

# Downgrade rights for Microsoft Commercial Licensing, OEM, and full-package product licenses

This brief applies to all Microsoft Licensing programs.

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## Summary

This licensing brief helps explain the downgrade rights for the most commonly acquired systems License Terms granted by Microsoft Commercial Licensing programs and how they compare with original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and retail full-package product (FPP) license rights.

## Details

Microsoft Commercial Licensing agreements include references to specific rights to use any prior versions of Microsoft licensed software. These rights are often referred to as “downgrade rights.”

Microsoft distinguishes between the term “version” and “edition” when referring to product licenses. The term “edition” means different functional offerings within a product family that are usually released simultaneously (for example, Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2019 and Microsoft Office Standard 2019). The term “version” refers to different generations of a product family (for example, Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2019 and Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2016). Downgrade rights between the current generation (N), the prior generation (N-1), and the generation prior to that (N-2) are limited to the same functional editions within each version (for example, Windows

10 Enterprise downgrades to Windows 8/8.1 Enterprise or Windows 7 Enterprise; however, Windows 10 Pro doesn't downgrade to Windows 8/8.1 Enterprise or Windows 7 Enterprise). For more information about access to prior product versions, please see the Microsoft Commercial Licensing [fulfillment information](#).

The following table compares Commercial Licensing downgrade rights with those provided under OEM and retail (FPP) licenses.

## Downgrade rights by product pool for licenses acquired through Commercial Licensing, OEM, and FPP

Software license agreement type	Application software	System software	Server software
<b>Commercial Licensing programs</b>	Downgrade rights are granted with all application software licenses acquired through the Commercial Licensing programs.  Please refer to the Microsoft Commercial Licensing <a href="#">Product Terms</a> for current information about which OEM applications qualify for enrollment in Software Assurance within 90 days from the date the licenses are acquired.	Downgrade rights are granted with all system software licenses acquired through the Commercial Licensing programs.	Downgrade rights are granted with all server software licenses acquired through the Commercial Licensing programs.  Please refer to the Microsoft Commercial Licensing <a href="#">Product Terms</a> for current information about which retail and OEM applications qualify for enrollment in Software Assurance within 90 days from the date the licenses are acquired.
<b>Licenses enrolled in Microsoft Software Assurance</b>	Downgrade rights are granted for any license enrolled in Software Assurance.  Please refer to the Microsoft Commercial Licensing <a href="#">Product Terms</a> for current information about which OEM applications qualify for enrollment in Software Assurance within 90 days from the date you acquired the licenses.	Downgrade rights are granted for any license enrolled in Software Assurance.	Downgrade rights are granted for any license enrolled in Software Assurance.  Please refer to the Microsoft Commercial Licensing <a href="#">Product Terms</a> for current information about which retail and OEM Server Software qualify for enrollment in Software Assurance within 90 days from the date you acquired the licenses.
<b>OEM Microsoft Software License Terms</b>	Rights to OEM versions of application software are granted in the OEM Microsoft Software License Terms. The	Rights to OEM versions of system software are granted in the OEM License Terms. The OEM License Terms for	Rights to server software are granted in the OEM License Terms. The OEM License Terms for most

Software license agreement type	Application software	System software	Server software
	<p>OEM License Terms for OEM versions of application software do not grant downgrade rights.</p> <p>Please refer to the OEM license terms for complete details.</p>	<p>Windows 10 Pro, Windows 8.1 Pro, Windows 8 Pro, Windows 7 Professional, Windows 7 Ultimate, Windows Vista Business, and Windows Vista Ultimate operating systems grant downgrade rights. See the full text of the OEM License Terms for the specific downgrade rights.</p> <p>Please refer to the OEM license terms for complete details.</p>	<p>OEM versions released with or after the Windows Server 2003 R2 operating system allow for downgrade rights to an earlier version of the software. New products that do not have earlier versions do not allow downgrades. See the full text of the applicable OEM License Terms for the specific downgrade rights.</p> <p>Please refer to the OEM license terms for complete details.</p>
<p><b>FPP Microsoft Software License Terms</b></p>	<p>Downgrade rights are not granted under most FPP application licenses.</p> <p>Please refer to the FPP license terms for complete details.</p>	<p>Downgrade rights are not granted under FPP system licenses.</p> <p>Please refer to the FPP license terms for complete details.</p>	<p>Some server products offer downgrade rights.</p> <p>Please refer to the FPP license terms for complete details.</p>

## Frequently asked questions

### General

**Q1:** *Where can I confirm my specific downgrade rights and eligible versions to downgrade for my organization's Commercial Licensing agreement?*

**A:** Downgrade rights (rights to use any prior version) are granted as part of all the Commercial Licensing agreements. Please refer to the Microsoft [Product Terms site](#) for specific downgrade paths for your products.

