

Reimaging licensed Microsoft software by using Commercial Licensing media

This brief applies to most Microsoft Commercial Licensing programs.

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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 and Open Value agreements, Campus and School agreements, and Select Plus. 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.

What's new in this brief

This brief replaces a previous version published in April 2014. It has been updated to reflect Windows Software Assurance per User licensing and to reflect that Microsoft now refers to the Volume Licensing agreements formerly in this brief as Commercial Licensing agreements

Details

Benefits

Customers licensing software through Microsoft Commercial Licensing programs 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 those devices are licensed under that particular Commercial Licensing program, through an OEM, or through retail channels, so long as certain eligibility rules are followed. Using standard images can help with the following:

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- ▶ More agile software deployment
- ▶ Reduced total cost of ownership (TCO) through easier deployment
- ▶ Standardized software across devices and streamlined product activation

Reimaging eligibility

Reimaging rights, if applicable, are granted in a customer's Commercial Licensing agreement. Reimaging is permitted only if the products licensed under an eligible Commercial Licensing program (and fulfilled with Commercial Licensing media) are identical to the licensed product the customer wishes to reimage. Commercial Licensing customers who 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 can exercise their 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. Rights to image a device with different versions/editions of software can be found in the Product Terms. Any exceptions to these requirements are addressed in the product 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 Office 365 ProPlus 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.)

Commercial Licensing: 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](#).

Reimaging licensed Microsoft software by using Commercial Licensing media

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

Reimaging Rights—using media to image multiple PCs	
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.
Commercial Licensing	Yes, you may use Commercial Licensing media to reimage any device properly licensed to run what it is being reimaged with.

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

- ▶ **Using Commercial Licensing media to reimage.** Commercial Licensing Windows Desktop operating system media may be used to reimage devices if all devices being reimaged are licensed for the edition and version of Windows being reimaged onto them. (Note: 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.** OEM devices imaged with a Pro version of the Windows Desktop Operating System sometimes include limited downgrade rights. For example, customers purchasing a PC from an OEM with Windows 10 Pro have the right to downgrade to Windows 7 Professional. If a Commercial Licensing customer wants to take advantage of these downgrade rights they may do so and use Commercial Licensing media. In this example, Commercial Licensing Windows 7 Professional bits may be used to reimage any of the customer's devices licensed for Windows 7 Professional (either with an OEM Windows 7 Professional 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.** Devices assigned a Commercial Licensing Windows Pro or Enterprise Upgrade license have full downgrade rights. If a Commercial Licensing customer wants to take advantage of these downgrade rights, they may do so and use Commercial Licensing media. A chart depicting downgrade rights for the Pro and Enterprise editions of Windows is available in the [Windows 10 Commercial Licensing Guide](#).
- ▶ **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. OEM media (including custom OEM images) may be used to reimage devices, but only those that were originally imaged with such media. Thus, OEM images cannot be used in the scenario where an organization wishes 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. Details are available through the [Product Licensing Search](#) (under **Document Type**, click **Windows License Verification**). When a customer contracts with an OEM to install Commercial Licensing media on the its behalf, the devices procured from the OEM still have underlying OEM licenses and should come with OEM recovery media (even though the customer never had possession of the devices with the original OEM media installed on them). The customer is free to contract with multiple OEMs and/or third parties to leverage Commercial Licensing reimaging rights in this manner. The customer is thus able to 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 reimaging rights subject to the eligibility requirements.

OEM-specific information

Reimaging is the copying of software onto multiple devices from one standard image. Organizations that want to recover their systems by using OEM media or OEM custom images may only do so as follows: OEM media may be used to individually recover an image to a device using recovery media provided by the OEM. The OEM recovery media (1) should match the product version that was originally preinstalled on the system, (2) may only be used to image devices that came with it, and (3) may not be modified prior to recovering an image to a device.

- ▶ **Using OEM media to reimage:** You may use OEM media (including custom OEM images) to reimage devices, but only those devices that were originally imaged with such media.
- ▶ **Downgrading and reimaging:** The EULA that came with your OEM version of Windows may include the right to use a prior version of the software. For example, instead of using the Windows 10 Pro software, you may use one of the following earlier versions: Windows 8.1 Pro or Windows 7 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: The right to use a prior version of the software must be in accordance with all other reimaging terms.

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 [Volume Licensing Service Center](#) (VLSC) portal 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 and make arrangements accordingly. You are not entitled to Microsoft support as a result 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. For example, Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2016 is designed for enterprises and licensed through Commercial Licensing to empower IT administrators with tools for deploying, managing, and customizing the product. It also provides users with additional functionalities that are not available in OEM and retail channels.

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?

To be eligible to reimage a PC with Windows Enterprise requires one of the following:

- a) The PC is licensed for Windows Enterprise Upgrade through Commercial Licensing.
- b) The PC licensed for Windows Software Assurance.
- c) The primary user of the PC is licensed for Windows Software Assurance per User.

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 Windows Software Assurance 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 Software Assurance 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 [Volume Licensing Service 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 VLSC website, 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. For more details on Volume Activation, visit www.microsoft.com/licensing/resources/vol/default.aspx.

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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