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Licensing FAQ

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Please see the categories below for answers to frequently asked questions regarding OEM system builder licensing.

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Genuine Microsoft Software

Q. What is validation and when do I need to do it?

A. Validation is an online process that verifies that your copy of Windows is genuine and that critical Windows licensing files have not been damaged, deleted, or removed. It takes only a few moments and lets Microsoft create a match between your PC's hardware profile and your 25-character product key, which is usually located on the Certificate of Authenticity (COA). This match is anonymously archived so it can be checked against future activation and validation attempts and helps make sure that the Windows product key installed on your PC matches the original Windows product key that was purchased. In this way, validation helps ensure that your product key is not used by another person in a malicious manner, such as activating a counterfeit or non-genuine copy of Windows. Microsoft might ask you to validate after Windows activation, when you request a genuine Windows download from the Microsoft Download Center, or when requesting a non-security-related download from Windows Update. No personally identifiable information is collected during validation.

You may notice that some downloads have icons next to their names in the Download Center. Each of these downloads also has a highlighted section about Windows validation just below the Quick Details box on the download details page. These downloads require validation of Windows, which helps to ensure that Windows users receive all the benefits of running authentic and fully licensed copies of Windows. To access a download that requires validation, follow the appropriate process:

- If you see a Download button or link, click the button or link to download the file.
- If you see a Continue button or link, click the button or link and follow the instructions that are provided. After the validation process is complete, you will be returned to the download details page with the Download button displayed. If Windows cannot be validated, you will receive additional instructions.

Q. What is a Certificate of Authenticity (COA) label?

A. A Certificate of Authenticity (COA) label helps you and your customers identify genuine Microsoft Windows software. Without it, your customers will not have a legal license to run their Windows software.

Each COA label includes advanced anti-counterfeiting features to help verify the software's authenticity. The COA label is included with each individual software license. For preinstalled Microsoft Windows operating systems, the COA label must be affixed by the system builder to the PC chassis. The COA label also includes the product key, which will be needed in the event the operating system needs to be reinstalled. COA labels must be distributed as part of the full System Builder Software License, which also includes the hologram CD and documentation. **A COA is not a software license.** It is a visual aid that helps in determining whether Microsoft software is genuine. A COA should never be purchased, sold, or distributed by itself without the software it authenticates. COA labels cannot be distributed as standalone items. For more information, visit the COA, Recovery Media, and Security Features page.

Q. How can I get a replacement COA?

A. The After-Market Fulfillment Program supporting System Builders with replacement orders for damaged Certificates of Authenticity (COAs) and recovery media through the OEM Partner Center (OPC) retired on **April 15, 2016**.

Complimentary software recovery can now be downloaded at www.microsoft.com/software-download/home.

Alternatively, System Builders should request replacement of damaged COAs through their distributors.

Physical recovery media can also be ordered for a fee at Microsoft Customer Support. Use the following contact information based on location:

- United States: (800) 360-7561
- Canada: (800) 933-4750
- All other countries must visit Global Customer Service to locate the correct contact number.

Q. What are the Microsoft Software License Terms?

A. An end user who acquires software is acquiring the right to use that software. End users don't "own" the software, which is intellectual property and is generally "owned" by its developers. The right to use the software is governed by the Microsoft Software License Terms—which, in the case of OEM system builder product, is an agreement between the **system builder and the end user**. The Microsoft Software License Terms can typically be found within the software product, and an end user must accept the Microsoft Software License Terms before running the software.

The Microsoft Software License Terms define what end-user rights and restrictions apply to the use of the software, and covers topics such as how the software can be used, whether the license can be transferred, and so on.

Q. What are the different ways that my customers can get legal licenses for Windows desktop operating systems? What about software applications such as Microsoft Office 2016?

A. There are only two ways a customer can get a Windows desktop operating system on a new PC:

- OEM system builder software preinstalled on a PC
- Retail product

Please note that full versions of Windows operating systems are not available through any Microsoft Volume Licensing program.

