



SIPB Bugsquashathon Survival Guide

Debian and Ubuntu are broken up into *packages*. Each package that you install on your system, through apt-get, Synaptic, or another package manager, is what is known as a *binary package*. These binary packages are built from *source packages*. A single source package can build several binary packages.

Almost all software in Debian and Ubuntu was built by other developers and then later integrated into the Debian system. The other developers are referred to as "upstream".

0.1 Debian

Debian was begun in August 1993 by Ian Murdock, as a new distribution which would be made openly, in the spirit of Linux and GNU. It started as a small, tightly-knit group of Free Software hackers, and gradually grew to become a large, well-organized community of developers and users.

Debian has the idea of strict ownership of packages; each package has a maintainer and while technically any Debian Developer can upload a package, socially the maintainer is the one responsible for approving changes and fixing bugs therein.

0.2 Ubuntu

The Ubuntu project was started in 2004 by Mark Shuttleworth as an attempt to bring Linux, already successful on servers, to the desktop.

Ubuntu is the downstream of Debian, and it imports packages from Debian on a six month cycle. We are currently in the middle of an import cycle, so often many bugs in Ubuntu can be fixed in Debian, then propagated through the import process.

Ubuntu packages are collectively maintained by all Ubuntu Developers; there is no idea of a single Maintainer like in Debian. This means changes can be fixed faster, but it also means there's diffusion of responsibility. Ubuntu Developers have to be more of a "jack of all trades", which often means they are a master of none.

Ubuntu has a longer description about [their relationship with Debian](#).

1 Environment

You'll need to do your development on a computer running Debian or Ubuntu. If your local computer isn't set up this way, contact one of the organizers and they will get you set up.

The [Ubuntu Packaging Guide](#) contains a bunch of useful details. You should start with [how to get set up](#). Then, you should review [the overview of a debian/ directory](#). Finally, look over the [steps to fix an Ubuntu bug](#). When you're ready, contact one of the facilitators and we'll find you a bug to work on.