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Some things will always be a mystery.
Windows licensing doesn't have to be.

Windows Licensing Guide

When acquiring new computers, you may be confused about how to legitimately license your Microsoft® Windows® operating systems. Here are a few guidelines to help clarify Microsoft licensing rules and to help protect you from piracy or unlicensed software.

- **There are two ways to acquire your initial Windows license.**

1. An OEM version from your PC manufacturer where the Windows software is preinstalled and supported by that PC manufacturer.
2. A retail version. This version is generally the most expensive option and is supported by Microsoft via phone and web.

- **Preinstalled OEM software is the least expensive method.**

Acquiring your Windows operating system preinstalled from your OEM or system builder is the least expensive and most efficient way to acquire a genuine Windows operating system license.

- **Volume License Agreements (including Software Assurance) offer Windows upgrades only.**

The initial full Windows operating system license is not available via any Microsoft Volume License Program (Open, Select, Enterprise Agreement, Software Assurance) including Academic Volume License Programs (Campus, School Agreements) and programs designed for governmental acquiring. These Volume License Programs offer Windows **upgrades** only.

Upgrades are designed to upgrade previously acquired full Windows licenses. You must first acquire the full Windows license via the OEM or retail channel.

- **OEM software cannot be transferred.**

An OEM Windows operating system license cannot be transferred from one computer system to another, even if the computer system on which it was originally installed is no longer in use. It is tied to the initial computer on which it was installed.*

For more information, please see
www.microsoft.com/genuinewindows



OEM versions of Windows are designed to be preinstalled by your PC manufacturer. This is the most cost-effective and efficient way to acquire your initial Windows license.



Retail versions of Windows are more expensive than OEM versions. Full Windows licenses as well as Windows upgrades are available via the retail channel.



The full Windows license is not available via any Microsoft Volume License Program, (Open, Select, Enterprise Agreement), including Academic Programs—Volume Licenses cover Windows upgrades only.

*Note: Some older End User License Agreements (EULA) for copies of certain OEM operating system software (that is; MS-DOS®, Microsoft® Windows® 3.1 and Microsoft® Windows® for Workgroups 3.1) distributed in 1995 or earlier may permit transfer of the OEM operating system software license under limited circumstances.