

## Chapter 1

# How to Use Tons of Powerful, Free Software — Fast

---

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Exploring what free software has to offer
  - ▶ Downloading and installing the top free software package
  - ▶ Getting support for your free software
- 

**T**he Internet offers over 10,000 free software packages available for download. Some of these, of course, stand head and shoulders above the rest. Programs such as Mozilla Firefox, Mozilla Thunderbird, the GIMP, OpenOffice.org, and others are fantastic tributes to what free software stands for.

In the opinion of your humble author and many others, free software is best when it is not just free as in zero cost but also free as in freedom. In the case of software released under the terms of popular free software licenses like the GNU General Public license, you are free to use the software in any way you want, including giving it away, improving it, and modifying it however you want or selling it on a street corner. The only thing you are not free to do under free software licenses like the GNU General Public License is restrict someone else's freedom to do the same. Needless to say, many programmers love free software, which is also known as *open source*. It's like buying a car they can tinker with and not having the hood padlocked. And it is the result of modifications made by businesses and individual programmers that this software grows and evolves.



There's considerable controversy in some circles whether “free software” or “open source software” is a better name for the freely distributable and freely modifiable software described in this book. I and many others think that free software is the proper description, because it highlights the philosophical and ethical value of software freedom. Also, what most people call Linux is actually only a software kernel that is a central but small part of an operating system and is usually combined with an array of software from the Free Software Foundation's GNU project and from others to create a complete operating system. So in this book when I refer to the popular operating system that uses the Linux kernel, I use what I consider the more accurate name for it, GNU/Linux.

The free software packages that I describe in this book are generally as good, if not better than available proprietary software, and you can expect this free software soon to outperform any proprietary software competition. This enormous growth is the history of free software. When the free software protocols of TCP/IP, http, ftp, and others appeared, the Internet was born and soon saw the demise of proprietary networks such as Compuserve. Free software powers 68 percent of all Web servers. And currently, free software is gaining a firm foothold in the application software field. Why? Because it grows through the spirit of giving, which may be one of the most powerful forces in the universe.

So, why not explore the world of free software? It's all free, it's powerful, it's secure, and it's available for everyone to enjoy and improve. And if you're concerned about support for your free software, let me assuage your fears: Support is available, and it's free, too.



In this book, I do occasionally include some proprietary software that is free to download, but not to modify. These software applications are mostly listed in Chapter 24. I also include a chapter on Skype, which is proprietary Internet telephone software that is given freely (meaning with no charge) to anyone for non-commercial use.

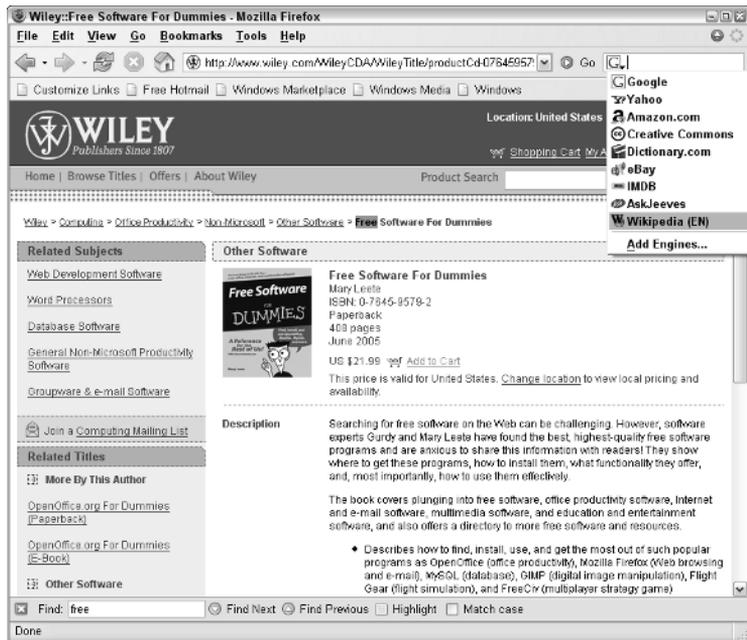
## *Exploring the Web with Mozilla Firefox*

Why is Mozilla Firefox increasing its market share of Internet browsers practically on a daily basis, since it appeared in the autumn of 2004? Because exploring the Web with Mozilla Firefox, as shown in Figure 1-1, gives you peace of mind, due to its increased security features, and lets you work more efficiently, using the following features:

- ✓ **Greater security:** It disallows viruses, worms, Trojan horses, and other malicious programs from running in Firefox.
- ✓ **Tabbed browsing:** Using tabs makes viewing and managing Web pages much easier than opening and closing windows.
- ✓ **Search engines right on the toolbar:** What do you like to search? Google? Yahoo!? eBay? Amazon? Ask Jeeves? Wikipedia? All these search engines and more can be listed right on the toolbar. Now there's no need to go to Google to do all your searching.
- ✓ **RSS integration:** Bookmarks can come alive with RSS integration. Just like the news headlines at Yahoo!, you can have bookmarks that give you the latest of whatever you want the latest of — latest news, latest bargains, latest whatever. And it's easy to setup and use.

- ✔ **Easy bookmarking:** Firefox offers easy and powerful bookmark organizing.
- ✔ **Pop-up-free browsing:** You can disallow pop-ups, and Firefox lets you know when a Web page is trying to open a pop-up. Then you can decide whether you want to see it or ignore it.
- ✔ **Best Find feature I've ever used:** This feature alerts you right away if what you're looking for in a Web page is not available — even while you are typing.

**Figure 1-1:**  
Use Mozilla  
Firefox Web  
browser for secure  
browsing,  
tabs, easy-  
access  
search  
engines,  
RSS, and  
more.



## Downloading and Installing Mozilla Firefox for Windows, Mac OS X, and GNU/Linux

To download Mozilla Firefox for Windows or Mac OS X, go to [www.mozilla.org](http://www.mozilla.org) and click on the Free Download link for Firefox, unless you want to download Firefox in a language other than English, then choose the Other Systems and Languages link and click the link for your system and language. Save the file to your hard drive. After the file finishes downloading, Windows users can follow the instructions in the sidebar, “Installing applications in Windows,” for installing the program.

## Installing applications in Windows

Here are the detailed steps that you can follow to install Firefox, as well as virtually any application in Windows: The basic idea is first to see if your downloaded file is compressed, and if it is then uncompress it. (Need some free decompressing software? Go to [http://www.thefreesite.com/Free\\_Software/Unzipping\\_compression\\_freeware/](http://www.thefreesite.com/Free_Software/Unzipping_compression_freeware/) and choose your favorite one.) If the file is not compressed, then you can generally just double-click on it to start the Installation wizard.

To install any application in Windows, you can do the following:

- 1. After downloading the file that you want to install, if your browser downloads to the desktop, you may want to move the file into a folder.**

I have a folder in My Documents called Downloaded Applications where I move all of my downloaded programs.

- 2. Open the folder where the downloaded file resides, if it is not already open, click the View button, and choose Details. (Don't double-click on the downloaded file! Just open the folder.)**

The details of the downloaded files in your folder appear: Name, Size, Type, and so on.

- 3. If the Type of the downloaded file is Compressed, then right-click on the file and choose Extract Files. Otherwise, go to Step 6.**

A dialog box appears with the name and location of the new folder that the file will extract into.

- 4. Click OK.**

A progress bar appears, showing the progress of the extracting process. When it finishes, a new folder appears in the same folder as the downloaded file, with the same name, except the type is a File Folder and not a Compressed file.

- 5. Double-click to open the newly extracted folder.**

Often you may see one application file in the open folder. In some cases, such as OpenOffice.org, more than one application file appears, in which case I will let you know what file to double-click on in the next step.

- 6. Exit all the programs that you have running in Windows.**

- 7. Double-click on the application file in the extracted folder, or if the downloaded file was not compressed, then double-click on the downloaded file.**

The Installation Wizard appears.

- 8. Generally, you probably just want to accept all the default values of the Installation Wizard. Sometimes, you may be required to choose a language and location.**

If you want more details about the Installation Wizard, see the Appendix.