For application software such as Microsoft Office, customers can acquire licenses through:

- OEM system builder software preinstalled on a new PC sold with either a Product Key Card (PKC) or traditional disc version that corresponds to the desired Office suite
- Product Key Card or traditional disc version purchased at retail
- Microsoft Volume Licensing programs

Q. I get many email solicitations offering "Microsoft software at cheap prices." Is this software legal?

A. Most likely no, this is not legal. Several software counterfeiting operations around the globe are marketing their goods through spam email advertisements. In an attempt to mask their location, these organizations change their names and email addresses daily. The basic contents of the spam message remain the same: "Microsoft software offered at cheap prices."

The advertisers use terms like "OEM software" as an attempt to explain why the offered software is so inexpensive. Microsoft is working to educate customers and partners about the risks of getting software from suspicious sources. We're investigating these spam and counterfeiting operations and trying to stop this activity. Purchasing from known and trusted sources and avoiding "too-good-to-be-true" deals are the best ways to avoid wasting valuable money on counterfeit or infringing software. For more information, see Piracy Basics.

If you are aware of or have suspicions of piracy concerning Microsoft software, we urge you to contact us by email at piracy@microsoft.com or visit http://www.microsoft.com/piracy/reporting.

Additionally, we recommend acquiring Microsoft OEM system builder software from an authorized Microsoft OEM distributor—an assured source of genuine Microsoft software. To find a list of the distributors in your country, visit the Microsoft Authorized OEM Distributors page.

Q. I see products like Windows 8.1 Professional—COA only—advertised for sale. Is this legal?

A. Offers to distribute parts of the OEM system builder software packages are not legal. Under no circumstances are system builders or any other vendors authorized to distribute single OEM system builder software components such as stand-alone Certificates of Authenticity (COAs).

Please note that the Certificate of Authenticity included with each OEM system builder software package authenticates only the software components with which it is legally distributed. As mentioned, any offer to distribute parts of the Microsoft software package (such as the COA only) is not authorized, and any individual who were to obtain parts of the Microsoft software components would not be authorized to use the associated software or redistribute the components. For OEM system builder Windows desktop operating systems, the complete software package must include the COA, hologram CD, and manual(s).

If you are aware of or have suspicions of piracy concerning Microsoft software, we urge you to contact us by email at piracy@microsoft.com or visit http://www.microsoft.com/piracy/reporting.

Additionally, we recommend acquiring Microsoft OEM software from an authorized Microsoft OEM distributor—an assured source of genuine Microsoft software. To find a list of the distributors in your country, visit the Microsoft Authorized OEM Distributors page.

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System builder licensing

Q. What are the different ways in which Microsoft OEM system builder Windows desktop operating system licenses can be distributed?

A. The current OEM System Builder License allows system builders to distribute Windows desktop operating system licenses in the following ways:

1. Preinstalled on a new PC.
2. **Unopened** OEM System Builder Packs can be distributed to other system builders by themselves. Note that they must remain unopened so the receiving system builder can accept and be bound by the break-the-seal license agreement that is affixed to the pack.

Q. Can I provide a computer system to my customer without an operating system (also referred to as a "naked PC")?

A. Yes. There is nothing illegal about selling a computer system without an operating system. However, getting the operating system preinstalled is your customer's most cost-effective way to acquire a genuine Windows operating system license. A customer who subsequently wants to install a Microsoft Windows desktop operating system on that naked PC will need to acquire it through the retail channel, which is a more costly option. Full Windows operating systems are not available through any Microsoft Volume Licensing program, and an OEM operating system license cannot be transferred from an "old" PC to a new one.

Q. Can I create my own recovery disks and sell these with the computer systems that I build? I have heard that direct OEMs can do this, so why can't I?

A. No. System builders may not offer a recovery solution with removable media (such as a recovery CD) because it is prohibited by the terms of the Microsoft OEM System Builder License. A full version of the Windows operating system is provided on a hologram CD in the Microsoft System Builder Pack for each end user, and the CD must be transferred to the end user at the time of distribution. The hologram CD acts as the recovery media.

However, system builders can offer a hard disk recovery solution in addition to, but not as a replacement for, the hologram CD. Third-party software companies can also help system builders do this. Although system builders are allowed to offer a hard disk recovery solution, Microsoft is not developing new technologies or software tools at this time to offer as part of this recovery solution.

