (Touch Bar models)	Limited
T2 (Security Chip)	2018	MacBook Pro/Air 2018-2020, iMac Pro	Very Limited
Apple Silicon (M1/M2/etc)	2020	All Macs since 2020	Improving but limited

### Why These Older MacBooks Are Good for Linux

MacBooks from 2013-2017 use **standard Intel processors** and do not have the locked-down security of newer models. They work well with Linux because:

- Intel integrated graphics work well with Linux
- WiFi and other components are generally supported
- No Secure Boot restrictions from Apple

## What You Need

- A compatible MacBook (see list above)
- At least 50GB of free hard drive space
- A USB drive (8GB or larger)
- macOS recovery partition or internet connection
- 45-90 minutes of uninterrupted time

## Step 1: Prepare macOS (Create Backup and Space)

**Before proceeding:** Back up your Mac using Time Machine. While Linux installation does not erase your macOS partition, having a backup is essential.

1. Connect an external hard drive for Time Machine backup
2. Open **System Settings > Time Machine**
3. Select your backup drive and click **Back Up Now**
4. Wait for backup to complete

## Step 2: Resize macOS Partition

You need to shrink macOS to make room for Linux Mint.

1. Open **Disk Utility** (Applications > Utilities)
2. Click **Apple SSD** in the sidebar
3. Click the **Partition** button
4. Click the **+** to add a new partition
5. Drag the divider to resize macOS (leave at least 50GB for Linux Mint)
6. Click **Apply**

## Step 3: Download Linux Mint

1. Download Linux Mint from: [linuxmint.com/download](https://linuxmint.com/download)
2. Choose the **Cinnamon** edition (works well on Mac hardware)
3. Download the ISO file to your Mac

## Step 4: Create Bootable USB on Mac

On your Mac, open **Terminal** and run:

1. Insert your USB drive
2. Run: `diskutil list` (note the disk number of your USB, usually `/dev/disk2`)
3. Run: `diskutil unmountDisk /dev/diskN` (replace N with your USB disk number)
4. Run: `sudo dd if=/path/to/linuxmint.iso of=/dev/rdiskN bs=1m`
  - Replace `/path/to/linuxmint.iso` with the actual path
  - Replace `rdiskN` with your USB disk (use `rdisk` not `disk` for faster writing)
5. Wait for completion (may take 10-15 minutes)

**Note:** The Terminal will not show progress. Wait until you see the command prompt return.

## Step 5: Boot into Linux Mint

1. Restart your Mac
2. Immediately press and hold **Option (Alt)** key
3. Hold until you see the Startup Manager
4. Select the **EFI Boot** option (your USB drive)
5. Press **Enter** to boot Linux Mint

**Tip:** If you do not see an EFI Boot option, try holding **Command + Option + R** to boot into Internet Recovery, then restart and try again.

## Step 6: Install Linux Mint

1. Once Linux Mint desktop loads, double-click **Install Linux Mint**
2. Choose your language and click **Continue**
3. Select **Install Linux Mint alongside macOS**
  - The installer should show both macOS and free space
  - Drag the slider if needed to adjust partition sizes
4. Click **Install Now**
5. Follow the on-screen instructions:
  - Choose your time zone
  - Create your username and password
  - For boot loader, select the main hard drive (not a specific partition)
6. Wait for installation (20-30 minutes)
7. Remove USB drive when prompted and restart

## Important: Install rEFInd for Easy Boot Selection

After Linux Mint is installed, you need a boot manager to choose between macOS and Linux. **rEFInd** is recommended.

1. Boot back into macOS (restart and hold Option, select macOS)
2. Download rEFInd from: **refind.org**
3. Mount the Linux partition to install rEFInd:
  - Open Terminal
  - Run: `mkdir ~/refind && cd ~/refind`
  - Extract rEFInd download
  - Run: `./refind-install`
4. Restart your Mac
5. You will now see a menu to choose macOS or Linux Mint

## Common Problems and Solutions

### Problem: WiFi does not work after installation

Solution: MacBook WiFi chips (Broadcom) need proprietary drivers. In Linux Mint, go to Menu > Administration > Driver Manager and install Broadcom WiFi drivers.

### Problem: Screen brightness controls not working

Solution: Use function keys or install "MacBook Tools" from software center. You may need to edit GRUB settings.

### Problem: Trackpad gestures not working properly

Solution: Install "libinput" and "xf86-input-mtrack" for better trackpad support.

### Problem: Computer runs hot

Solution: Install "thermald" and "powertop" from the software center to manage CPU temperatures.

### Problem: Audio not working

Solution: Some MacBook audio requires additional setup. Search for "MacBook Linux audio fix" for your specific model.

## Recommended Apps After Installation

- **VLC** - Media player for videos
- **Firefox** or **Brave** - Privacy-respecting browsers
- **Signal** - Encrypted messaging
- **ProtonMail** - Encrypted email
- **GIMP** - Photo editing (alternative to Photoshop)
- **LibreOffice** - Office suite (alternative to Microsoft Office)

## FAQ

**Q: Can I still use macOS?**

A: Yes. Dual boot means you choose which OS to start. Your macOS partition remains unchanged.

**Q: Will Linux Mint void my warranty?**

A: No. Installing Linux does not physically damage your Mac. You can always reinstall macOS later.

**Q: Can I remove Linux Mint later?**

A: Yes. You can use macOS Recovery to reformat the Linux partition and reclaim the space.

**Q: Why do MacBooks from 2018+ have more problems with Linux?**

A: The T2 chip (2018+) and Apple Silicon (2020+) have locked boot processes that prevent standard Linux installation without workarounds.

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## Ready to Get Started?

Want help with your Linux installation? Privacell offers Linux migration services.

Contact: [privacell.ca/contact-us/](https://privacell.ca/contact-us/)

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