

Software reimaging rights

Licensing guidance

Summary

Reimaging is the copying of software onto multiple devices from one consistent image. Reimaging rights are granted to Microsoft Commercial Licensing customers buying licenses under Enterprise Agreements, Microsoft Products and Services Agreements (MPSA), Open License, Open Value agreements, and Campus and School agreements (CASA). Under these rights, customers can reimage original equipment manufacturer (OEM) or full-package product (FPP) licensed devices using media provided under their Commercial Licensing agreement. However, certain conditions exist for using Commercial Licensing media for reimaging software that is previously installed either by the OEM or from FPP.

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Reimaging rights

When you license software through Microsoft Commercial Licensing programs, you benefit from the right to use Commercial Licensing media to deploy the same standard image of software across multiple licensed devices. It does not matter whether you licensed those devices under that particular Commercial Licensing program, through an OEM, or through retail channels, as long as you follow certain eligibility rules.

Reimaging rights eligibility

Reimaging rights, if applicable, are granted in your Commercial Licensing agreement. You are permitted to reimage only if the products licensed under an eligible Commercial Licensing program (and fulfilled with Commercial Licensing media) are identical to the licensed product you wish to reimage. If you have licensed the same Microsoft software products from an OEM, through a retail source, or under an agreement other than an eligible Microsoft Commercial Licensing agreement, you can exercise your reimaging rights under those separately sourced licenses using copies made from Microsoft Commercial Licensing media. This means the products licensed through the two sources are the same product, version, and edition; contain the same components; and are in the same language. Rights to reimage a device using a different version or edition of software than what was originally licensed may be granted in some programs via downgrade rights and/or license migration rights. You can find rights to image a device with different versions/editions of software and any exceptions to these requirements in the product-specific entries in the [Product Terms](#).

The following are examples that do not meet the eligibility criteria for reimaging:

- **Different products:** Windows Server Standard and Windows Server Essentials are different editions of the product and cannot be reimaged. This also applies to the Windows Pro and Windows Enterprise operating systems and Microsoft 365 Apps for enterprise and Office Professional Plus.
- **Different components:** The Microsoft Office system suites must have the same component products. For instance, Microsoft Office Standard licensed through the OEM, system builder, or FPP channel and Microsoft Office Professional Plus licensed through Microsoft Commercial Licensing are not the same product. They also do not share the same components. Therefore, you cannot reimage in this example.
- **Different languages:** English and Multilingual User Interface (MUI) Packs are not the same language. Also, different languages such as English and French do not meet the criteria. Therefore, you cannot reimage in these examples.

Different versions: Windows Server 2012 R2 and Windows Server 2012 are not the same version, just as the Windows 8.1 Professional and Windows 10 Enterprise operating systems are not the same version or edition. Therefore, you cannot reimage among these examples. (See Windows Desktop Operating System section below.)

Reimaging in Open License and Open Value Programs

You must purchase at least one license of the Microsoft software that you want to reimage under your Open License authorization number or Microsoft Open Value or Microsoft Open Value Subscription Agreement number. This purchase is required to obtain the media and necessary Volume Licensing Keys (VLK[s]). You may use this media to reimage as many devices as you have licenses for, subject to the reimaging eligibility requirements described above.

Reimaging of the Windows Desktop Operating System

Microsoft Commercial Licensing programs do not offer licenses for the full version of the Windows desktop operating system. However, the *media* for the full version is available to customers who license Windows via a Windows Upgrade license in any Commercial Licensing program. Reimaging by using Commercial Licensing full-version media requires that customers have licensed a Qualifying Windows desktop operating system either preinstalled through an OEM or System Builder, as an FPP retail product, or through other Microsoft programs. Commercial Licensing customers can use their Commercial Licensing full version media to reimage their Windows desktop operating system from an OEM only if it is the same product and version that came with the PC. Rights to reimage by using a different version or edition may be granted in the EULA that came with your OEM version of Windows, your Commercial Licensing agreement, or in some Commercial Licensing programs specified in the [Product Terms](#).

The following table summarizes differences between OEM, FPP, and Commercial Licensing Windows Operating system licenses:

Purchasing channel	Windows Reimaging Rights	Details
Commercial Licensing	Yes	You may use Commercial Licensing media to reimage any device properly licensed to run what it is being reimaged with.
OEM	Yes	You may use an OEM recovery image on devices shipped by that OEM if the device is appropriately licensed.
FPP (Retail)	No	You may use FPP media only on the device licensed with the FPP license.

The following clarifies reimaging rights for the Windows Desktop operating system:

- **Using Commercial Licensing media to reimage.** You can use Commercial Licensing Windows Desktop operating system media to reimage devices if all devices being reimaged are licensed for the edition and version of Windows being reimaged onto them. Note that each device being reimaged does not need to be licensed under Commercial Licensing if they are properly licensed for the edition and version being reimaged onto them.
 - **Downgrade Rights: Using Commercial Licensing media to reimage a device with an OEM license.** If you have OEM devices imaged with a Pro version of the Windows Desktop Operating System, you may have limited downgrade rights. For example, if you purchase a PC from an OEM with Windows 11 Pro, you have the right to downgrade to Windows 10 Pro. You can use Commercial Licensing media to take advantage of these downgrade rights. In this example, you can use Commercial Licensing Windows 10 Pro bits to reimage any of your devices licensed for Windows 10 Pro, either with an OEM Windows 10 Pro license or via OEM downgrade rights granted in the Windows 10 Pro OEM EULAs.
 - **Downgrade Rights: Using Commercial Licensing media to reimage a device with a Commercial Licensing license.** If you have devices assigned a Commercial Licensing Windows Pro or Enterprise Upgrade license, you have full downgrade rights. You can use Commercial Licensing media to take advantage of these downgrade rights.
- **Using OEMs or Other Third Parties to Reimage Devices with Commercial Licensing Media.** Many organizations want to deploy a standard image across multiple devices shipped from different OEMs. You can use OEM media (including custom OEM images) to reimage devices, but only those that were originally imaged with such media. Thus, OEM images cannot be used in the scenario where you wish to deploy a standard image across