- 9. After you complete the Installation Wizard, you can start the program by choosing Start ⇨ All Programs ⇨ (Program Name).**

The steps to install any application in Windows are virtually the same. The basic idea is first to see whether the downloaded file is compressed, and if it is, uncompress it. If it's not, you can generally just double-click on it to start the Installation Wizard.

Mac OS X users can install Firefox by doing the following:

1. **Find the downloaded file with the file format .dmg.** (If you can only find the file that ends with .dmg.gz, double-click on it. Stuff It Expander unpacks it and creates a file ending with .dmg.)
2. **Double-click on the downloaded file ending with .dmg.**
3. **Drag the Firefox application (the globe with the fox on it) into the Applications folder.**
4. **Drag the icon onto the dock, if you want it to be there (which is handy).**

GNU/Linux users can download and install Mozilla Firefox using KPackage. For more details, see the Appendix.

## *Reading Mail with Mozilla Thunderbird*

Mozilla Thunderbird offers the same added security as Mozilla Firefox. No programs can enter your computer through e-mail and start to run automatically in Mozilla Thunderbird, as they can in other email programs. This feature provides peace of mind. Mozilla Thunderbird also has other top-notch features as well:

- ✓ **Intelligent Junk Mail filtering:** Mozilla learns from you, and then you let it take over the task of getting rid of unwanted messages for you.
- ✓ **RSS Integration:** Subscribe to an RSS feed of your choice and have the latest information automatically sent to you as e-mails.
- ✓ **Advanced filtering:** Filter e-mail into folders as it arrives, or easily sort your inbox with a single click.
- ✓ **Smart address book:** This feature fills in addresses automatically as you type them.
- ✓ **Saved Search feature:** You can search e-mails and save them into folders, as shown in Figure 1-2.

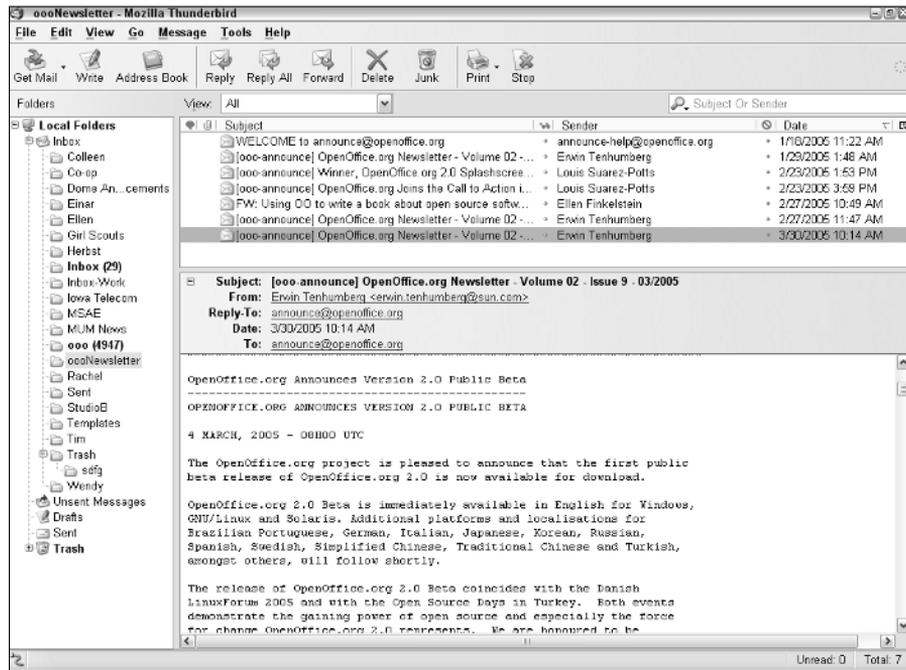
To download Thunderbird for Windows or Mac OS X, go to [www.mozilla.org](http://www.mozilla.org) and click the Download Thunderbird for Windows, English link under the Get Thunderbird heading. If you want to download for Mac OS X or GNU/Linux, go to [www.mozilla.org/products/thunderbird/](http://www.mozilla.org/products/thunderbird/) and click on the Other Systems and Languages link under Download Now.

Save the file to the hard drive. Then after it finishes downloading, Windows users, follow the instructions in the sidebar in the “Exploring the Web with Mozilla Firefox” section of this chapter to install the program.

Mac OS X users can install Thunderbird by doing the following:

1. Find the downloaded file with the file format **.dmg**. (If you can only find the file that ends with **.dmg.gz**, double-click on it; Stuff It Expander unpacks it and creates a file ending with **.dmg**.)
2. Double-click on the downloaded file ending with **.dmg**.
3. Drag the Thunderbird application into the Applications folder.
4. Drag the icon onto the dock, if you want it to be there (which is handy).

GNU/Linux users can download and install Mozilla Thunderbird using KPackage. For more details, see the Appendix.



**Figure 1-2:**  
 Mozilla  
 Thunderbird  
 is a  
 security-  
 minded mail  
 client full  
 of great  
 features.

## Manipulating Images Digitally

Anyone who takes digital photos and wants to improve their look will LOVE the GIMP. The GIMP, which stands for GNU Image Manipulation Program, performs basically the same tasks as Adobe Photoshop. It has a wide array of features, including tools by which you can retouch images, and filters that can enhance their colors and look. Using the GIMP, you can do the following:

- ✔ **Select, cut, copy, layer, crop, and scale images.**
- ✔ **Add transparency.**
- ✔ **Use the Clone tool to repair blemishes, as shown in Figure 1-3.**
- ✔ **Draw and paint with a paintbrush, pencil, airbrush, even an eraser, using more than fifty different types of brushes.**
- ✔ **Filter an image in a multitude of ways.** Here are just a few:
  - **Color filters** to enhance the colors of an image
  - **Edge-detect filters** to make an image look like a line drawing
  - **Light effect filters** to add spotlights and other lighting effects
  - **Cartoon filter** to give an image a cartoon look
  - **Artistic filters** to give an image an artistic flair
  - **Rendering filters** for interesting artworks, without the need of any digital photo



**Figure 1-3:**  
Using the  
GIMP's  
Clone tool,  
I erased  
the horse's  
fence.

## *Downloading and installing the GIMP for Windows*

To download and install the GIMP for Windows, go to <http://gimp-win.sourceforge.net/stable.html>. Click on the word *Download* to download each of the following programs from this page:

- ✓ GTK+ 2 For Windows
- ✓ The Gimp For Windows
- ✓ GIMP Help 2
- ✓ GIMP Animation Package: Optional, for advanced users

Each time you click the Download link, you can choose a mirror site to download the program from. (For more about mirrors, see the Appendix.) Click in the Download column for a site near you. Save the file to the hard drive. Click the Back button to return to the page to start the other files downloading in the same manner.

After the files finish downloading, follow the instructions in the sidebar in the “Exploring the Web with Mozilla Firefox” section of this chapter, to install the programs. Install GTK+ 2 first, then the Gimp For Windows, and then GIMP Help 2.

## *Downloading and installing the GIMP for Mac OS X or GNU/Linux*

On the Macintosh, the GIMP requires X11, a graphics windowing software used by many GNU/Linux applications. Apple provides a version of X11 for Mac OS X, and you may have installed it if you chose a custom install when installing Mac OS X on your computer — but if you don’t remember doing this, you probably didn’t. To download and install X11 for Mac OS X, go to <http://gimp-app.sourceforge.net> and click on the link “Get X11 for OS X 10.3” or on the link “Get X11 preview for OS X 10.2,” depending on which version of Mac OS X you have, and then follow the directions in the window that appears to save the file to the hard drive. (If you have a version of Mac OS X later than 10.3, choose the version for 10.3.)

To download and install the GIMP for Mac OS X, go to <http://gimp-app.sourceforge.net> and click on the link `Gimp-2.2.3.dmg`. Click in the Download column of a site near you to start the download. Save the file to the hard drive.

