Installing on older computers

FreeBSD installer sets up GPT by default. However, I have some servers which have spent years (decades?) in a NOC. Constant temperature, constant humidity, and very, very clean electricity. Some of these are so old, they don't know what to do with GPT.

I think the FreeBSD people are so used to the modifications they need to make, the documentation is really not very clear for newbies (which I am, at least in regards to BSD), so I'll try to document it better here. These are just notes for the time being.

The symptoms are, you do a very nice, clean install, then the server fails to boot! The trick is, on older computers, manually create partition table using MBR. You can use the GUI installer for it (I don't have pretty pictures of it), or you can choose the command line.

Using the GUI installer

1. Do a standard install until you get to the Partitioning screen
2. Choose Manual install (Automatic creates the GPT scheme)
3. Find your drive. I generally look for the drive that is the right size and the layout I expect. For example, if I'm installing to a USB drive, I look for da0 of the right size and (if I didn't clean it off), an MBR with a Windows partition. In this case, I'll assume it is a USB and named *da0*.
4. Delete the existing partition scheme (even if it is already MBR). This wipes the partition table.
5. Create an MBR partition table
6. Create a freebsd slice in the MBR (*da0s1*)
7. Create a freebsd_ufs file system in the slice (*da0s1a*)
    1. Set “mount” to /
    2. **IF** this is a USB device, go into Options
    3. Set SUJ off
    4. Set SU on
    5. Set TRIM on
8. Continue with rest of install

From the Command Line

This can also be manually accomplished, so I'm including some notes here, though I really don't use them anymore. These are not formatted very well; like I said, they are just incomplete notes.

- gpart bootcode -b /boot/mbr ada1
- gpart set -a active -i 1 ada1

OR

- gpart bootcode -b /boot/boot0 ada1
- gpart bootcode -b /boot/boot ada1s1

See http://daemon-notes.com/articles/system/install-ufs/gpart-mbr

- gpart create -s mbr ada1
- gpart show ada1
- gpart add -t freebsd ada1
- gpart create -s bsd ada1s1
- gpart show ada1s1
- gpart add -t freebsd-ufs ada1s1

Install simple MBR boot loader (boots active slice):

- gpart bootcode -b /boot/mbr ada1
- gpart set -a active -i 1 ada1

Ooops, it still doesn't work

If it still doesn't work, you can boot from the install image, then drop to a command prompt. At that point, attempt the information in From The Command Prompt above.

No guarantees. **I have not done this successfully yet!**

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