System builders are bound by the Microsoft OEM System Builder License, affixed to the side of the System Builder Pack, which is different from the direct agreements used by direct OEMs. The licensing terms for system builders and large OEMs are different because they are designed to address the specific needs of each community. The right to create recovery media is limited to OEMs with direct agreements; however, these OEMs are also bound by other contractual obligations. The OEM System Builder License is designed to make it easy for system builders to acquire and distribute genuine Microsoft software, and accordingly, its terms are different.

Q. Are system builders allowed to create a "ghost image" CD and ship it along with the system for OEM customers?

A. No. System builders may not offer a recovery solution with removable media (a recovery CD, for example)—it is prohibited by the terms of the Microsoft OEM System Builder License. A full version of the Windows operating system is provided on a CD in the Microsoft System Builder Pack for each end user, and the CD must be transferred to the end user at the time of sale. The hologram CD acts as the system builder recovery media.

Please refer to the preceding question for more information.

Q. What are the ADK and OPK and why do I have to use them?

A. System builders who distribute Windows software on a fully assembled PC must preinstall the software on the PC's hard drive using either the Windows Assessment and Deployment Kit (Windows ADK) or the OEM Preinstallation Kit (OPK).

Preinstallation tools ensure that customers will encounter the Windows Out-of-Box Experience (OOBE) and that they receive the opportunity to accept the Microsoft Software License Terms.

Additionally, the ADK and OPK are easy to set up and use, and will save you time versus manual installation. They enable you to add your own shortcuts and branding to the operating system, to test preinstalled PCs without interrupting the preinstallation process, and much more.

Q. We would like to create a computer system using an OEM Windows operating system that has a dual-boot feature. The single system would use the same version of Windows on both boot images/partitions.
Does this require two different licenses, or can I use the same license and product key for both images/partitions, since they are both on a single system that can use only one operating system at a time?

A. A customer who wants Microsoft Windows installed onto two partitions of a computer system will need to obtain two OEM system builder Windows software licenses. OEM software generally does not permit simultaneous usage of a PC by two end users.

Q. Can a PC with an OEM Windows operating system have its motherboard upgraded and keep the same license? What if it was replaced because it was defective?

A. Generally, an end user can upgrade or replace all of the hardware components on a computer—except the motherboard—and still retain the license for the original Microsoft OEM operating system software. If the motherboard is upgraded or replaced for reasons other than a defect, then a new computer has been created. Microsoft OEM operating system software cannot be transferred to the new computer, and the license of new operating system software is required. If the motherboard is replaced because it is defective, you do *not* need to acquire a new operating system license for the PC as long as the replacement motherboard is the same make/model or the same manufacturer's replacement/equivalent, as defined by the manufacturer's warranty.

The reason for this licensing rule primarily relates to the Microsoft Software License Terms and the support of the software covered by those terms. The Microsoft Software License Terms are a set of usage rights granted to the end user by the PC manufacturer, and relate only to rights for that software as installed on that particular PC. The system builder is required to support the software on the original PC. Understanding that end users, over time, upgrade their PCs with different components, Microsoft needed to have one base component "left standing" that would still define the original PC. Since the motherboard contains the CPU and is the "heart and soul" of the PC, when the motherboard is replaced (for reasons other than defect) a new PC is essentially created. The original system builder did not manufacture this new PC, and therefore cannot be expected to support it.

Q. The new COA is shaped differently from the previous COA. How do I apply it for the best coverage?

A. The new COA is designed to adhere smoothly and securely. For optimal results, see the following recommended COA application technique:

- Begin at the "tab" at the right end of the COA. Remove the COA from the backing liner with minimal touching of the adhesive. (The back of the COA has a 17mm adhesive-free band, which is intended to prevent adhesive from surfacing through the new anti-piracy feature.)
- Attach the COA to the surface with initial pressure applied to the left side of the COA. With a sliding motion left to right across the COA, use the pad of your thumb or finger to apply firm, even pressure. In addition to ensuring even attachment of the COA to the surface, the motion across the COA from left to right will help eliminate any pillowing at the adhesive-free area.
- After initial attachment, apply pressure with the back of the hand or pad of the thumb in a sliding motion backward and forward once or twice to fully adhere the COA to the surface.