After the file has downloaded, Mac OS X users can install the GIMP by doing the following:

1. **Find the downloaded file with the file format .dmg.** (If you can only find the file that ends with .dmg.gz, then double-click on it; Stuff It Expander unpacks it and creates a file ending with .dmg.)
2. **Double-click on the downloaded file ending with .dmg.**
3. **Drag the application into the Applications folder.**
4. **Drag the icon onto the dock, if you want it to be there (which is handy).**

Follow the same steps to install the X11 file you downloaded, if it's not already installed on your Macintosh.

GNU/Linux users generally have The GIMP installed already on their desktops. Or they can use KPackage to download and install it or get the latest version. For more information on KPackage, see the Appendix.

## *Free Internet Telephone and Conference Calls*

Skype is the most popular Internet telephone today with more than 29 million registered users. And it is adding an average of 155,000 users per day. It is not open source software, which means programmers around the world cannot tinker with it and improve it, but it works great and it is given freely. You can make calls from computer-to-computer, or you can make regular phone calls from your computer. The computer-to-computer calls are free, but there's a small charge for the computer-to-phone calls. Even so, as of March 11, 2005, over one million people have enrolled in this SkypeOut service. Skype is user-friendly with its easy-to-use interface and its new Getting Started Wizard, as shown in Figure 1-4. It also has better reception than an ordinary phone.

Skype can also be used as an instant messenger, which is handy when you want to spell out things to people you may be talking to.

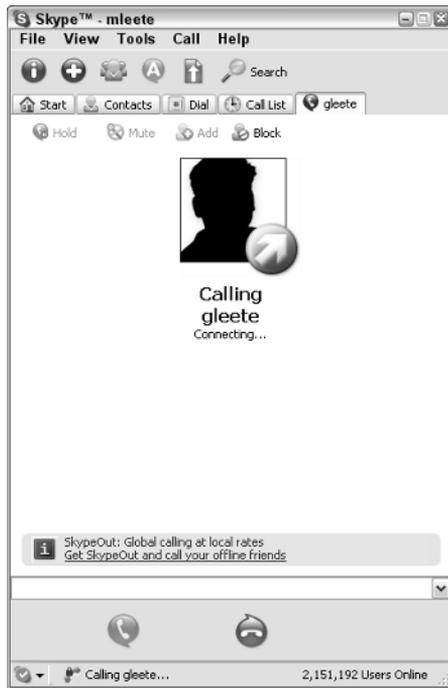
To run Skype, you need an Internet connection, either a dial-up with a minimum 33.6 Kbps; or cable, DSL, or other broadband connection. Plus, you need a microphone.

To download Skype, go to [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com) and click on the “Download Skype Now. It's Free” button at the top of the page. The download may start immediately. If not, click on the Download Skype For (*your operating system here*). Save the file to the hard drive.

To install Skype on Mac OS X 10.3 or higher, double-click on the downloaded .dmg file. Drag the Skype application to the main Applications folder.

To install Skype on Windows, double-click on the downloaded file, SkypeSetup. Follow the instructions of the Installation Wizard.

Chapter 13 gets you up and running with Skype.



**Figure 1-4:** Free telephone calls with great reception and conference calling ability for up to four callers is available with Skype.

## *Recording and Editing Sound*

Audacity is an audio editor and recorder that enables you to basically be your own sound studio. Using Audacity, shown in Figure 1-5, you can record sounds, mix sounds, cut and copy sounds, run filters on sounds, and even change the speed or pitch of the recordings. You can use Audacity to convert tapes or records into digital recordings, or you can use it to convert one type of sound file to another. The filters include Noise Removal, Echo, Tremolo, Equalization, and others.

## *Downloading Audacity*

You can download Audacity from <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>. Click on the Download tab and click either the Windows or Mac OS 9 Or X link to download the Audacity 1.2.3 installer. Click in the Download column of

a site near you. (If you want more information about mirrors, see the Appendix.) Save the file to the hard drive.

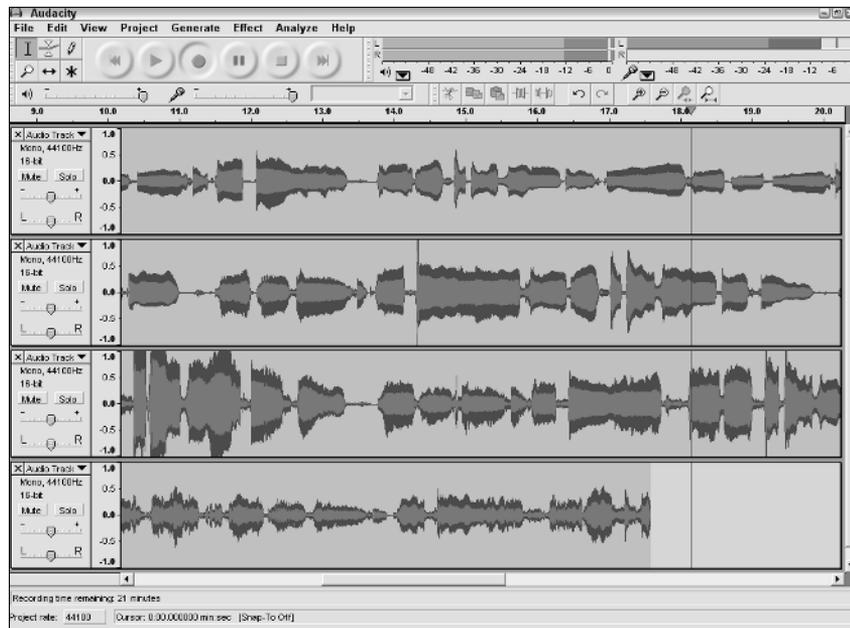
You'll also want to download the LAME MP3 encoder. This program allows you to export a sound file into MP3 format. To download the MP3 encoder, Windows users can go to <http://mitiok.free.fr> and click on any lame-3.96.1 link. Mac OS X users can go to <http://spaghetticode.org/lame/> and click on the link for Mac OS X.

## Installing Audacity

After the files finish downloading, you may need to extract the zipped files of the LAME MP3 encoder. To do so, Windows users can right-click on the lame-3.96 file and choose Extract files. The unpacking may take place automatically in Mac OS X. If you saw a progress bar for Stuff It Expander when you downloaded Lame, you don't need to unpack it. Otherwise, just double-click on the file.

The first time Audacity needs to use the LAME MP3 encoder, it will ask you where it is. Otherwise, you don't need to do anything else with the LAME MP3 program at present.

To install Audacity, Windows users can follow the instructions in the sidebar in the “Exploring the Web with Mozilla Firefox” section of this chapter.



**Figure 1-5:**  
Multi-track  
your voice  
and more  
with  
Audacity.

GNU/Linux users may already have Audacity installed, but if you don't or if you want to update it to the latest version, you can use KPackage to do so. See the instructions in the Appendix.

Mac OS X users can double-click on the downloaded file and then drag the Audacity application into the Applications folder.

## Using Office Software

OpenOffice.org 2.0 rivals, and sometimes surpasses, Microsoft Office in features, reliability, and user-friendliness. OpenOffice.org was designed as a Microsoft Office clone in order to make the migration process easy for people who want to go “free.” Sun Microsystems licensed OpenOffice.org under the GNU General Public License, and they also kept a non-free version, called Star Office, which includes a proprietary database, to make available for people or businesses who want the support that Sun offers. OpenOffice.org is a suite of programs that includes a word processor, spreadsheet program, database program, drawing program, HTML editor, and PDF creation software.



OpenOffice.org 2.0 is available for Windows and GNU/Linux, but the Mac OS X version is only available in an earlier version. You have the choice of using a version that runs on X11, creating the look and feel of the GNU/Linux desktop, or you can use NeoOffice, which runs in the Mac OS X desktop. Currently, NeoOffice is still a beta release candidate, but it may be completely stable by the time you read this. Check out [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) for more information about what's available.

