

# Microsoft Windows Operating System Licensing Guide

Guide for Refurbished Personal Computers (PC)

Microsoft  
AUTHORIZED  
Refurbisher

Microsoft  
REGISTERED  
Refurbisher



## Using genuine Windows operating systems is as important for refurbished PCs as it is for new PCs.

Only genuine Windows operating systems offer end users the quality they expect plus additional benefits—such as full access to downloads, updates, and enhanced features.

### What is a Refurbished PC?

A refurbished PC is a used PC that has gone through one or more of the following processes that leave the PC ready for use by a new owner:

- **Data wiping of hard drive**
- **Testing and validation of hardware and component functionality**
- **Cosmetic repair and/or replacement of defective minor PC components**

With respect to operating system licensing, a PC is considered to be a refurbished PC if it has the original motherboard, or a replacement was made of a defective motherboard with one of exactly the same make, model and specification. Major repairs, such as the installation of a new model motherboard, results in a “new” PC and not a “refurbished” PC.

### When is a new Windows operating system license required and when is one not required?

#### A new Windows license is not required for a refurbished PC that has:

1. The original Certificate of Authenticity (COA) for a Windows operating system affixed to the PC, **and**
2. The original recovery media or hard-disk based recovery image associated with the PC.

The operating system identified on the original COA indicates the edition of Windows that was originally licensed for that PC and the refurbisher can use either:

1. The original recovery media **or**
2. The original hard-disk based recovery image to reinstall the operating system software specified on the COA.

The original recovery option (described above) used to reinstall the software on a refurbished PC must accompany any distribution of the refurbished PC. Prior to relinquishing a PC for refurbishment, the end user can contact the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) of the PC to obtain the appropriate recovery media for a fee—subject to availability. Second-hand recovery media is sometimes offered for sale by individuals in various forums and markets. Purchasing media from unknown sources is not recommended as it introduces the risks of copyright infringement, improper licensing and infected/corrupted or incomplete software.

#### A new Windows license is required for a refurbished PC if:

1. The refurbisher did not obtain the original recovery media along with the system to be refurbished **or**
2. The PC does not have a hard-disk based recovery image.

The refurbisher must purchase a new Windows license in order to provide the purchaser of the refurbished PC with a genuine, licensed version of Windows on the PC.

### Why should I care whether the refurbished PCs I sell have the appropriate Windows licensing?

Selling a PC with an unlicensed copy of Windows can subject the refurbisher and retailer to liability for copyright infringement. If you sell a refurbished PC with Windows installed, it is the responsibility of the refurbisher to ensure that the PC is properly licensed. It is the responsibility of the retailer to ensure that it does not sell refurbished PCs that may infringe on Microsoft copyrights. Copyright infringement is taken seriously by the software industry and law enforcement. Piracy reports are investigated and, in the appropriate cases, legal action may be taken. For more information on infringement risks and “how to tell” whether software is genuine, please visit: <http://www.microsoft.com/piracy>.

### What if my customers don't care whether or not the PC I sell them is licensed for Windows?

Customers sometimes may not understand that their ability to use software is based on their purchase of the license, not the purchase of the software alone. Purchasers of PCs with unlicensed software on them are likely to be subjecting themselves to easily avoided legal risks. These risks can be mitigated by ensuring that an appropriately licensed version of Windows is provided with every PC.

### What are the available Microsoft refurbisher programs?

#### Microsoft has a two licensing programs for refurbished PCs. These are:

- Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher (MAR) program
- Microsoft Registered Refurbisher program

For more information on the Microsoft refurbisher programs, visit [www.microsoft.com/refurbishedpcs](http://www.microsoft.com/refurbishedpcs).

