

What is the Ubuntu Launcher?

The **Ubuntu Launcher** is a key feature of the Ubuntu desktop environment. It acts as a vertical taskbar that provides quick access to frequently used applications, open windows, and system features. On most Ubuntu versions that use the **GNOME desktop environment**, this launcher appears on the **left side of the screen** by default and can be customized in many ways.

Purpose of the Launcher

The Ubuntu Launcher is designed to improve **productivity and navigation**. Instead of searching through menus to find and open programs, users can **pin their favorite applications** to the launcher for quick access. It also serves as a **task switcher**, allowing users to switch between open applications easily.

The launcher's role is similar to the **taskbar in Windows** or the **Dock in macOS**, but its vertical position and integration with Ubuntu's design make it unique.

Main Features of the Ubuntu Launcher

- 1. Pinned Applications**

You can pin your favorite apps to the launcher by dragging them from the application menu or right-clicking an open app and selecting **“Add to Favorites.”** These stay visible on the launcher even after you close them.
 - 2. Running Applications**

Applications that are currently open are highlighted on the launcher with a small **dot or line** beside their icon. If multiple windows of the same app are open, the dot becomes thicker or multiplies, depending on the version of Ubuntu.
 - 3. Active Window Indicator**

Hovering over an open application icon allows users to preview or select specific windows if there are multiple instances.
 - 4. Context Menus**

Right-clicking on a launcher icon opens a **quick menu** that may show tasks specific to the application (like opening a new window, recent files, etc.).
 - 5. Search and Dash Integration**

The launcher works closely with the **Activities Overview** (accessed by pressing the Super/Windows key), where you can search for applications, files, or system tools.
 - 6. Removable and Customizable**

Users can remove applications from the launcher by right-clicking and choosing **“Remove from Favorites.”** You can also change the position of icons by dragging them up or down.
-

Customization Options

Ubuntu allows users to customize how the launcher looks and behaves:

- **Positioning:** Although it appears on the left side by default, you can move it to the bottom using tools like **GNOME Tweaks**.
 - **Auto-Hide:** You can enable auto-hide so the launcher disappears when not in use, giving more screen space.
 - **Icon Size:** The size of the icons can be adjusted for a more compact or spacious layout.
-

Why the Ubuntu Launcher is Useful

The launcher simplifies the workflow by putting important tools **within one click's reach**. It supports multitasking by showing all open applications clearly and lets users jump between tasks quickly. For users coming from other operating systems, it's an intuitive way to get comfortable with Ubuntu.