**Q2:** How do I get prior versions of products when I need to downgrade to a prior version of a Microsoft product my organization licenses through Commercial Licensing?

**A:** While you have the right to downgrade products, in general, the Microsoft Volume Licensing Service Center (VLSC) provides download access only to the current (N) and the prior version (N-1) of products. Note: In addition to the VLSC download software access, all Commercial Licensing customers may choose to purchase physical media (CD/DVD) copies of their licensed software through their Microsoft reseller.

If you have legally obtained physical media (CD/DVD) of earlier Microsoft products that your organization is currently licensed to use through downgrade rights, you may use these prior software versions at your discretion.

For more information about access to prior product versions, please see the [fulfillment information](#).

## Windows Desktop

**Q1:** Where can I find the specific downgrade rights for my Windows licensed product?

**A:** Your ability to downgrade to a prior version of Windows is stated in the License Terms for these products. You may use the following media for your downgrade version: Commercial Licensing media (provided the user has a Commercial Licensing agreement), retail (FPP), or OEM (which includes a system builder hologram CD, provided the software is acquired in accordance with the Microsoft OEM System Builder License). Use of the downgraded operating system is governed by the License Terms for the original product preinstalled on the PC. You may not use both the licensed Windows product and the downgrade product; only one Windows product may be used at a time.

**Q2:** What are the downgrade rights for Windows?

**A:** For Windows 10 Pro licenses acquired through an OEM, you may downgrade to Windows 8.1 Pro. For Windows 10 licenses acquired through Commercial Licensing, you may downgrade to any prior version of the licensed Windows edition. Refer to the table below for more specific product downgrade rights.

Version Downgrade to	OEM Preinstall	Commercial Licensing	Commercial Licensing	Commercial Licensing	Commercial Licensing
	Windows 10 Pro	Windows 10 Pro	Windows 10 Enterprise LTSC/LTSB	Windows 10 Enterprise E3/E5	Windows 10 Education E3/E5
Windows 10 Enterprise Semi-Annual Channel (prior versions)				•	•
Windows 10 Enterprise LTSC/LTSB (prior versions)			•	•	•
Windows 8/8.1 Enterprise			•	•	•

Version Downgrade to	OEM Preinstall	Commercial Licensing	Commercial Licensing	Commercial Licensing	Commercial Licensing
	Windows 10 Pro	Windows 10 Pro	Windows 10 Enterprise LTSC/LTSB	Windows 10 Enterprise E3/E5	Windows 10 Education E3/E5
Windows 10 Pro Semi-Annual Channel (prior versions)			•	•	•
Windows 8.1 Pro	•	•	•		•
Windows 7 Enterprise			•		•
Windows 7 Professional		•	•		•
Windows Vista Enterprise				•	•
Windows Vista Business		•	•		•
Windows XP Pro		•	•		•
Windows 2000 Professional		•	•		•
Windows 95/98/NT		•	•		•

Notes:

- There are no downgrade rights to Windows 7 Ultimate.
- Support for Windows 7 ended January 14, 2020.
- Support for Windows XP ended April 8, 2014.

**Q3:** Because the multilingual user interface (MUI) is included with Windows 8.1 Pro and Windows 8 Pro, may I use downgrade rights to run MUI on a Windows 7 PC not covered by Software Assurance?

**A:** No. MUI is only available for Windows 7 in the Windows 7 Enterprise edition, which requires Software Assurance.

**Q4:** If a user is licensed with Windows Software Assurance per User, do Windows downgrade rights extend to all of the licensed user's devices?

**A:** Yes. With Windows Software Assurance per User licensing, all of the user's devices receive the same downgrade rights as they would if they were covered by Windows Software Assurance per Device.

## Office

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**Q1:** *What products may I downgrade to if I have Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2019?*

**A:** Downgrade rights in Commercial Licensing programs give you the right to downgrade to any prior version of the same product. Therefore, you may downgrade Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2019 to any prior versions of Office Professional Plus. You may not, however, downgrade to a prior version of Microsoft Office Standard Edition because it is a different product and not considered a prior version of Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2019.

In addition, Office Professional Plus 2019 users may not use earlier versions of any application included in a prior version license that is not included in license the user owns.

**Q2:** *May I downgrade my Office Professional Plus 2019 license to Office Standard 2019 or Office Standard 2016 through my Commercial Licensing agreement?*

**A:** No. Downgrade rights grant the user the right to use prior versions of Microsoft software, not other editions of the software released simultaneously unless explicitly stated in the Product Terms (for example, Windows Server 2019 Datacenter to Standard, Microsoft SQL Server 2019 Enterprise to Standard software).

