Things To Do With An Old PC

https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/creative-projects-reuse-old-pc/

16 Unique Creative Projects to Reuse Your Old PC
BY TINA SIEBER
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Got an old PC knocking about and don't want to throw it away? Here are some amazing ways to repurpose and reuse an old computer.

Things To Do With An Old PC

Here are several DIY projects to repurpose and reuse an old PC, laptop, screens, and other accessories. We've also thrown in some ways to trade in your old hardware or turn it into cash.

Things To Do With An Old PC

(This list is edited to eliminate the "far-out-there" ideas and save some time in this talk.)

Things To Do With An Old PC

1. Media Center

Things To Do With An Old PC

One of the most useful things you can do with an old PC is to move it into your living room and repurpose it as a media center. You can watch movies and TV, listen to music, and play games by installing and setting up Kodi or similar software on your machine.
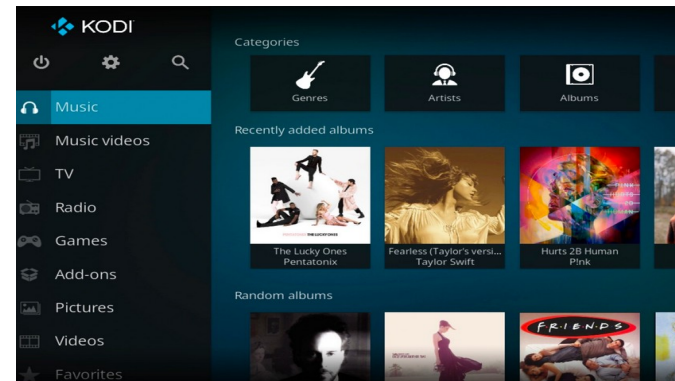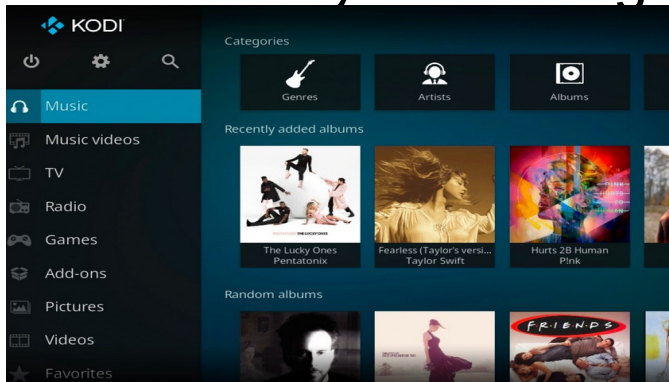
A nice benefit is that media center software is lightweight and doesn't require a lot of system resources, so you can use it even on very old hardware.

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I know some people who have Windows Media Center PCs still up and running from the Windows Home Server days. Windows Home Server is no longer supported by Microsoft, but an Open Source fork has been created. It is still maintained, though I'm not sure I would trust the security patch status of the project. When Windows 7 went out of support, such projects became increasingly risky if they connect to the Internet. Connecting to the Internet is basically the point of setting up a Media Center PC.

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These days, it's better to go with Linux and Kodi for your Media PC setup. Or, build your box with the Plex Server software package which is used in the Silicon Dust Home Run HD dedicated media box. (Plex is paid software, but it has a lot more channels already set up for you than Kodi. And a really nice Program Guide.)

https://kodi.tv/

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Disclaimer

Kodi does not provide any media content or sources. Users must provide their own content or manually configure Kodi to access third party online services. The Kodi project does not provide any support for bootleg content or other illegally sourced material, nor do we allow community support within our official web sites and services for such content.

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3. Build a Home Server

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You can use your old PC to host your media and other files and access them whenever you need. This is handy if you only have a limited amount of hard drive space on your new PC.

You can also give access to the home servers to other users on your network, allowing you to share your files with them.

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Media Center and Home Server are closely related types of projects. But whereas the old Windows 7 Media Center is defunct, you can still use either Windows or Linux server editions to create and set up your Home Server.

A server is great for file storage and backup for a whole house full of PCs. The server itself does not care whether it's Windows or Linux, NTFS or Linux Ext or BTRFS, or whatever. With RAID you have built in redundancy, so a server generally does not need further discrete backup. Windows has something called Pooled Storage, which also provides redundancy.

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4. Set Up a Web Server

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https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/build-linux-web-server-computer-part-1/

How to Build a Linux Web Server With an Old Computer

What if you want to host files on the internet? If you have your own website, you can host your site yourself from home instead of paying for hosting or using free hosts, which can be bad for your site. Again, you can use Windows or Linux for a Web Host server.