Q. How does a company qualify to become a direct Microsoft OEM? It seems that the larger companies currently have an unfair advantage compared with smaller OEMs.

A. Direct OEM licensees do receive a discount compared to buying through the system builder channel, but that discount is based on the licensee's commitment to receive ongoing bulk shipments versus purchasing at will. Other elements of the direct licensing agreement require significant initial investment from the OEM. Furthermore, legal and technical requirements are placed on direct OEMs to protect Microsoft intellectual property, and these requirements can add other costs to the production of a PC. The primary difference between the two programs cannot be gauged merely by looking at prices and software licenses. Each program is designed to meet the specific needs of the partner.

Q. I am a reseller of PCs that come preloaded with OEM Windows operating systems. Am I allowed to load Microsoft Office onto these machines?

A. Yes, you may install Microsoft Office software onto the computer systems as long as you do so in compliance with the Microsoft OEM System Builder License. Please note that the preinstallation and software distribution process for Microsoft Office makes it easier to buy and sell than prior versions, with a single image to manage for all Office suites and an intuitive SKU lineup.

Q. Can two or more users access and fully use OEM Windows operating systems concurrently on the same machine?

A. No. The Microsoft Software License Terms do not permit two or more users to concurrently use the full feature sets of Windows operating systems.

However, the Windows Microsoft Software License Terms do allow for a limited number of computers or other electronic devices to connect to the computer upon which the software is installed to use one or more of the following services: File Services, Print Services, Internet Information Services, and telephony services. The Microsoft Software License Terms also permit limited concurrent use in connection with the Remote Assistance and NetMeeting technologies. Please refer to the applicable Microsoft Software License Terms for detailed information regarding such limited concurrent uses.

Q. What can system builders offer their customers as a "legalization solution" for Windows desktop operating systems?

A. Microsoft recognizes that end users sometimes acquire non-genuine Windows operating systems for their PCs and may wish to "get legal" by obtaining genuine software.

To obtain genuine Windows software, end users can do one of the following:

1. Return to their reseller to resolve the issue.
2. Visit the Windows Genuine Advantage website, run the validation wizard, and purchase a download of genuine Windows software.
3. Acquire a retail version of genuine Windows software from a reseller.
4. If eligible, acquire a Get Genuine Kit for Windows software from a reseller.

The Get Genuine Kit is available only for use on fully assembled PCs with a previously installed counterfeit, pirated, or otherwise illegal or unlicensed copy of Windows software.

How it works:

1. A reseller can acquire the Get Genuine Kit from authorized Microsoft OEM distributors.
2. A reseller or an end-user must affix the enclosed Certificate of Authenticity (COA) label to the PC.
3. Microsoft recommends, but does not require, that on the PC, the reseller or the end-user do one of the following:
   - Run the Windows Product Key Update Tool.
   - Perform a reinstall of Windows software.
   - Perform a clean install of Windows software.
4. However, the reseller or the end-user must do one of the above in order to receive updates, upgrades, and support services.

Other facts:

- The Get Genuine Kit is available in single packs.

License	Pack contains
1	1 COA label, 1 media, and 1 Microsoft Software License Terms

- Microsoft supports this software.
- The license is *not* transferable to another PC.

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Windows system builder licensing for personal use

Q. Can I purchase OEM system builder software for personal use?

A. For Windows 8.1, if you are building a PC for your personal use or installing an additional operating system in a virtual machine, you must purchase a full packaged retail product, not OEM system builder software.

Q. Do personal use rights apply to upgrades from Windows 8?

A. If you have a Windows 8 COEM and choose to install an upgrade from the Windows store (free upgrade to Windows 8.1), you preserve any personal use rights that you had under the Windows 8 product.

However, if you choose to purchase a Windows 8.1 COEM license, not only should it not be used for upgrade purpose (it's clearly stated on the break the seal agreement that Windows 8.1 COEM should only be an OEM pre-install product, not for upgrade), it also does not include personal use rights.

Q. Where can I get more information about the Personal Use License?

A. To learn more, visit the Windows system builder licensing for personal use page.

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Microsoft on preinstallation and software returns

Q. When selling a PC to my customers, should it be preinstalled with a Microsoft operating system, and if so, must they use the Microsoft operating system purchased with the PC?