## Skype for Business and SharePoint

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**Q1:** *If I purchase Skype for Business Server 2019 Client Access Licenses (CALs), which Microsoft Lync Server 2013 CAL may I downgrade to?*

**A:** Downgrade rights grant the user with the right to use prior versions of Microsoft software, not other editions of the software released simultaneously, unless explicitly stated in the Product Terms. Lync Server was renamed Skype for Business Server. Therefore, you may downgrade Skype for Business Server 2019 Standard, Enterprise and Plus CALs to prior versions of Skype for Business Server or Lync Server Standard, Enterprise and Plus CALs, respectively.

**Q2:** *Are there any exceptions for SharePoint Server 2019?*

**A:** Yes. Customers licensed for SharePoint Server 2019 may access and use any of the products listed in the table below in place SharePoint Server 2019 as follows:

SharePoint Server 2019 licenses	Downgrade to
SharePoint Server 2019 license	SharePoint Server 2016/2013/2010 or FAST Search Server 2010 for SharePoint Server

A customer's right to access and use copies of SharePoint Server 2016/2013/2010 or FAST Search Server 2010 for SharePoint Server in place of licensed copies of SharePoint Server 2019 under this offer is subject to the terms and conditions of a customer's Commercial Licensing agreement, the product use rights for SharePoint Server 2019, and these terms. That right expires upon the expiration or termination of the SharePoint Server licenses.

## Windows Server

**Q1:** What are the downgrade rights for the three main editions of Windows Server 2019?

**A:** The Windows Server 2019 product is streamlined and simple, making it easy for customers to choose the edition that is right for their needs. Although Windows Server 2012 R2 is a prior version of the Windows Server 2019 software, Windows Server processor-based licenses are not prior versions of the Windows Server 2019 core licenses. Windows Server 2012 R2 was the last version of the software to be licensed by processor. As an exception to the standard downgrade rights applicable to Commercial Licensing products, customers are permitted to downgrade to and use earlier versions and editions of the Windows Server software in place of licensed copies of Windows Server 2019. When invoking downgrade rights or down edition rights, the license terms of the version and edition acquired still govern use of the software.

Deployment options <sup>1</sup>			
Licensed edition	Down editions	Versions <sup>2</sup>	Use rights <sup>3</sup>
<b>Windows Server 2019 Datacenter</b>	Windows Server Datacenter	2016 or earlier	2019
	Windows Server Standard	2016 or earlier	2019
	Windows Server Essentials	2016 or earlier	2019
	Windows Web Server	2008 R2 or earlier	2019
	Windows HPC Server	2008 R2 or earlier	2019
<b>Windows Server 2019 Standard</b>	Windows Server Standard	2016 or earlier	2019
	Windows Server Essentials	2016 or earlier	2019
	Windows Web Server	2008 R2 or earlier	2019
	Windows HPC Server	2008 R2 or earlier	2019
<b>Windows Server 2019 Essentials</b>	Windows Small Business Server Essentials	2008 R2 or earlier	2019

<sup>1</sup>Shows software editions and versions that may be used in place of the appropriately licensed edition in a given OSE.

<sup>2</sup>Customers may downgrade to any other version as long as they have the appropriate media and keys.

<sup>3</sup>All use rights are still governed by the licensed edition.

**Q2:** Does the transition from processor-based to core-based Windows Server licensing have any effect on downgrading to a processor-based licensed prior version of Windows Server?

**A:** The ability to downgrade does not change the licensing under which a customer can use the software; the rights for purchased software (i.e. Windows Server 2016) apply. This means that core-based licensing and use rights apply to the version the customer downgrades to and that the virtualization rights do not change. Below are a few examples.

Licensed edition	Downgraded version or edition	Licensing rights that apply
Datacenter 2019	Datacenter 2012 R2	Datacenter 2019
Standard 2019	Enterprise 2008 R2	Standard 2019
Standard 2019	Standard 2012 R2	Standard 2019

**Q3:** What version of Client Access License (CAL) or External Connector (EC) do I need for each Windows Server version?

**A:** CALs and ECs permit access to the same version, or earlier versions, of the server software. Below are a few examples.

	Windows Server 2019	Windows Server 2016	Windows Server 2012 R2	Windows Server 2012	Windows Server 2008 R2
<b>2019 CAL/EC</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>2016CAL/EC</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>2012 CAL/EC*</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

*\*Windows Server 2012 version CAL/EC provides access to Windows Server 2012, 2012 R2, and prior versions. There was no Windows Server 2012 R2 version CAL/EC released.*

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