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# Hands On with Phoenix's Hyperspace Pre-Boot Shell

By Cisco Cheng

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Many laptops are now advertising secondary [operating systems](#) that boot up in a matter of seconds. You might have seen one, and if so, there's a good chance that it is a Linux environment—one that works in tandem with a version of Windows Vista or XP.

These pre-boot environments are simplistic and quickly accessible, with low power consumption and correspondingly enormous battery benefits. Until now, these Linux environments were custom-tailored to a specific laptop and haven't been available as separate install files.

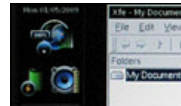
At CES 2009, Phoenix launched downloadable versions, dubbed Hyperspace Dual and Hyperspace Hybrid, which can be installed on any laptop. There are limitations, though.

Phoenix sent me two test laptops, one with Hyperspace Dual and the other with Hybrid. The concept is simple: Since most users primarily use their laptops for web surfing, why go through the trouble of booting into Windows? A minute of your life is wasted, and it eats up the laptop's battery life.



Hyperspace resides as a layer underneath Windows and boots up in a matter of seconds. Once you're in, there's a left pane made up of settings and customizable icons, the latter of which are entirely made up of shortcuts to popular Internet sites such as Gmail, YouTube, meebo, Amazon.com, and Flickr, to name a few. The network settings are at the top of the pane, which you'll need to access the Internet. There are three options here: Wired, WiFi, and WWAN (if a 3G card is detected). Both the wired and WiFi settings worked flawlessly with PCMag.com's networks.

Hyperspace is fast and easy to grasp, but its functionalities are limited. For instance—at least for now—physical drives in Windows aren't accessible, reading and writing data files with a Linux application like OpenOffice is not supported, and music and videos residing on the hard drive are off limits. Phoenix is working on other features at the moment, so it's limiting Hyperspace to just Web navigation.



One's choice of Hyperspace version is based on system requirements. Hybrid has the most potential, because it utilizes the virtualization technologies of Intel and AMD [processors](#). Users can instantly toggle back and forth between operating systems, with battery savings of up to 25 percent if you're in Hyperspace, according to Phoenix. While using Hyperspace, you can put Windows in Sleep or Hibernate modes, or shut it down completely.

There is a catch, however. Installing Hybrid requires that your laptop uses [Intel's](#) or AMD's virtualization technology, and from my findings, not many laptops do. GRC has a [free downloadable application](#) that detects if your laptop has virtualization, and you can also check your BIOS for this setting. For laptops that don't support virtualization, Hyperspace Dual is your only option, which involves shutting down the inactive operating system.

HyperSpace is immediately available for download in two versions at [www.hyperspace.com](http://www.hyperspace.com). Consumers can check their laptop while logged into hyperspace.com to determine which version to use. An annual license for Hybrid [costs](#) \$60 or \$149.95 for three years, while Dual is cheaper, costing \$40 or \$100 for a three-year license. Both plans includes updates and free Web site support.

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