Identifying Operating Systems

Operating system identification in SUSE Linux is performed using the text-based `/etc/os-release` configuration file. By interpreting its common and product-specific attributes, system administrators and developers can accurately identify specific distribution variants and versions. This enables seamless task automation, guarantees software compatibility, and simplifies environment troubleshooting across diverse Linux deployments.

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1 Why identify an operating system?

As software developers and system administrators, you often manage several versions of the same product or even several products. Operations on each version or product may require a different configuration, therefore, it is crucial to easily identify the system.

Proper system identification can help you with automation, ensuring compatibility, troubleshooting, and so on.

2 The `/etc/os-release` content

For operating system identification, use a text-based file `/etc/os-release`. The file contains product key attributes like name and version. Viewing and interpreting the content can help you with automation, ensuring compatibility, troubleshooting, and so on.

The `/etc/os-release` file contains two types of attributes: common attributes and product-specific attributes. Each type is described further.

2.1 Common attributes

The common attributes have the same values for all SUSE Linux products.

TABLE 1: COMMON ATTRIBUTES

Attribute	Meaning	Value
`NAME`	Full name of the distribution	SLES
`PRETTY_NAME`	A prettified name that is displayed to the user	SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 16.1
`VERSION`	A complete version	16.1
`VERSION_ID`	A version number. This is the recommended attribute for identifying the operating system.	16.1
`ID`	Short identification of the distribution. This is the recommended	sles

Attribute	Meaning	Value
	attribute for identifying the operating system.	
`ID_LIKE`	A list of similar distributions	suse opensuse
`CPE_NAME`	Common Platform Enumeration	cpe:/o:suse:sles:16:16.1

2.2 Product-specific attributes

The product-specific attributes differ for each SUSE product. The file `/etc/os-release` contains the following product-specific attributes:

TABLE 2: PRODUCT-SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTES

Attribute	Meaning	Value for SUSE Linux Enterprise Server	Value for the immutable SUSE Linux Enterprise Server	Value for SLES for SAP	Value for the immutable SLES for SAP
`VARIANT`	The specific flavor of the product. This is a newly introduced attribute.	Enterprise Server	Enterprise Server (Immutable)	Enterprise Server for SAP applications	Enterprise Server for SAP applications (Immutable)
`VARIANT_ID`	A short machine readable name that can be used to identify a particular product in scripts. This is a newly introduced attribute.	server	transactional	server-sap	server-sap-transactional

Attribute	Meaning	Value for SUSE Linux Enterprise Server	Value for the immutable SUSE Linux Enterprise Server	Value for SLES for SAP	Value for the immutable SLES for SAP
`SUSE_SUPPORT_PRODUCT`	The official SUSE product name. This is a newly introduced attribute.	SUSE Linux Enterprise Server	SUSE Linux Enterprise Server	SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP applications	SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP applications
`SUSE_SUPPORT_PRODUCT_VERSION`	The official SUSE product version. This is a newly introduced attribute.	16.1	16.1	16.1	16.1

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