A. Most consumers want PCs that are easy to use and work right out of the box, without the need for specific IT expertise or cumbersome and time-consuming installation processes. Microsoft believes that PCs with a preinstalled operating system, optimized for the needs of these consumers, provide the best possible computing experience and are an effective means to reduce software piracy.

Most computing devices, PCs, netbooks, tablets, or smart phones are perceived by consumers as a single product that includes various hardware and software components. Consumers are accustomed to using these devices without any technical knowledge on how to install an operating system or any additional software to ensure that the device is functioning properly. Accordingly, there is no significant consumer demand for PCs without a preinstalled operating system. Those consumers who ask for PCs without an operating system usually are technical experts or hobbyists.

PC manufacturers, system builders, and retailers are free to choose what kind of PC they want to sell to their customers. They decide whether the PC they sell has a preinstalled

operating system and what kind of software will be preinstalled. The resulting product offerings are again driven by consumer demand. Microsoft does not oblige its partners to sell PCs with Windows preinstalled, nor does it prevent manufacturers, system builders, and retailers from selling PCs with competing operating systems or no operating system at all.

All consumers are free to choose between PCs with the Windows operating system, with a non-Microsoft operating system, or without any operating system at all. The PC market offers a wide variety of all types of products.

Consumers who purchase a PC with a Microsoft operating system preinstalled do not have to use this operating system. They can choose to reject the Microsoft Software Licensing Terms and may contact the manufacturer to determine its return policy. The manufacturer is free to set its return policy, which might require the consumer to return either the operating system software only or the entire system on which the software is installed. Microsoft only requires the manufacturer to put in place a return policy, and does not dictate how the manufacturer deals with returns. That policy is solely determined by the manufacturer.

Refurbished/used PCs

Q. What is the difference between a refurbished PC and a used PC?

A. A refurbished PC is a computer system that has had substantial hardware modifications that may require a new operating system license—because the modifications have essentially created a "new" PC.

Generally, an end user can upgrade or replace all of the hardware components on a computer—*except* the motherboard—and still retain the license for the original Microsoft OEM operating system software. If the motherboard is upgraded or replaced for reasons other than a defect, then a new computer has been created. Microsoft OEM operating system software cannot be transferred to the new computer, and the license of new operating system software is required.

If the motherboard is replaced because it is defective, you do *not* need to acquire a new operating system license for the PC as long as the replacement motherboard is the same make/model or the same manufacturer's replacement/equivalent, as defined by the manufacturer's warranty.

A used PC is a computer system that has had few or no hardware changes. The license for OEM software on a used PC may not be transferred to a new or different PC. However, the entire used PC, including the software media, manuals, and Certificate of Authenticity, may be transferred to another end user along with the software license rights.

Q. Can I sell secondhand computer systems with the original Microsoft software, or will a new license be required before selling?

A. Please look at the Microsoft Software License Terms to find out which type of license has been issued for the Microsoft software on the computer system and check the provisions relating to transfer. To find and read the Microsoft Software License Terms, click **Start**, click **Help and Support**, and search for "Read the Microsoft Software License".

Generally speaking, in the case of OEM or OEM system builder software, the license may not be transferred to a new or different PC. However, the entire used PC, including the software media, manuals, and Certificate of Authenticity, may be transferred to another end user along with the software license rights.

Q. If my customer asks me to upgrade a PC with new hardware components, when is a new operating system needed? When would the PC be considered "new"?

A. Generally, an end user can upgrade or replace all of the hardware components on a computer—*except* the motherboard—and still retain the license for the original Microsoft OEM operating system software. If the motherboard is upgraded or replaced for reasons other than a defect, then a new computer has been created. Microsoft OEM operating system software cannot be transferred to the new computer, and the license of new operating system software is required.

If the motherboard is replaced because it is defective, you do *not* need to acquire a new operating system license for the PC as long as the replacement motherboard is the same make/model or the same manufacturer's replacement/equivalent, as defined by the manufacturer's warranty.

Q. Can a system builder install Microsoft OEM software on a refurbished computer system, which may include branded PCs, such as Hewlett-Packard and Compaq?