multiple devices shipped from different OEMs. You may contract with an OEM (or other third parties) to reimage devices with Windows Desktop operating system media licensed and procured through Commercial Licensing on your behalf if the devices are licensed with a Qualifying Operating System. When you contract with an OEM to install Commercial Licensing media on your behalf, the devices procured from the OEM still have underlying OEM licenses and should come with OEM recovery media (even though you never had possession of the devices with the original OEM media installed on them). You are free to contract with multiple OEMs and/or third parties to leverage Commercial Licensing reimagining rights in this manner and create a standard Windows Desktop operating system image that can be deployed across multiple device types.

Note: Any Microsoft software contained in the product pool media received under your Commercial Licensing agreement and licensed through sources outside Commercial Licensing is covered by these reimagining rights subject to the eligibility requirements.

OEM-specific Information

When you want to recover your systems using OEM media or OEM custom images, you can use OEM media to individually recover an image to a device using the recovery media provided by the OEM. The OEM recovery media should match the product version that was originally preinstalled on the system, may only be used to image devices that came with it, and may not be modified before recovering an image to a device.

- **Using OEM media to reimage:** You can use OEM media (including custom OEM images) to reimage devices, but only those devices that were originally imaged with such media.
- **Downgrading and reimagining:** If your OEM version of Windows includes the right to use a prior version of the software, you can downgrade. For example, instead of using Windows 11 Pro, you can use Windows 10 Pro. If the earlier version includes different components, any terms for those components in the agreement that come with the earlier version apply to your use of such components. Neither the manufacturer or installer, nor Microsoft, is obligated to supply earlier versions to you. You must obtain the earlier version separately. Note: You must follow all other reimagining terms when using a prior version of the software.

Frequently asked questions

1. What is Microsoft Commercial Licensing media?

Microsoft Commercial Licensing media means a web-based download of Microsoft Commercial Licensing Products from the [Microsoft 365 Admin Center](#) or Microsoft Commercial Licensing CD/DVD Disk Kits.

2. What happens to support and warranty coverage for Microsoft software licensed through a finished goods channel that is reimaged with Commercial Licensing media?

Microsoft Commercial Licensing programs are separate from the support offerings available from Microsoft and its sales partners. You should investigate the contractual and support implications with your OEM before reimaging. You are not entitled to Microsoft support because of reimaging by using Microsoft Commercial Licensing media. In addition, you should discuss any impact to your existing warranty and support coverage with your current warranty and support provider.

3. Why is Microsoft Office licensed through Microsoft Commercial Licensing different from the Microsoft Office licensed through OEM, retail (FPP), or other sales channels?

Microsoft Office products licensed through Microsoft Commercial Licensing programs are enterprise products with a different user interface, bypass enablement, and IT management tools.

4. Under what circumstances may I use my Windows Enterprise Commercial Licensing media to reimage an OEM PC licensed for Windows Pro that is not covered by Microsoft Software Assurance or a Windows Enterprise Upgrade license?

A Windows Enterprise license (per user or per device) is needed to reimage a device with Windows Enterprise. If the device is only licensed for Windows Pro, it would not be eligible to be reimaged with Windows Enterprise.

5. I have a user licensed for Windows under the per user model and their PC is reimaged with Windows Enterprise. What happens if the Windows per User subscription expires or the user leaves the company?

If the employee leaves the company and the device is given to another eligible Windows per User licensed employee for use only by that employee or other similarly licensed employees, there is no need to remove the software. Otherwise, if non-licensed users use the device, it will need to be licensed with Windows Software Assurance per Device. If you terminate

Windows Enterprise per User, you are required to revert the PC back to its original licensed operating system.

6. Do I have the right to reimage if I do not have Software Assurance?

Yes. All Microsoft Commercial Licensing customers, regardless of whether they have Software Assurance, can reimage if the eligibility requirements for reimaging are met.

7. How do I get the VLKs needed to reimage my product?

As a Commercial Licensing customer, the VLKs you need should be automatically assigned through the [Microsoft 365 Admin Center](#). If not, you can request your key through Microsoft [Activation Call Centers](#). Note that if you are an Open License or Open Value customer, you must purchase at least one unit of the licensed product that you want to reimage to obtain access to the product media and receive a key.

8. I want to reimage my OEM Windows Pro PCs by using the Multiple Activation Key (MAK) rather than the Key Management Service (KMS). How do I obtain more activation keys, if needed?

First, check how many activations are associated with the Windows MAK by going to the [Microsoft 365 Admin Center](#), product key page, or by using the [Volume Activation Management Tool](#) (VAMT). If you need more activations, call the Activation Call Center and state the reason or email makadd@microsoft.com and include your agreement information, customer name and contact information, business justification for the additional activations requested (for example, reimaging), the product key, and the number of additional activations you would like to add to the key.

9. Do I have the right to reimage with a prior version of my licensed product?

You may reimage with a prior version if the license terms for the software that you want to reimage permit you to use a prior version in place of the licensed version. The eligibility requirements as stated above regarding product and version, components, and language apply.

10. I have a 32-bit OEM PC running Windows Pro. Can I reimage it to 64-bit Windows Pro with 64-bit Commercial Licensing media?

Yes. You can reimage between a 32-bit and 64-bit platform if they are the same product and version, contain the same components, and are in the same language.

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