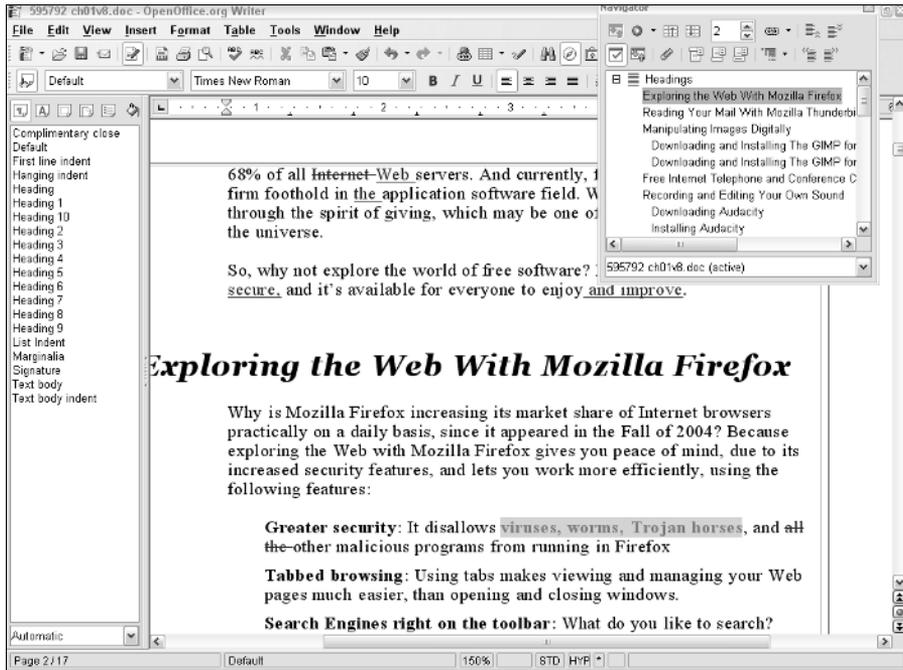
## Processing words

OpenOffice.org Writer, as shown in Figure 1-6, is a powerful word processor that can handle huge documents and lots of different formats, including Microsoft Word. It can automatically generate indexes, tables of contents, headers and footers, footnotes, and more. You can apply styles and add graphics, as well as scale, position, and improve their color. You can also add columns, generate templates, and much more.

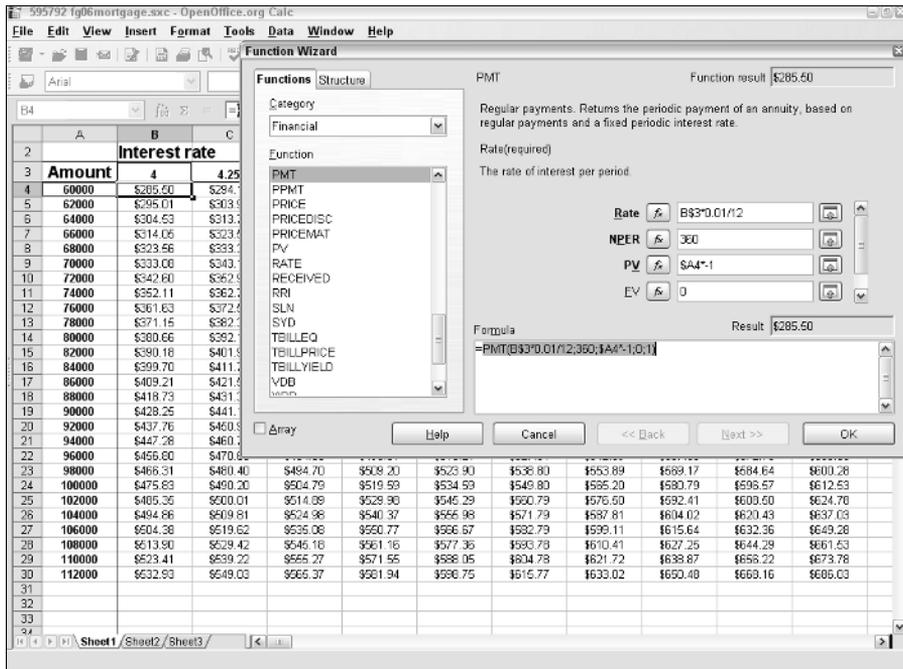
## Making calculations

OpenOffice.org Calc is a spreadsheet program for 2D tables and 3D matrices. It can import and export many spreadsheet formats, including Microsoft Excel. It has a capacity for over 65,000 lines and has hundreds of ready-made functions in categories such as Financial, Statistics, Mathematics, Database, and more. Its Function Wizard is shown in Figure 1-7.

**Figure 1-6:** OpenOffice.org Writer is useful for all of your word processing needs.



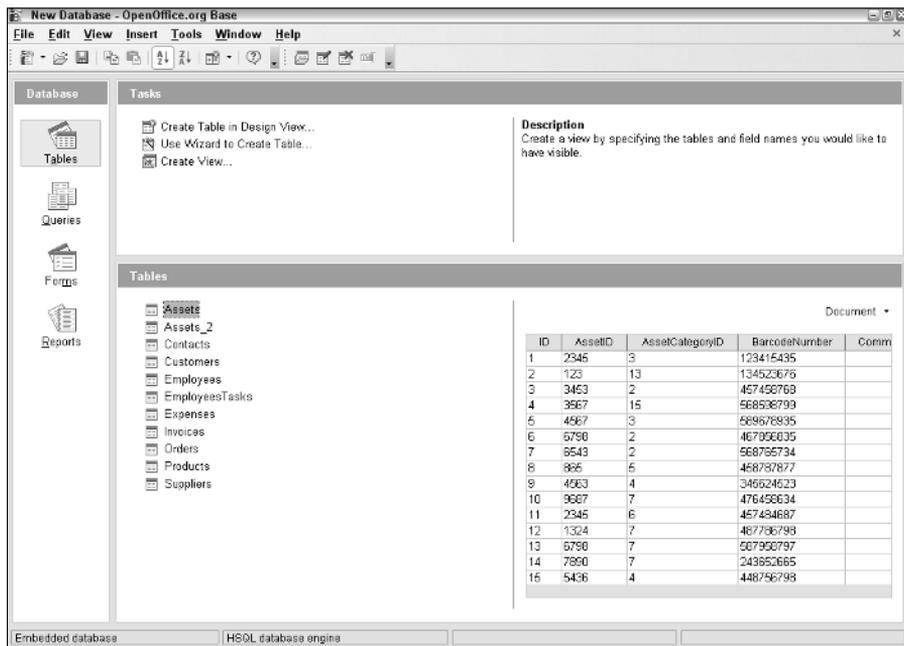
**Figure 1-7:** OpenOffice.org Calc can handle huge 2D or 3D tables and over 65,000 lines.



## Building databases

The newest member of the OpenOffice.org suite is OpenOffice.org Base, as shown in Figure 1-8. You can create new databases, complete with relational tables, using the Table Wizard. You can create links to other databases, such as dBASE, MySQL, Oracle, Access, and others, to enter data, query data, and generate reports using the Form, Query, and Report Wizards.

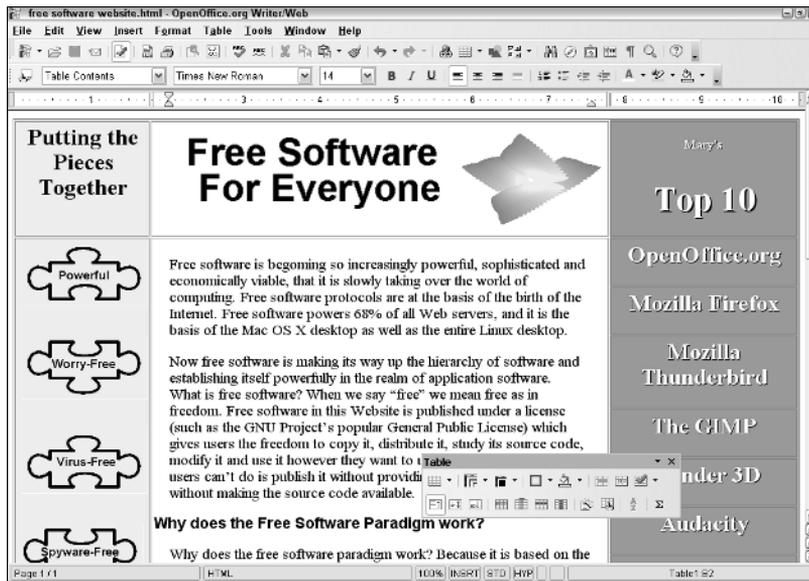
**Figure 1-8:**  
Use the Form, Query, and Report Wizards to create a database, enter data, find data, and write reports for any Base database, or other databases such as dBASE, MySQL, Oracle, Access, and others.