# Other Frequently Asked Questions

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- Q. I have acquired a used PC with the original manufacturer's Windows desktop operating system COA on the computer's case and the matching copy of the original OEM recovery media disk or recovery media image that came with the PC when it was new. Is the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) Windows desktop operating system on this used PC properly licensed?
- A. Yes, in this case it appears that you have the genuine OEM Windows desktop operating system software which is designed exclusively for computer manufacturers to preinstall on their computers. Genuine OEM software always comes with a COA (note: the OEM COA is different from an orange retail proof of license label) and a manual or Quick Start Guide. Some major manufacturers provide an OEM disc for reinstalling programs, while smaller manufacturers are required to provide a Microsoft Windows edge-to-edge hologram disc. OEM software cannot be downloaded and may not be unbundled or re-bundled from sources other than the OEM selling you the computer.

Q. What should customers look for as evidence that the PC purchased from a member of a Microsoft refurbisher program has a genuine Windows operating system license?

- A. There are three components to check for on a refurbished PC to ensure it is properly licensed.
1. A properly licensed refurbished PC will have both the original COA that came affixed to the PC when it was newly purchased AND a specially designed Windows COA for refurbished PCs. A refurbished PC COA has a unique product key or a serial number, the Windows product name, and statement "For Use on Refurbished PC Only".



Sample of a refurbished PC COA

2. Only certain Windows editions are available through the Microsoft Refurbisher programs. The Windows operating system installed on the refurbished PC must match the product named on the refurbished PC COA.
3. Depending on the Microsoft Refurbisher program, the customer may also receive with each PC, a Recovery Media Pack or a hard disk based recovery image created by the refurbisher. The Recovery Media Pack which is only supplied by the Microsoft Registered Refurbisher program, contains a recovery media hologram DVD, and outer wrap in a slim-line CD case.

Q. I have a used PC without a Windows COA. Can I install Windows on the PC?

- A. Yes, but because the PC does not have proof that Windows was originally installed on it, you must purchase a full version (not upgrade version) of the Windows operating system Windows through a retail channel.

For information on all of the Microsoft refurbisher programs, please visit: [www.microsoft.com/refurbishedpcs](http://www.microsoft.com/refurbishedpcs).

Q. Can I create a library of recovery CDs and use them to restore operating systems? Can I share my library with other organizations and perhaps make them available for download online?

- A. No. Only the original recovery media for a PC or the original hard-disk based recovery image for a PC can be used to reinstall the Windows product. Making unauthorized copies of recovery media could be considered counterfeiting the software.

Q. I have recovery media from a manufacturer that will install the Windows operating system on a different model than the one specified on the media. I also have recovery media from one manufacturer that works on PCs from another manufacturer. Can I use these for the PCs I am refurbishing?

- A. No. Recovery media can only be used with the original PC that it accompanied when supplied by the OEM to the end user customer.

Q. I have a working system with no COA. I also have a system that has a faulty motherboard with an affixed COA on the case. I swapped covers so that the working system now has a cover with an affixed COA. I have a recovery CD. Can I reinstall Windows legally?

- A. No. The COA and recovery media were valid for the original PC in its entirety, not just the case. You may replace the faulty motherboard on the PC with the COA, provided that you replace it with one of the same specification as the original. You may then use the recovery media to reinstall the Windows software on the PC. You cannot move the COA from one PC to another.

Q. I have a used PC with a COA and recovery media, but the hard disk drive has failed. Can I replace the hard disk drive and reinstall Windows from the recovery media?

- A. Yes, because you have both the COA and recovery media, you can reinstall after you replace the faulty hard disk drive.

Q. What are the differences between the Microsoft Refurbisher programs?

- This Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher (MAR) program is for large partners who average more than 1,000 PCs refurbished monthly. Refurbishers professionally refurbish computers and servers with genuine Microsoft software preinstalled for sale to businesses, consumers, and non-profits.
- The Registered Refurbisher Program (RRP) is for small and medium-sized partners across the globe that wish to supply professionally refurbished PCs preinstalled with Microsoft software to local consumers, businesses, and to qualified charities, non-profits, schools, and government programs.