

Downgrade Rights for Microsoft Commercial Licensing, OEM, and Full-Package product licenses

Licensing guidance

Summary

This licensing guide explains your downgrade rights under Microsoft's Commercial Licensing programs and compares them with the license rights of the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and retail full-package product (FPP) licenses.

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Overview of downgrade rights

Microsoft defines your rights to use earlier versions of licensed software through Commercial Licensing agreements. These rights are commonly known as “downgrade rights.”

When you purchase a license for a Microsoft product, you can choose to install and use an earlier version of the same product instead of the latest one. Microsoft grants this flexibility through downgrade rights.

Microsoft also distinguishes between **version** and **edition** when defining product licenses:

- A **version** refers to different generations of a product family (e.g., SQL Server 2019 vs. SQL Server 2022).
- An **edition** refers to different feature sets released at the same time (e.g., SQL Server 2022 Standard vs. SQL Server 2022 Enterprise).

With downgrade rights, you can install and use any earlier version or a permitted edition in place of the licensed product. However, Microsoft does not provide installation media or product keys for older versions.

In most cases, the Microsoft 365 Admin Center (MAC) allows you to download the current version (N) and the immediate prior version (N-1) of available products. Your downgrade rights still let you install any earlier version if you have access to the required media and keys.

While you can install older versions, we recommend avoiding those more than one or two generations old, particularly if they have reached the end of ESU (Extended Security Updates).

For more details on how to access prior product versions, visit the [Microsoft Commercial Licensing Fulfillment page](#).

Downgrade rights by purchase channel

License agreement type	Application software	System software	Server software
Licenses acquired through Commercial Licensing programs or enrolled in Software Assurance	All Application software licenses you obtain through Commercial Licensing programs include downgrade rights. Likewise, any Application software licenses you acquire through OEM and enroll in Software Assurance within 90 days of purchase include downgrade rights. Refer to the Microsoft Product Terms for current details about which OEM application software licenses qualify for enrollment in Software Assurance.	All System software licenses acquired through Commercial Licensing programs include downgrade rights.	All Server software licenses acquired through Commercial Licensing programs include downgrade rights. Likewise, any Server software licenses you acquire through OEM or retail Full-Packaged Product (FPP) and enroll in Software Assurance within 90 days of purchase include downgrade rights. Refer to the Microsoft Product Terms for current details about which OEM and FPP Server software licenses qualify for enrollment in Software Assurance.
Licenses acquired through OEM (not enrolled in Software Assurance)	The OEM License Terms for Application software do not allow downgrade rights. Refer to the OEM Microsoft Use Terms for details.	The OEM License Terms define the rights to use OEM versions of system software. Refer to the OEM Microsoft Use Terms for details.	The OEM License Terms define the rights to use OEM versions of server software. Most OEM versions released with or after Windows Server 2003 R2 allow downgrade rights to earlier versions. However, new products that do not have earlier versions do not allow downgrades. Refer to the OEM Microsoft Use Terms for details.
Licenses acquired through retail Full Packaged Product (FPP)	Most FPP application licenses do not include downgrade rights. Refer to the FPP Microsoft Use Terms for details.	FPP system licenses do not include downgrade rights. Refer to the FPP Microsoft Use Terms for details.	Some server products offer downgrade rights. Refer to the FPP Microsoft Use Terms for details.

Frequently asked questions

General

1. **Where can I confirm the specific downgrade rights and eligible versions for my organization's Commercial Licensing agreement?**

Downgrade rights (the ability to use any prior version) are granted as part of all Commercial Licensing agreements. You can confirm specific downgrade paths for your products by visiting the [Microsoft Product Terms](#).

2. **How can I get prior versions of Microsoft products when downgrading a licensed product through Commercial Licensing?**

While you have the right to downgrade products, the Microsoft M365 admin center generally provides download access only to the current version (N) and the prior version (N-1) of products.

Note: In addition to downloading software through the Microsoft M365 admin center, all Commercial Licensing customers can purchase physical media (CD/DVD) copies of their licensed software through a 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 are free to use these prior software versions as needed. Please note, we recommend installing only recent versions, especially avoiding those past the end of ESU.

For more details about accessing prior product versions, refer to the [Fulfillment | Microsoft Volume Licensing](#).

Windows Desktop

3. **Where can I find the specific downgrade rights for my Windows licensed product?**

The License Terms for your Windows product explain your right to downgrade to a prior version. You can use Commercial Licensing media (if you have a Commercial Licensing agreement), retail (FPP) media, or OEM media for the downgrade. OEM options include a system builder hologram CD or an ISO download, as long as you obtained the software according to the Microsoft OEM System Builder License.

The License Terms for the original product preinstalled on your PC govern the use of the downgraded operating system. You cannot use both the licensed Windows product and the downgrade product at the same time; you may only use one Windows product at a time.

4. **Does Windows Professional acquired through an OEM include downgrade rights?**

When you buy a device from a manufacturer or installer with a Professional version of Windows preinstalled and configured to run in full feature mode, you have the right to downgrade to an equivalent edition of a prior version of Windows Professional. You can exercise this right only while Microsoft supports that earlier version and supports that earlier version on your hardware. For full details, review the license terms for your specific product at [Microsoft Use Terms](#).

Office

5. What products may I downgrade to if I have Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2024?

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 2024 users may not use earlier versions of any application included in a prior version license that is not included in the license the user owns.

6. May I downgrade my Office LTSC Professional Plus 2024 license to Office Standard 2024 or Office Standard 2019 through my Commercial Licensing agreement?

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 2025 Datacenter to Standard, Microsoft SQL Server 2022 Enterprise to Standard software are permitted).

SharePoint

7. What are the downgrade rights for SharePoint Server Subscription Edition?

Yes, customers licensed for SharePoint Server Subscription may access and use any of the products listed in the table below in place of SharePoint Server Subscription as follows, however we do not recommend the use of versions that have reached ESU (Extended Security Updates).

SharePoint Server Subscription Licenses	Downgrade to
SharePoint Server Subscription license	SharePoint Server 2019/2016/2013/2010

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

Windows Server

8. What are the downgrade rights for the three main editions of Windows Server 2019?

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 ^[1]			
	Down editions	Versions ^[2]	Use rights ^[3]
Windows Server 2025 Datacenter	Windows Server Datacenter	2022 or earlier	2025
	Windows Server Standard	2022 or earlier	2025
	Windows Server Essentials	2022 or earlier	2025

Deployment options ^[1]			
Licensed edition	Down editions	Versions ^[2]	Use rights ^[3]
Windows Server 2025 Standard	Windows Server Standard	2022 or earlier	2025
	Windows Server Essentials	2022 or earlier	2025
Windows Server 2019 Essentials	Windows Small Business Server Essentials	2008 R2 or earlier	2019

[1] Shows software editions and versions that may be used in place of the appropriately licensed edition in a given OSE.

[2] Customers may downgrade to any other version as long as they have the appropriate media and keys.

[3] All use rights are still governed by the licensed edition.

9. 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?

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	Standard 2012 R2	Standard 2019

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

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

	Windows Server 2025	Windows Server 2022	Windows Server 2019	Windows Server 2016	Windows Server 2012 R2
2025 CAL/EC	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2022 CAL/EC	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2019 CAL/EC	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
2012 CAL/EC^[1]	No	No	No	No	Yes

[1] 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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