## Creating Web pages

Using Writer's integrated HTML editor, you can create Web pages and Web sites right from Writer, as shown in Figure 1-9. You can create Web pages from scratch, using the Tables feature in Writer, and turn graphics or text into hyperlinks that can link to other documents, other Web pages, and so on. You can position and wrap graphics and determine the size of your Web page. Or if you want to automatically create Web pages, using existing Writer documents, you can use the Web Page Wizard to publish them. The Web Page Wizard can automatically use headings as links, if you want.

**Figure 1-9:**  
Use OpenOffice.org Writer to create a Web site, either from scratch using tables or automatically using the Web Page Wizard.

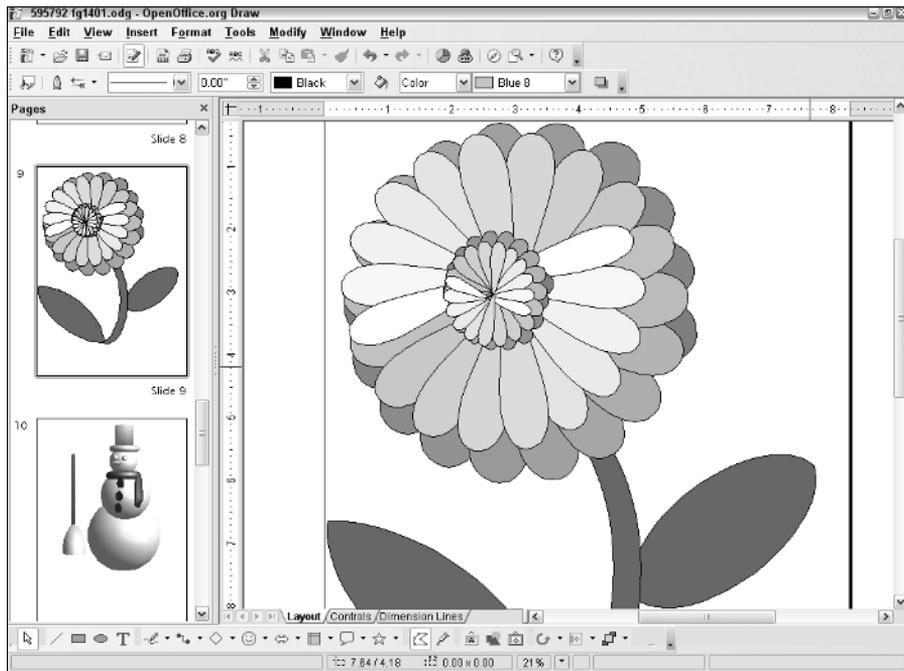


## *Drawing clip art and more*

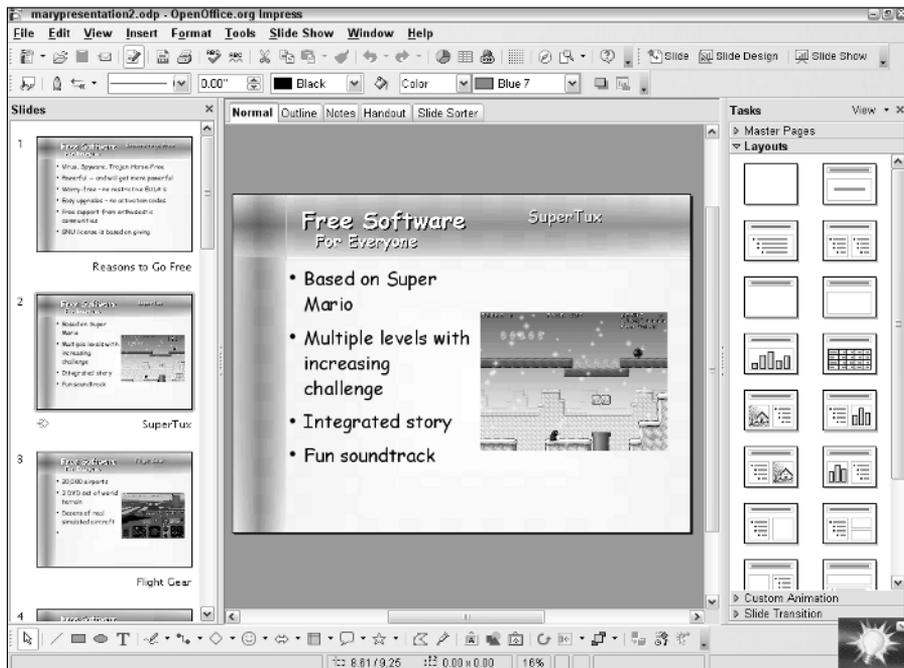
Draw is a vector drawing program that can make an artist out of anyone. You can create shapes, then combine them and pull points to transform simple shapes into recognizable drawings. Using Draw, you no longer have to wade through enormous amounts of clip art to find what's right for you — only to find that it's not available for commercial use. Try out the Duplicate feature to create elaborate designs, as shown in Figure 1-10. Simple drawing is not as hard as most people think. Draw also has a basic 3D art program that lets you create, rotate, position, light, and texture 3D objects.

## *Making presentations*

Impress is a PowerPoint clone designed to help you create presentations, as shown in Figure 1-11. It imports and exports PowerPoint files, as well as Flash (SWF) files and HTML Web pages. You can create slide shows and add transitional effects, such as wipes and sounds. You can automatically advance slides at time intervals of your choosing, or you can advance slides manually with a single click or press of a key. You can also use the Navigator to choose the slide order as you go. Charts are simple to create, either 2D or 3D, and you can customize them. Creating a presentation is quick and easy with Impress because it uses basically the same menus and tools as Draw and Writer. The learning curve is quick.



**Figure 1-10:**  
Draw 2D  
or 3D clip  
art with  
OpenOffice.  
org Draw.



**Figure 1-11:**  
Create  
presentations  
easily using  
OpenOffice.  
org Impress.

## Generating PDF documents

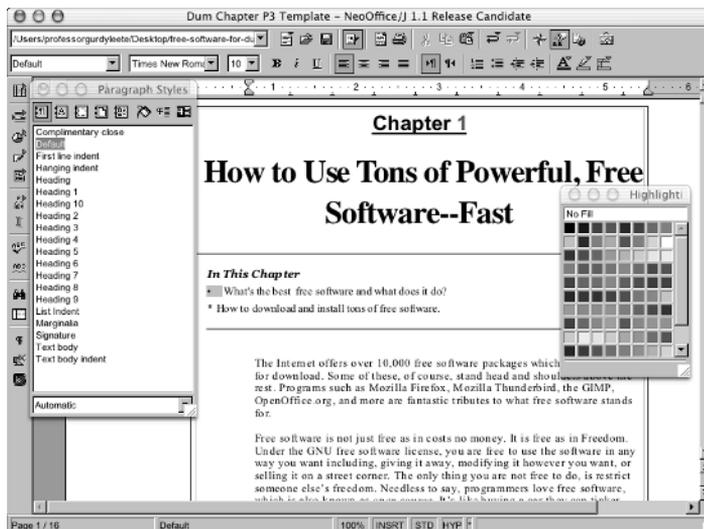
Another great feature of OpenOffice.org is that it can generate PDF documents from any of its modules. (It's funny that it can't read PDF documents, but that's okay. Adobe Acrobat Reader is free to use, even though it is not free as in the freedom to change it.)

## Downloading and installing OpenOffice.org

OpenOffice.org 2.0 is available for Windows and GNU/Linux users. Mac OS X users currently have two options of earlier releases to choose from:

- ✓ **OpenOffice.org version 1.1.2:** This uses X11, a program that comes with Mac OS X.
- ✓ **NeoOffice:** This beta version currently runs like any Mac OS X program, as shown in Figure 1-12. By the time you read this, however, it may be available in a stable version. Even as a beta version, it's very handy.

