Which Debathena metapackage should I install?

Q: Which Debathena metapackage should I install?

Answer

Debathena provides various levels of Athena functionality through different metapackages, and each metapackage comes with different levels of support. Some metapackages are better suited for certain hardware configurations than others. This article will help you to understand the different metapackages and the implications of installing them.

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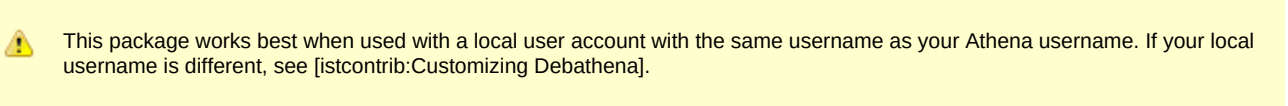
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Debathena-standard

Description

This package is suitable for personal workstations and laptops, as it does not require network access in order to log in. It provides the minimal level of Athena compatibility - it gives your machine full access to Athena services, but does not configure your machine to use Kerberos authentication and AFS home directories. Anyone wishing to log into such a workstation must have a local account and local home directory. Athena commands and locker software are available to users once they have logged in.

Debathena-standard provides the functionality of Athena via the command line interface. Enter `renew` on the command line to gain access to Athena.



Support

Limited telephone and e-mail support is available from IS&T Athena Consulting on a best-effort basis.

Debathena-login

Description

This package is suitable for "dialup" or headless remote-access servers. (A modified version of this package runs on the IS&T Athena Dialup servers.) Athena users may log in remotely (using SSH) or on a terminal session, however graphical logins are limited to users who have a local account and home directory on the workstation, and those users will see the default operating system's desktop environment, not the Athena one.

This package is not generally recommended for a user's primary workstation.

This package includes everything from Debathena-standard, and configures your machine to use Kerberos authentication and AFS home directories. This allows other Athena users to log in to your machine, hence the name.

Support

Limited telephone and e-mail support is available from IS&T Athena Consulting on a best-effort basis.

Debathena-login-graphical

Description

> ⚠ Users are strongly encouraged to install Debathena-workstation instead of this metapackage unless they have a specific need for the reduced functionality of Debathena-login-graphical.

This package is suitable for personal workstations. Athena users may log in at the console or remotely (e.g. using SSH). It does not automatically install extra software such as LaTeX (though such software can be installed manually by the workstation maintainer). It does not provide automatic updates; the workstation maintainer is responsible for keeping the system up to date.

This package configures graphical software to integrate with the Athena environment. It contains Debathena-login along with some additional dependencies useful for graphical workstations.

Support

Limited telephone and e-mail support is available from IS&T Athena Consulting on a best-effort basis.

Debathena-workstation

Description

This package is suitable for private desktop workstations. Athena users may login at the console or remotely (e.g. using SSH). A large amount of extra software (e.g. LaTeX, OpenOffice, GNUplot) is automatically included. It provides automatic updates and bugfixes (for the life of the operating system). **Operating system upgrades and workstation configuration are the responsibility of the maintainer**. Support for local home directories and local file storage is available. Support for local installation of external software is available, subject to compatibility.

This package configures a private, graphical Debathena workstation. In addition to everything from Debathena-login-graphical, this package contains configuration, such as automatic updates, designed to minimize the need for manual maintenance.

> ⚠ If you have a local user account on your Ubuntu installation with the same username as your Athena account, you might run into problems running your Athena dotfiles. See Why don't I get my AFS home directory when logging in to a Debathena workstation? to learn how to resolve them.

Support

Full telephone and e-mail support is available from IS&T Athena Consulting for the operating system and locker software. Support for peripheral devices is on a best-effort basis.

Disk space requirements

About 15 GB.

Debathena-cluster

Description

> ⚠ This package is intended for unattended workstations (such as those in clusters or a shared workstation in a lab).

Athena users may log in at the console, but remote access is not possible. Security updates and bugfixes are automatically applied, and the

operating system will be automatically upgraded when applicable. Local home directories and local file storage are **not permitted**, though you can use an external USB storage device (such as a portable hard drive or flash drive) as well as the optical drive. Permanent local software installation is **not possible**; any modifications to the filesystem will be reverted when you log out. Configuration of the workstation is at the discretion of IS&T. This package provides the maximum level of Athena functionality, but does not permit any local configuration. A wired Ethernet connection with a static IP address is required.

Support

Full telephone and e-mail support is available from IS&T Athena Consulting for the operating system and locker software.

Comparison of different metapackages

This table provides an overview of the various differences between the metapackages.

Feature	cluster	workstation	login-graphical	login	standard
Customizable	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Automatic Updates	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Automatic Upgrades	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Athena users can log in at the console	✓	✓	✓[a]	✗	✗
Athena users can log in remotely (e.g. SSH)	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
Local accounts/home directories supported	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Suitable for a public workstation	✓	✓[b]	✗	✗	✗
Suitable for a desktop workstation	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Local installation of external software	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support for external USB storage devices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

[a] Debathena-login-graphical does not include all software from Athena workstations, so users who use alternative window managers may experience difficulty logging in.
[b] Debathena-workstation may be suitable for a public workstation that will only be used by a small number of people, such as in a lab or office. Debathena-cluster is recommended for unattended public workstations which will be used by large numbers of people.

Additonal Metapackages for Advanced Users

> ⚠ The following metapackages are unsupported. They provide levels of Athena functionality below that of Debathena-standard, and some locker software may fail to run. Together, these three packages comprise the functionality of Debathena-standard, and we strongly recommend you install that Debathena-standard instead.

We have also created these additional metapackages for more granular control over the Debathena installation process. The first 3 packages (debathena-clients, debathena-locker, debathena-athena-libraries) comprise the vast majority of Debathena-standard, so you are encouraged to install that package instead whenever possible.

debathena-clients: This package installs programs such as "blanche" and "athinfo" and "zwgc", but does not include anything that requires AFS such as "add" or "attach".

debathena-locker: This package includes AFS and software commonly used to access lockers, such as "add" and "attach". Together with debathena-athena-libraries, this package should allow you to run most locker software.

debathena-athena-libraries: This package installs a number of shared libraries from Ubuntu or Debian which may be required by locker software.

debathena-build-depends : This depends on everything needed to build all Debathena packages.

Other package managers

For many years, the Debathena project recommended using `aptitude` to install and upgrade Debathena. With the introduction of (*multiarch*) (support for having multiple architectures of packages installed simultaneously, such as i386 and amd64 versions of the same libraries) in Ubuntu 12.04, this is no longer the case. `aptitude` has very limited (*multiarch*) support and should no longer be used. We recommend using `apt-get` for all distributions currently supported by Debathena.

Also note that the `synaptic` and `adept` GUIs do not readily support setting the `DEBIAN_FRONTEND` environment variable. (If you have to use them, you should use `dpkg-reconfigure debconf` to change the Debian Frontend to `non-interactive`, and when you are done, change it back to the default of dialog. Alternatively, you can not change the `Debconf` priority; you will just be asked more unnecessary questions.)

See Also

- Debathena Landing Page