

Base and Additive CALs

Licensing guidance

Summary

This guidance explains how you use Base and Additive Client Access License (CALs) to license access to base and advanced Microsoft server software features and capabilities.

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Licensing models

Client Access Licenses (CALs) are applicable to server products licensed under the Server/CAL and Per Core/CAL licensing models. Under these models you license your use of the server software via Server or Core licenses, and you separately license access to that server software via CALs. CALs themselves do not provide any software or services; they simply provide the right to access server software.

CALs are typically available on a per user or per device basis. User CALs permit the licensed user to access the server software from any device, whereas Device CALs permit any user to access the server software from the licensed device.

Overview of base and Additive CALs

Server software typically includes base functionality and advanced functionality. The required CAL for the server product depends on the functionality being accessed.

Base CALs

Base CALs are the minimum requirement for accessing any of the applicable server product's functionality. For example, anyone in your organization accessing any Exchange Server functionality requires an Exchange Server Standard CAL, which is the Base CAL for Exchange Server and Windows Server CAL, which is the Base CAL for Windows Server.

Additive CALs

Access to advanced functionality associated with an Additive CAL requires the appropriate Additive CAL in addition to the Base CAL.

For example, accessing in-place archiving or holds or any other [additional functionality associated with Exchange Server Enterprise CAL](#) (the Additive CAL for Exchange Server), requires both Exchange Server Standard CAL and Exchange Server Enterprise CAL. Likewise, remote access to Window Server requires Windows Server Remote Desktop Services CAL (an Additive CAL for Windows Server) in addition to Windows Server CAL. You can find the information in the Product Terms [Additional Functionality Associated with Windows Server 2025 Remote Desktop Services CAL](#).

Access to multiple server editions

Base and Additive CALs are tied to the specific functionalities they enable access to and not the different editions of the server software. For example, Exchange Server Standard CAL licenses access to base functionality whether provided via Exchange Server Standard or Exchange Server Enterprise, and Exchange Server Enterprise CAL licenses access to additional functionality whether provided via Exchange Server Standard or Exchange Server Enterprise. In this sense, Standard CALs and Enterprise CALs are associated with base functionality and additive functionality respectively as opposed to being associated with the Standard and Enterprise editions of the server software.

How to determine when base and Additive CALs are required

You can determine the base and Additive CAL requirements by referring to the "Access Licenses" section of the Product Terms for the specific server product. For example, the [Access License section of the Product Terms for Exchange Server](#) looks like this:

Access Licenses

Server Software Access

Base Access License
Exchange Server 2019 Standard CAL
Exchange Online (Plan 1/1G/2/2A/2G) User SL
CAL Equivalent License (refer CAL and ML Equivalency Licenses)

Additional Functionality Associated with Exchange Enterprise CAL

In-Place Archive, In-Place Holds (Indefinite, Query-based, and Time-based), Information Protection and Compliance, Custom Retention Policies, Per User/Distribution List Journaling, Site Mailboxes – Compliance, Data Loss Prevention

Additive Access License
Exchange Server 2019 Enterprise CAL
Exchange Online (Plan 2/2A/2G) User SL
CAL Equivalent License (refer CAL and ML Equivalency Licenses)

This section reflects that there are both Base and Additive CALs for Exchange Server. Further it lists “Additional Functionality Associated with Exchange Enterprise CAL” which tells you when you need the Additive CAL in addition to the Base CAL.

Options for acquiring base and Additive CALs

The tables in the “Access Licenses” section of the Product Terms for the specific server product also reflect that you have multiple options for fulfilling the CAL requirements, including:

- CALs for individual server products.** You can purchase individual, standalone CALs for a server product. For example, you can see from the tables above that Exchange Server Standard CAL meets the Base CAL requirements for Exchange Server and Exchange Server Enterprise CAL meets the Additive CAL requirements.
- CAL Suites.** Instead of buying individual CALs, you can opt for a CAL Suite that bundles several CALs (and MLs) together. The Core CAL Suite is primarily composed of Base CALs and the Enterprise CAL Suite includes all those same Base CALs as well as Additive CALs. For example, the Core CAL includes Exchange Server Standard CAL along with Base CALs other server products and the Enterprise CAL Suite includes both Exchange Server Standard CAL and Exchange Server Enterprise CAL along with base and Additive CALs for other server products. Whether purchased individually or through a CAL Suite, the access rights are the same. Refer to the [CAL and ML Equivalency Licenses section of the Product Terms](#) to see which CALs and MLs are included in the Core CAL Suite and Enterprise CAL Suite, and to the [CAL Suites licensing guidance](#) for more information.
- User Subscription Licenses for individual online services.** User Subscription Licenses (SLs) for certain online services also meet the base and Additive CAL requirements. For instance, the tables above reflect that Exchange Online (Plan 1/1G/2/2A/2G) User SL meets

the Exchange Server Base CAL requirement, and an Exchange Online (Plan 2/2A/2G) User SL meets the Exchange Server Additive CAL requirement.