A. Yes, as long as the system builder complies with the OEM System Builder License requirements for preinstallation and distribution of the OEM Microsoft software licenses, and the customer accepts the Microsoft Software License Terms. For more information, visit the OEM System Builder License page.

Q. If I need to reinstall the operating system on a machine from a direct OEM, such as Dell, that my customer has brought in. How should I do this?

A. A customer who wants you to reinstall Windows must provide recovery media from the direct OEM, because the software is licensed to the customer for use on that PC by that OEM. You cannot use your own OEM system builder media to reinstall the operating system, or any other version of media (such as TechNet, MSDN, or Action Pack), because these versions differ from the original OEM Windows license your customer acquired from the direct OEM. A customer who doesn't have a backup copy of the software for reinstallation will need to contact the original OEM and request replacement recovery media; you can use that media to reinstall the operating system on that machine.

Downgrade rights

Q. What are downgrade rights and how would my customer benefit from them?

A. Downgrade rights refer to the ability of your customers to acquire the most recent version of Microsoft software but continue to run a previous version until they are ready to upgrade. Downgrade rights are an end-user right and are documented in the product Microsoft Software License Terms.

Q. Where can I find out more about downgrade rights?

A. For information about downgrade rights, visit the Understanding downgrade rights page.

Q. Who can install the downgrade software or reinstall the original software?

A. A system builder (when authorized by the end user) or the end user. Because downgrade rights are an end-user right granted in the Microsoft Software License Terms, the end user must first be able to accept the Microsoft Software License Terms associated with Windows or Windows Server software. Therefore, this software must be installed first before the downgrade software is installed.

Q. Where do end users get the CD/media to install the downgrade software?

A. End users must install the downgrade software using a legally licensed copy of the specified previous version of the Windows desktop or server operating system. The downgrade software may be from the retail, OEM system builder, or Volume Licensing channels.

Q. Can end users use both the latest version and the downgrade software at the same time?

A. No. End users may install and use only one Microsoft operating system (either the downgrade software or the applicable Windows or Windows Server software at any given time.

Q. Can end users return to Windows or Windows Server software after they downgrade?

A. Yes. End users who downgrade may reinstall the original software when they are ready to migrate. For example, an end user who downgrades to Windows 7 Professional may later return to Windows 8.1 Pro software, provided that the end user deletes the Windows 7 Professional software from the PC.

Q. How do end users reinstall the original software after downgrading?

A. End users must use the original system builder media that was included with the PC or server for reinstallation. The downgrade software must be deleted from the hard drive before the original software is reinstalled.

Q. Does Microsoft Office contain downgrade rights to a previous version?

A. No, downgrade rights are not available for Microsoft Office Product Key Cards or traditional disc versions.

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Activation

Q. What is product activation?

A. Product activation technology is aimed at reducing software piracy as well as ensuring that Microsoft customers receive the product quality that they expect.

Q. Which customers and products are required to activate?

A. All customers who acquire retail packaged products or OEM system builder products are required to activate the software. The software on a new PC from a system builder may be activated by the system builder. Product activation will not be required for licenses acquired by a customer through a Microsoft Volume Licensing program, such as Open License or Select License. Under these Volume Licensing programs, customers will be given a Volume License Key that will bypass activation.

Q. How does Microsoft product activation work?

A. Product activation works by validating that the software's product key, required as part of product installation, has not been used on more PCs than is allowed by the software's license. The product key and the product ID (created from the product key used during installation) are sent along with a "hardware hash" (a non-unique number generated from the PC's hardware configuration) to the Microsoft activation system during activation. Activation is completed either directly via the Internet or by a telephone call to a customer service representative. Most customer service centers are open 24 hours.

Q. What do I do if a customer returns a computer system that I sold, but the customer has activated the OEM system builder Windows software?