**Figure 1-12:**  
NeoOffice  
is one of  
the two  
Mac OS X  
versions  
of Open  
Office.org.



### Downloading and installing OpenOffice.org for Windows and GNU/Linux

GNU/Linux users probably have OpenOffice.org as one of their applications. However, you may want to update it to the latest version. Windows or GNU/Linux users can follow these instructions to download OpenOffice.org:

1. Go to [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) and click on the **Download** tab.
2. Click on the **OpenOffice.org 2.0** link.
3. In the pane that appears, select the language, operating system, and download site (any site near you is fine).

A window appears, informing you of the opportunities to contribute to the OpenOffice.org project.

4. Click **Continue to Download**.

(You can always come back to this page to explore the opportunities to help OpenOffice.org grow.)

5. Depending on your Web browser, a window may appear asking whether you want to save the program to the disk or open it. Choose **Save To Disk**.

This program takes about ten minutes to download on my computer, but your mileage may vary depending on the speed of your Internet connection.

After the files finish downloading, follow the instructions in the sidebar in the “Exploring the Web with Mozilla Firefox” section of this chapter to install programs with the following exception: In Step 7, you’ll find that OpenOffice.org has more than one possible application program to click on. The program that you want to double-click on is called Setup.

After OpenOffice.org is installed, in Windows users can start OpenOffice.org by choosing Start ⇨ All Programs ⇨ OpenOffice.org ⇨ (select either *Base*, *Calc*, *Draw*, *Impress*, or *Writer*). GNU/Linux users using the KDE desktop can choose K ⇨ OpenOffice.org ⇨ (select either *Base*, *Calc*, *Draw*, *Impress*, or *Writer*).

### ***Downloading OpenOffice.org or NeoOffice for Mac OS X users***

Mac OS X users can follow these instructions to download OpenOffice.org:

1. Go to [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) and click on the **Download** tab.
2. Click on the **OpenOffice.org Mac OS X(X11)** link.
3. Click either the **NeoOffice Download Now** link or the **OpenOffice.org Download Now** link. If you click **OpenOffice.org**, skip to Step 6.

NeoOffice is still a beta version, but may be easier and nicer to use, since it runs natively on Mac OS X. Although OpenOffice.org 1.1.2 using X11 is very stable and may provide more power. The choice is yours. Personally, I would choose NeoOffice and use that until I came across some problem that may require the other version. You can run both versions simultaneously on a Mac. If you choose OpenOffice.org 1.1.2, you also need to install X11 on your Macintosh if you haven’t already, as described previously in this chapter in “Downloading and installing the GIMP for Mac OS X or GNU/Linux.”

- 4. If you chose NeoOffice, then be sure you have Mac OS X 10.2 or higher, 256 MB of memory, and 400 MB of free disk space on your computer.**
- 5. Scroll down and click on a download link for any mirror. (If you want Openoffice.org in a language other than English, scroll down even further and click on the link for the language you want.) Save the download file to the hard drive.**
- 6. If you chose OpenOffice.org in Step 3, then click in the URL column of a site near you and save the downloaded file to the hard drive.**

It takes a few minutes to download.

After the files finish downloading, double-click on the downloaded file. If you downloaded NeoOffice, this should open a volume called NeoOfficej. Double-click on NeoOfficej to open a window with the NeoOfficej.pkg file. Double-click on the NeoOfficej.pkg file to start the Installation Wizard. Follow the instructions of the Installation Wizard.

To start NeoOffice click the Applications button in any folder window in the Finder, scroll through the applications until you reach NeoOffice, and double-click on it.

### ***Downloading and installing Java 2 Runtime Environment***

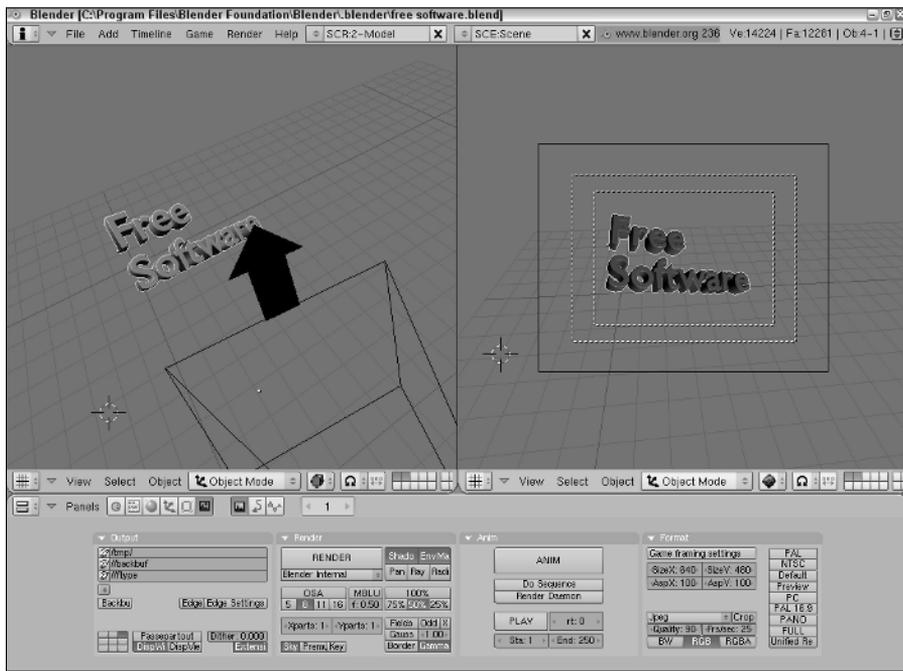
The Base database program in OpenOffice.org 2.0 does not run without a program called Java 2 Runtime Environment, which is a proprietary program by Sun Microsystems that is free to use. If you use Mac OS X, you don't need this program because at this writing Base does not run in Mac OS X. Also, for GNU/Linux users, SimplyMEPIS comes with Java 2 Runtime Environment already installed, or you can download and install it yourself for other GNU/Linux desktops. To download and install Java 2 Runtime Environment, follow these steps:

- 1. Go to [java.sun.com/j2se/1.4.2/download.html](http://java.sun.com/j2se/1.4.2/download.html).**
- 2. Click on the Download J2SE JRE link.**

A Terms of Use License Agreement window appears. (Basically, you're not allowed to modify, decompile, or reverse engineer the program. You're also not allowed to use it for the design, construction, operation, or maintenance of any nuclear facility.)
- 3. Click Accept and then click Continue.**
- 4. Click the Windows Installation, Multi-language link or click the link for your GNU/Linux operating system.**
- 5. Save the program to the hard drive.**
- 6. When installing Java 2 Runtime Environment, double-click on the downloaded file and follow the instructions of the Installation Wizard.**

## 3D Art and Animation

Blender is a powerful 3D animation program that allows you to do 3D modeling; add lights, textures, transparencies; and then animate your 3D world. You can create models from scratch, or you can type text and extrude it. It's handy if you want to create a 3D logo, as shown in Figure 1-13 — or even if you want to do a feature-length 3D movie. This program is designed for professionals, but the basics can be understood by novices, which is what I try to cover in Chapter 19.



**Figure 1-13:**  
Create an  
animated 3D  
logo using  
Blender.

To download Blender for Windows or Mac OS X, go to [www.blender3d.com](http://www.blender3d.com) and click on the Download Blender 2.36 link. In the table that appears, click the link for a continent — EU, USA, Australia — in the same row as the platform for the Blender version that you want to download. (Feel free to try any link, even if it's not your continent.) Save the program to the hard drive.

After the files finish downloading, Windows users can follow the instructions in the sidebar in the “Exploring the Web with Mozilla Firefox” section of this chapter to install Blender.

GNU/Linux users can download and install Blender using KPackage. See the Appendix for instructions.