- 4. User Subscription Licenses for online services suites.** Like CAL Suites, you can also purchase User Subscription Licenses for a suite of online services which provide access to server products in addition to the included online services. For example, Microsoft 365 E3 includes Exchange Online Plan 2, so it meets the base and Additive CAL requirements for Exchange Server. Refer to the [CAL and ML Equivalency Licenses section of the Product Terms](#) to see which CAL and ML equivalents are included in the various online services subscription suites.

External user access

You can also refer to the Product Terms for the specific server product to determine what, if any, requirements there are for licensing server access for external users and the options for meeting those requirements. For this, refer to the "Use Rights" section. For example, the [Use Rights section of the Product Terms for Exchange Server](#) includes this table:

Use Rights

Use Rights	
License Terms	Universal License Terms for all Software
Down Editions	Enterprise to Standard
External User Access Requirements	Licensed with Server (access to Additional Functionality requires both Base and Additive CALs)
Included Technologies	None
Notices	None

You can see in this table that for Exchange Server "External User Access Requirements" are "Licensed with Server (access to Additional Functionality requires both Base and Licensed with Server (access to Additional Functionality requires both Base and Additive CALs)"

This means that the Base CAL rights for external users are included with the Exchange Server license, so Base CALs are not required. However, access to the Additional Functionality (as listed in the "Access Rights" section explained earlier) requires the external user to be licensed with both the Base CAL and the Additive CAL."

External Connector licenses

For some server products, you have the option to license all access by external users through one license per server called an External Connector license. For example, the [Use Rights section of the Product Terms for Windows Server Standard, Datacenter, and Essentials](#) lists "CALs or

External Connector" as options for meeting External User Access Requirements. Under "[Server External User Access](#)" in the [Access License](#) section, you will find the specific External Connector licenses associated with the Base and Additive CALs for Windows Server.

Interactions with other products

When licensing access to Microsoft server products, you need to license access to both the server operating system (Windows Server) and the server applications (such as Exchange Server, SharePoint Server, etc.) being accessed.

Frequently asked questions

1. Are premium services CALs the same as Additive CALs??

Yes, Additive CALs are also known as "premium" or "premium services" CALs. This terminology was updated to be more descriptive and to reduce confusion with online services.

2. Do I need more than one Additive CAL per user or device to access the same functionality running on more than one server?

No, you only need one user or device Additive CAL to use the services on any number of your licensed servers. For example, a Remote Desktop Services User CAL allows one user to access Remote Desktop Services functionality on any of your servers licensed for Windows Server.

3. Do Additive CALs work with only specific editions of server software, such as Standard Edition or Enterprise Edition, or do they work with any edition?

Generally, Additive CALs allow access to any edition of the server software. For example, Exchange Server comes in both Standard Edition and Enterprise Edition. You can use the Exchange Standard CAL and Exchange Enterprise CAL with either edition of the server software.

4. Do all CALs have the same licensing terms? Are all CALs licensed in the same way?

Most CALs follow the same licensing terms outlined in this guide. However, some server products have specific terms for external user access licensing. Please visit the [Microsoft Product Terms site](#) to review the License Model for each Microsoft server software product that requires CALs.

5. Can a single-server product have multiple Additive CALs?

Yes, a single-server product can have multiple Additive CALs. For example, Windows Server includes both Windows Active Directory Rights Management Services and Remote Desktop Services. Each of these services requires separate device and/or user CALs when used by a customer.

6. Do Additive CALs come with the Core CAL Suite? For example, do Core CAL Suite customers receive rights to Remote Desktop Services and Active Directory Rights Management Services?

No, the Core CAL Suite does not include Additive CALs. Customers need to license Additive CALs separately when they use the corresponding functionality. However, you can use Additive CALs alongside the Core CAL Suite if the Core CAL Suite includes the corresponding Base CAL.

7. What Additive CALs come with the Enterprise CAL Suite and the Core CAL Suite?

Please see the CAL and ML Equivalency Licenses section for a current list of base and Additive CALs included in the Core CAL Suite and Enterprise CAL Suite.

8. Is the Enterprise CAL Suite an Additive CAL to the Core CAL Suite?

No, CAL Suites are not Additive. The Enterprise CAL Suite includes the components of the Core CAL Suite, allowing customers to purchase it without needing to buy the Core CAL Suite separately. Core CAL Suite licensees can purchase a separate "step-up" license to convert their Core CAL Suite license into an Enterprise CAL Suite license.

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