A. In this situation, we recommend:

- If the returned PC can be resold to another end user without any changes to the hardware components, you may resell it to another end user. You will need to remove the activated software and install it again, as the "new" end user must see and accept the Microsoft Software License Terms and enjoy the Out-of-Box Experience. The end user should not have any problems using the same product key to activate the software again, because the computer system configuration hasn't changed.
- If significant changes have occurred to the computer system's hardware components, you should remove the activated software and reinstall it. The "new" end user must see and accept the Microsoft Software License Terms and enjoy the Windows Out-of-Box Experience. You will also need to inform the "new" end user that the Windows software program was activated by the original purchaser. Microsoft also recommends that you instruct the end user to use the telephone call center activation method rather than the Internet method, so the user can talk to the customer service agent and explain what happened. The call center personnel have been notified that this may happen and can reactivate the software using the new PC hardware configuration data.
- There is a 30-day grace period before a Microsoft OEM system builder Windows desktop operating system needs to be activated. Additionally, if you wish to sell the returned computer, you will need to "roll back" the system so that the customer can accept the Microsoft Software License Terms and activate the software. Please refer to the Windows Assessment and Deployment Kit (Windows ADK) or OEM Preinstallation Kit (OPK) for information on preinstallation and what can be done to "roll back" the computer system.

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Volume Licensing

Q. Where can I get more information about Microsoft Volume Licensing programs?

A. Microsoft Volume Licensing programs are designed for organizations that need multiple copies of Microsoft software, and are economical ways to acquire anywhere from five to thousands of software licenses. Microsoft Volume Licensing programs include Open License, Select License, Enterprise Agreement, and Enterprise Subscription Agreement. For more information, visit the Volume Licensing page.

Q. What is Software Assurance (SA)?

A. Software Assurance is an offering for Microsoft Volume Licensing customers that provides customers with benefits such as the ability to spread payments over three years, new version rights, support, tools, and training. (Software Assurance availability and benefits vary by Volume Licensing program and region.) For a Customer Guide and more details, visit the Software Assurance for Volume Licensing page. Customers must enroll their existing licenses into Software Assurance to begin receiving SA benefits.

Q. Do I need to register as a Volume Licensing reseller to offer Software Assurance to my customers?

A. That depends on the Volume Licensing program. In regions where Open License is offered, any reseller can work through an authorized Microsoft distributor to offer Software Assurance to customers through the Open License program. To offer Open License Value (available in the United States, Canada, and Japan only), you need to register as a Microsoft Software Advisor.

Q. I don't currently offer volume licenses. How do I become registered to offer Open License Business, Open License Volume, or Open License Value?

A. In order to offer Open License Business, Open License Volume, and Multi-Year Open Volume agreements, you can order directly from a distributor. For more information, visit the Volume Licensing page.

Q. My customer wants to purchase a "naked" PC from me and acquire the Windows license through a Volume Licensing agreement. Is this OK?

A. No. Full Windows licenses are not available through any Microsoft Volume Licensing program, including academic volume licenses. The customer must first acquire a Windows operating system license via OEM software included with a new PC from an OEM or system builder, or via the retail channel.

Q. If a school enters into a Microsoft Academic Volume Licensing agreement (Campus, School, Open, Select), does that mean it is licensed for a full Microsoft operating system, such as Windows?

A. No. Microsoft Volume Licensing agreements license a school or institution only for an upgrade of Windows. No Academic Volume License covers the full Windows operating system.

Q. If a school has an Academic Volume Licensing agreement, such as Campus, that currently covers a Windows upgrade, does it still need a license that covers the full Windows operating system as well?

A. Yes. Academic agreements, including Campus, cover only the upgrade—not the full Windows operating system. Schools are required to have a separate license that covers the initial full Windows operating system license.

Q. If a school has an Academic Volume Licensing agreement and purchases a new PC, is it legal for the school to purchase a "naked" PC and use its Academic Volume License to install the full operating system?

A. No. Microsoft Academic Volume Licensing agreements license a school or institution only to upgrade a previously acquired full version of a Windows operating system. No academic volume license allows a school to install the full initial operating system on a new computer.

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Additional resources

Q. My licensing question wasn't answered in this FAQ. Where can I get additional help?

A. If your licensing question wasn't answered, you can contact a Licensing specialist by visiting the Volume Licensing page.

Further assistance with your System Builder Licensing question is available through our Licensing Forums. The OEM Reseller Support System provides a direct link to Microsoft support engineers and technical experts who provide unlimited, text-based support through the OEM Reseller and System Builder Forums.

This content is available in other languages. Select a language below to navigate to a page with the translated version of this content.

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Device Partner Center