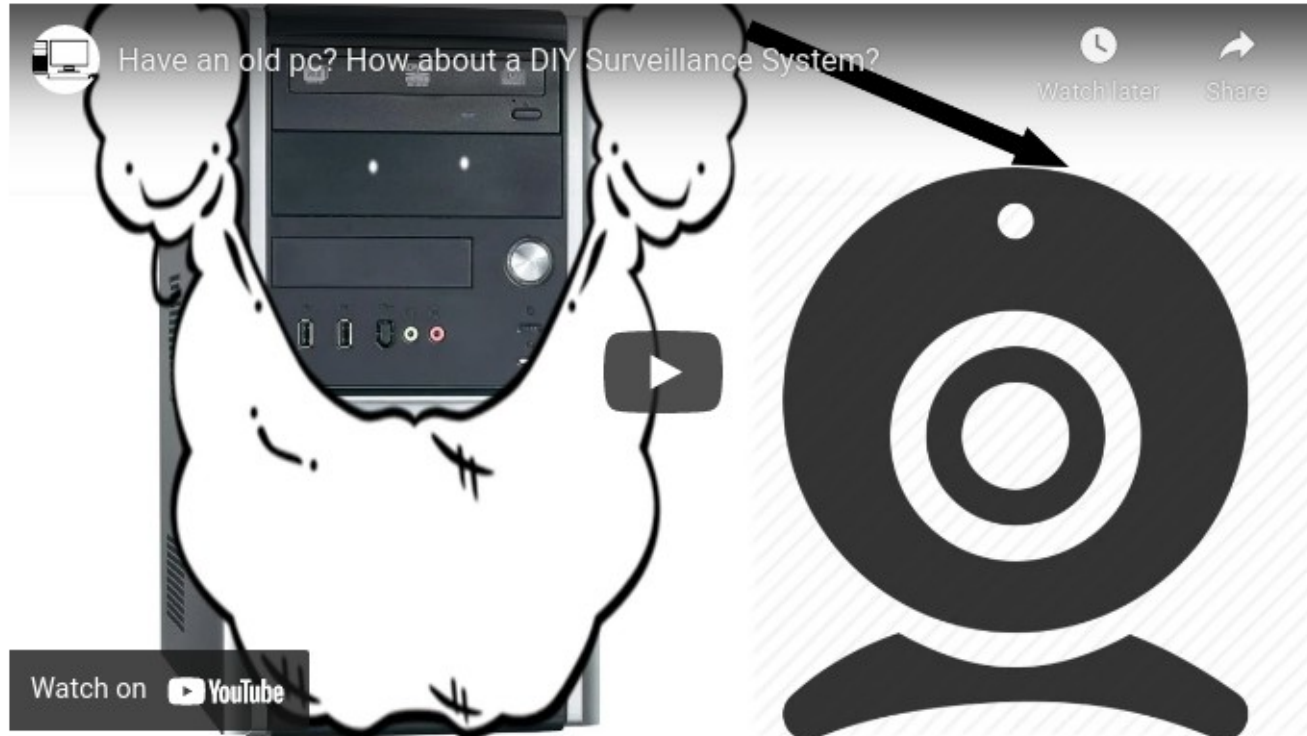# Things To Do With An Old PC

6. PC Testing Rig

Things To Do With An Old PC

If you build PCs often, or if you frequently benchmark components, then a test rig is extremely useful to have on hand. You can use the extra PC to test software, OS upgrades, or hardware, without endangering your production PC or disrupting your ongoing work (and Zoom meetings).

Testing Linux, testing older Windows environments, trying out new software and testing for fatal bugs. Trying out new hardware configurations (including peripherals). Many things you wouldn't want to do on your everyday workhorse PC.

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10. Home Security System

Have an old pc? How about a DIY Surveillance System?

Watch on ▶ YouTube

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If you have a simple webcam, you can connect it to your old PC to make your own home security system. Using software that detects motion and triggers an alert, you can get a notification or set off an alarm if there is unexpected movement in your home.

MUO has a tutorial on how to turn your computer into a video surveillance system. (This tutorial will step you through setup and the specialized software you will need for a home security system.)

The best part of D-I-Y security is you don't depend on a web service or a paid contract to keep your home secure. One down side is you will not have dedicated external monitoring.

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13. Create an External Hard Drive

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Reuse Parts -- Hard Drive (Also, memory, SSD, peripheral cards)

You don't have to reuse your entire computer. Many of the parts make great DIY projects all by themselves. So if parts of your PC are broken beyond repair, salvage what you can and put it to good use.

And finally…

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14. Make Someone Happy

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DONATE!

Does anyone know where you can donate old PCs
in Lexington?

One thing many places do with donated PCs: Convert
to Linux.

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Why Linux? Because it fits with older PCs better than Windows. And there aren't licensing issues.

You can convert your own old PCs to Linux fairly easily. Let's explore how to do this.

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What if I need Linux HELP?

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 John Rudy has asked me and other Linux users: "If I have a problem with my Linux computer, where's the Geek Squad I can call and they come to my house and just fix the computer and get me back up and running? Or I can bring my computer to them and they'll fix it?"

How to Get the Best Support on Linux Forums
https://www.makeuseof.com/tag/get-best-support-linux-forums/
(The illustration on the previous slide is from this article.)

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The best place to get help is online, but, it's important to approach support in a certain way. The article gives tips on how to get a fast and relevant reply.

In the Boston area we have members of Natick FOSS using Mastodon social media, or members of Boston Linux and UNIX users Group (BLU) using various means to communicate, as well as more specialized groups like BNUG (network users).

APCUG is an umbrella organization consisting of many user groups across the United States. They have sponsored Linux help groups from time to time.

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Resources -- Linux User Groups:
Natick FOSS user group
(Meeting virtually using Jitsi Meet):
https://www.millermicro.com/FOSSUserGroupArchive.html

Boston Linux and UNIX Users Group (BLU):
(Meeting virtually using Jitsi Meet)
http://blu.org/

The Boston Network Users Group
(Virtual Meetings monthly)
https://bnug.org/

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APCUG organization:
https://apcug2.org/about/

APCUG is an umbrella group of user groups. Some do Linux.

So yes, there is Linux help available. You may even know people who can help you if you ask.

So now, How do You Get Started With Linux? – Next Slide Show