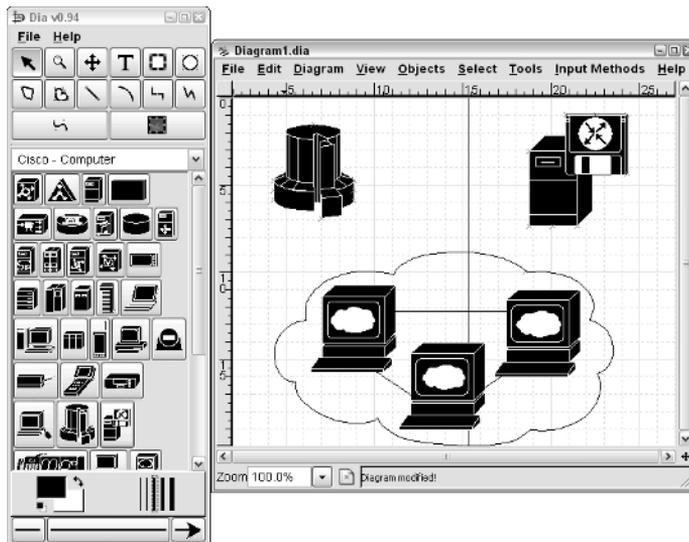
Mac OS X users can install Blender by doing the following:

1. Find the downloaded file without the file format .zip on the end. If you cannot locate the file, then double-click on the file with .zip on the end.  
The file unpacks.
2. Double-click on the downloaded folder blender-publisher-2.25-mac-osx-10.1 to open it.
3. Double-click on the blenderpublisher icon.
4. Drag the icon onto the Dock, if you want it to be there (which is handy).

## Creating Diagrams

Dia is a free diagramming program for Windows and GNU/Linux that is easy to use and versatile. You can use it to create flowcharts, IT networking diagrams (as shown in Figure 1-14) electrical diagrams, chemical engineering diagrams, civil engineering diagrams, maps, and more. It has tons of ready-made symbols, and all you have to do to create diagrams is basically just drag and drop. You can resize easily, move items around, add text, and more.

**Figure 1-14:**  
Using Dia,  
you can  
create  
flowcharts  
and other  
diagrams  
quickly.



To download Dia for Windows, go to <http://dia-installer.sourceforge.net/> and click the link under the heading Latest Release. The Project: diaWin32 Installer: File List window appears with a list of files to download

along with the file sizes beside each name. Click on one of the three filename links and click in the Download column for a site near you. Save the download to the hard drive and click the Back button to return to the previous window. Repeat the process to download all three files.

After the files finish downloading, follow the instructions in the sidebar in the “Exploring the Web with Mozilla Firefox” section of this chapter to install Dia using the dia-setup file.

GNU/Linux users can download and install Dia using KPackage, as described in the Appendix.

## *iPodder: The Podcast Receiver*

The iPodder program lets you subscribe to your favorite Internet audio programs and listen to them at your convenience, not just when they happen to be broadcast. This gives you the power to listen to whatever you want, whenever you want. iPodder, shown in Figure 1-15, automatically downloads the latest programs of whatever you subscribe to, which you can then load onto your iPod or portable media player. You can also click on a program and hear it played on your computer’s media player.

Windows users can follow these steps to download iPodder:

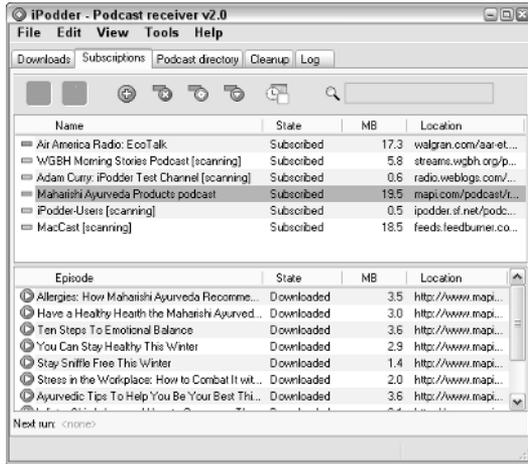
1. **go to** <http://ipodder.sourceforge.net>.
2. **Click on the appropriate Download link: Windows 2000 or XP; OS X 10.3 or Higher; or GNU/Linux.**
3. **Choose a mirror site near you and click in the Download column.**
4. **Save the file to the hard drive.**

After the file finishes downloading, Windows users can follow the instructions in the sidebar in the “Exploring the Web with Mozilla Firefox” section of this chapter to install iPodder.

Mac OS X users can install iPodder by doing the following:

1. **Find the downloaded file with the file format .dmg.** (If you can only find the file that ends with .dmg.gz, double-click on it; Stuff It Expander unpacks it and creates a file ending with .dmg.)
2. **Double-click on the downloaded file ending with .dmg.**
3. **Drag the application (the lemon icon) into the Applications folder.**
4. **Drag the icon onto the Dock, if you want it to be there (which is handy).**

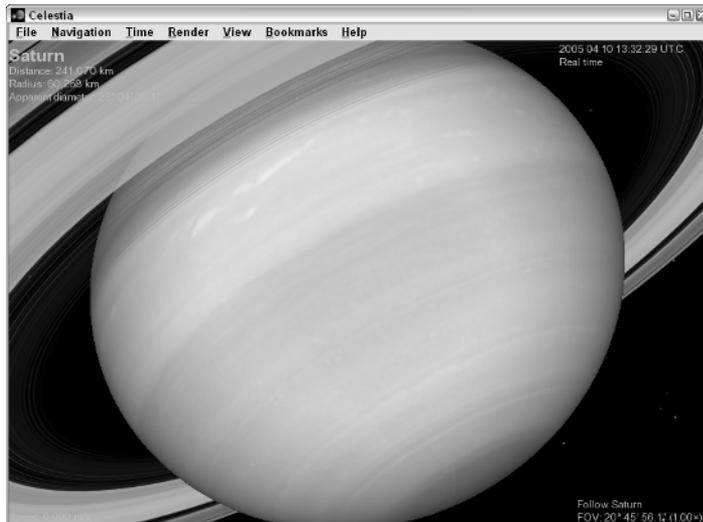
**Figure 1-15:** Subscribe to RSS audio feeds to receive the latest programs with iPodder.



## Learning

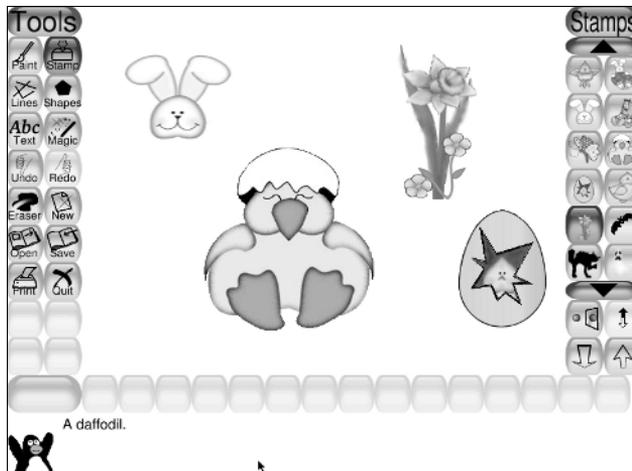
Lots of free software is available for educational purposes. Chapter 21 includes a discussion of the following, as well as all the information on downloading and installing all of them:

- **Celestia:** Get an up close and personal view of the solar system, as shown in Figure 1-16, as well as explore hundreds of stars, including some with known planets. This program gives you the feeling of really touring around the universe. Budding astronomers will find it fascinating.



**Figure 1-16:** Explore the universe with Celestia.

- ✓ **Flight Gear:** This incredible program lets you pilot any one of dozens of aircraft to any one of 20,000 airports around the world, while automatically generating the terrain of the earth from a three-DVD set of terrain or from downloads. It also varies the time of day and weather conditions. Imagine flying around the world from the comfort of your home. You can even request instant online help. Mayday!
- ✓ **Gcompris:** Children may find Gcompris, a suite of colorful, educational games, to be lots of fun while learning the alphabet and more.
- ✓ **Solfege:** This ear-training software trains you to recognize musical notes, chords, pitches, and rhythm. The easiest level of this program is not all that easy, and the hardest is quite hard. You had better be serious about music to use this program.
- ✓ **Tux Paint:** This software is for children of all ages. Even the smallest can probably enjoy the stamps and paint tools, as shown in Figure 1-17. The interface uses large buttons and is easy to navigate using the mouse. Tux Paint doesn't require reading to understand how to use it.
- ✓ **Tux Typing:** This program teaches typing with fun game play. Fish drop from the sky with letters that you need to type before the fish hit the ground. Then Tux the penguin gets to eat them.



