

Can your old laptop become a build machine?

A five-minute check before you spend an afternoon on it.

That laptop in the drawer might be one free afternoon away from being a real computer for building things — writing code, making small projects, and putting a website on the internet. Or it might not be worth it. This quick check tells you which, before you commit any time.

The five-minute check

If you can tick all six, your laptop is a good candidate:

- ☐ It **powers on and starts up** reliably, and holds a charge.
- ☐ The **screen, keyboard, and trackpad** all work (or you have an external one to plug in).
- ☐ It has at least **2 GB of RAM** (4 GB or more is much nicer).
- ☐ It has about **20 GB of free storage**.
- ☐ You have a **USB flash drive, 8 GB or larger**, you don't mind erasing.
- ☐ You have **internet** and a couple of hours (you can split it up).

Practical hardware requirements

Minimum

2 GB RAM
20 GB storage
Powers on, parts work

Comfortable

4–8 GB RAM
An SSD (faster) helps
Any laptop from the last ~10 years

Age matters less than most people expect — Linux runs well on machines that current Windows or macOS have left behind.

ONE IMPORTANT WARNING

The full process installs a fresh operating system, which **erases everything currently on the laptop**. Anything you want to keep must be backed up somewhere else first. The full guide walks through exactly how — but know this going in.

Clear stop signs

Skip it (or fix these first) if:

- The laptop **won't power on**, won't charge, or the screen stays black — that's a hardware fault, and installing Linux won't fix it.
- You **need what's on it** and have nowhere to back it up yet. Sort the backup out first.
- It's the **only computer you rely on daily** and you can't risk changing it. Use a spare instead.
- You want a phone-style, zero-effort setup. This is hands-on and takes a couple of focused hours.

What the full process gets you

Following the complete walkthrough, you finish with:

- ☐ A laptop running **Linux**, updated and secured.
- ☐ The tools developers use — a code editor, **Git**, Python, Node.js — installed and working.
- ☐ A small **website you built by hand**.
- ☐ That website **live on the internet**, at a real address you can share.
- ☐ A clear idea of **what to build next**.

THE HONEST VERSION

This won't fix a broken laptop, and it isn't a shortcut to a job or an income. It's a genuine, complete path from "I have an old laptop" to "I have a working computer with a live project on it." That's worth a lot on its own.

Passed the check? The full step-by-step playbook is here:

openmirrorllc.com/products/old-laptop-to-build-machine

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