how to check your debian version

How to Check Your Debian Version (Command Line Guide)

When logging into a Debian system for the first time, it's often important to know which version of Debian is currently running. Whether you're troubleshooting, deploying software, or auditing systems, identifying your Debian release is a key step.

In this guide, we will show multiple ways to check the version of Debian using the command line interface (CLI).

Debian Release Types

Before diving into the commands, here's a quick overview of Debian's three release branches:

⬚ Stable

This is the latest official release of Debian. It is thoroughly tested and is the recommended choice for production environments or organizational use.

⬚ Testing

This branch contains packages that are in the process of becoming part of the next stable release. While more up-to-date, it may contain bugs.

⚠️ Unstable (Sid)

This version is mainly used for development purposes. All new
development work starts here before moving to Testing.

Methods to Check Debian Version

Here are the most effective ways to determine the version of
Debian installed on your server or machine.

Method 1: Using lsb_release -a

This command prints LSB (Linux Standard Base) details about
your Linux distribution. It works regardless of your desktop
environment.

lsb_release -a

Typical output:

```
Distributor ID:   Debian
Description:      Debian GNU/Linux 12 (bookworm)
Release:          12
Codename:         bookworm
```

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Method 2: Reading /etc/issue

This file displays a system identification message. Use the
cat command to read it:

cat /etc/issue

Expected output:

Debian GNU/Linux 12 \n \l

Method 3: Viewing /etc/os-release

This file provides detailed OS information and is available on Debian 9 and later (with systemd):

cat /etc/os-release

Output example:

PRETTY_NAME="Debian GNU/Linux 12 (bookworm)"
NAME="Debian GNU/Linux"
VERSION_ID="12"
...

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Method 4: Using hostnamectl

Although typically used to set system hostname, this command also displays OS info:

hostnamectl

Example output:

Operating System: Debian GNU/Linux 12 (bookworm)
Kernel: Linux 6.1.0-9-amd64
Architecture: x86-64

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Summary

To summarize, you can check your Debian version using the following methods:

- lsb_release -a
- cat /etc/issue

- cat /etc/os-release
- hostnamectl

Each of these provides similar but sometimes differently formatted results.

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