**Figure 1-17:**  
Children  
love the  
Tux Paint  
stamps.

## Having Fun

Many great games are available as free software. Some are extremely involved and sophisticated, like Freeciv, a multiplayer, online, free software game similar to the popular Civilization game. Others are delightful, like SuperTux, the

side-scrolling, jump-and-run platform game, shown in Figure 1-18, with lots of levels and a storyline to go with it. This is Super Mario in Antarctica. For more information about these games, including downloading and installation instructions, see Chapter 22.

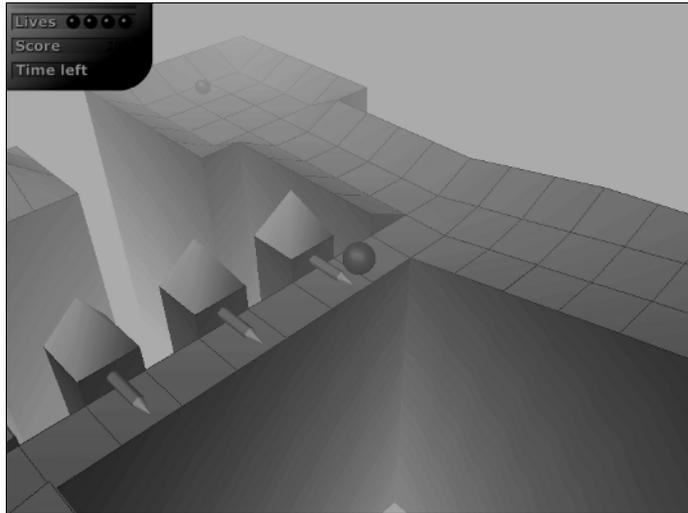
**Figure 1-18:** SuperTux is a delightful Super Mario-type side-scrolling, story-based game with lots of levels to keep every kid at heart busy for days!



Other great games include

- ✓ **BilliardGL:** A 3D pool game.
- ✓ **Circus Linux:** A clone of Circus Atari.
- ✓ **Crack Attack:** Similar to the Super Nintendo game, Tetris Attack.
- ✓ **Enigma:** A puzzle game with 700 different levels.
- ✓ **GITron:** A clever game based on the game in the movie *Tron*.
- ✓ **GNU Chess:** Try to beat it!
- ✓ **Trackballs:** A marble game, shown in Figure 1-19, similar to the popular Marble Madness.

In Chapter 22, I describe how to download, install, and play the games — at least, how to start to play them — especially SuperTux, my favorite!



**Figure 1-19:**  
Stay on  
track with  
Trackballs.

## *Powerful, Secure, Free: GNU/Linux Operating System*

GNU/Linux operating systems come in all shapes and kinds, but the one generally rated as perhaps the easiest-to-use, most polished, and suitable for the newcomer is SimplyMEPIS, shown in Figure 1-20. SimplyMEPIS is very easy to install because it automatically determines what software drivers your computer hardware needs and installs them without your needing to bother about them. It also allows you to boot from a CD-ROM, if you want to just try out the program on any Windows computer just to see how you like it. Then when you reboot again without the CD-ROM in the drive, your computer reboots Windows, as usual.

SimplyMEPIS boots with a huge array of free software already installed, including Mozilla Firefox, OpenOffice.org, the GIMP, Audacity, and many more. And best of all, you don't need virus protection. The only protection SimplyMEPIS requires is the firewall it installs during the installation process. Viruses and other malicious software do not harm your computer when you run SimplyMEPIS, as is the case with other GNU/Linux desktops. For information on downloading and installing SimplyMEPIS, see Chapter 23.

## *Getting Support*

The free software world doesn't leave you all to yourself with no recourse for support. In fact, often the opposite is true. Support forums for virtually every

top free software application are brimming with activity. Hundreds of experienced users come to the aid of the free software newbies daily. And the searchable archives of these forums are a vast treasure chest of information.

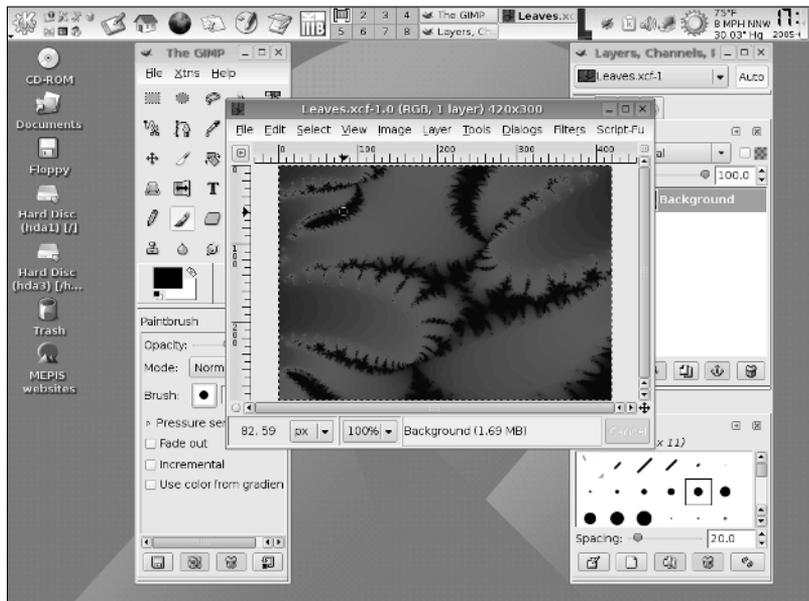
## *Searching the support forum archives*

Support forum archives for each major free software application are generally extensive and searchable. If you are using a stable version of a widely used program, and not a new beta, then it is likely that whatever question you have has already been asked by someone else. All you have to do is search the archives using keywords describing your problem. Normally, you can find the answer in less time than it takes to get a person on the phone using traditional phone support for proprietary applications. (And, guess what — the people answering your questions may be doing exactly the same thing! So, why not just do it yourself?)

## *Asking questions*

If the answer to your question is not in the support forums, then go ahead, be brave, and ask the question on the forum. Be concise and brief, and title it descriptively. (Remember, this e-mail may be read by hundreds of people.) You can normally expect an answer in about 24 hours. Although, if your topic is hot, it may take as little as a few minutes.

**Figure 1-20:** The Simply-MEPIS desktop installs with tons of free software and is virus-free.



## *Where to go for support*

Generally, all the home pages of the major free software applications have links for help and support. Check them out whenever you need advice. Here are a few examples of what's available and where.

- ✓ For OpenOffice.org, go to [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) and click the Support tab. Then choose any of the following:
  - Click the Archives tab below the User Mail List heading, for a huge searchable archive.
  - Click the Subscribe tab below the User Mail List to subscribe to the User Mail List. You must be subscribed in order to send e-mail to it.
  - Click the User Help:User-FAQ Project link for a comprehensive list of well-organized FAQs.
  - Click Mac Support link for a Mac-related FAQs.
  - Click the OpenOffice.org Consultants Directory for paid email, phone, or on-site support.
- ✓ For support for Mozilla Firefox and Thunderbird, go to [www.mozilla.org](http://www.mozilla.org) and click on the Support tab. Then choose any of the following:
  - Click on the Knowledge Base link for a searchable database of solutions.
  - Click on the link for Firefox Web Forum or Thunderbird Web Forum for e-mail support.
  - Click on the Third Party Phone And Email Support for phone support or email support for a small charge.
- ✓ For support for Skype, go to [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com) and click the Help tab. Then choose any of the following:
  - Type some key words into the Search Knowledgebase text box and click Search Knowledgebase.
  - Click Forum and then click the Search The Forums button to search all of the 13 active forums simultaneously.
  - Click the Users Guides link, if you think the answer to your problem may reside there.
  - Click the Submit Support Request for an e-mail form.