

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

This brief applies to all Microsoft Volume 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 Volume Licensing programs and how they compare with original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and retail full-package product (FPP) license rights.

What's new in this brief

This brief replaces a previous version published in December 2014. It has been updated to reflect Windows 10 licensing.

Details

Microsoft Volume 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 2013 and Microsoft Office Standard 2013). The term "version" refers to different generations of a product family (for example, Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2010 and Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2013). 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 Fulfillment information section of the Microsoft.com/Licensing site at www.microsoft.com/licensing/existing-customers/fulfillment.aspx.

Downgrade rights

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

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

Software License Agreement Type	Application Software	System Software	Server Software
Volume Licensing Programs	<p>Downgrade rights are granted with all application software licenses acquired through the Volume Licensing programs.</p> <p>Please refer to the Microsoft Volume Licensing Product Terms for current information about which OEM applications qualify for enrollment in Software Assurance within 90 days from the date the licenses are acquired.</p>	<p>Downgrade rights are granted with all system software licenses acquired through the Volume Licensing programs.</p>	<p>Downgrade rights are granted with all server software licenses acquired through the Volume Licensing programs.</p> <p>Please refer to the Microsoft Volume Licensing Product Terms 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.</p>
Licenses Enrolled in Microsoft Software Assurance	<p>Downgrade rights are granted for any license enrolled in Software Assurance.</p> <p>Please refer to the Microsoft Volume Licensing Product Terms for current information about which OEM applications qualify for enrollment in Software Assurance within 90 days from the date you acquired the licenses.</p>	<p>Downgrade rights are granted for any license enrolled in Software Assurance.</p>	<p>Downgrade rights are granted for any license enrolled in Software Assurance.</p> <p>Please refer to the Microsoft Volume Licensing Product Terms 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.</p>
OEM Microsoft Software License Terms	<p>Rights to OEM versions of application software are granted in the OEM Microsoft Software License Terms. The 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>Rights to OEM versions of system software are granted in the OEM License Terms. The OEM License Terms for 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>Rights to server software are granted in the OEM License Terms. The OEM License Terms for most OEM versions released with or after the Windows Server 2003 R2 operating system allow for the user to downgrade to an earlier version. New products that do not have earlier versions do not allow a user to downgrade. See the full text of the applicable OEM License Terms for the specific downgrade rights.</p>

Downgrade rights

Software License Agreement Type	Application Software	System Software	Server Software
		Please refer to the OEM license terms for complete details.	Please refer to the OEM license terms for complete details.
FPP Microsoft Software License Terms	Downgrade rights are not granted under most FPP application licenses. Please refer to the FPP license terms for complete details.	Downgrade rights are not granted under FPP system licenses. Please refer to the FPP license terms for complete details.	Some server products offer downgrade rights. Please refer to the FPP license terms for complete details.

Frequently asked questions

General

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

Downgrade rights (rights to use any prior version) are granted as part of all the Volume Licensing agreements. Please refer to the Microsoft Product Terms for particular downgrade paths for your products. The Product Terms is available at the Microsoft Volume Licensing site at www.microsoft.com/licensing/about-licensing/product-licensing.aspx.

2. 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 Volume Licensing?

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 Volume 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 section of the Microsoft Licensing site at www.microsoft.com/licensing/existing-customers/fulfillment.aspx.

Windows Desktop

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

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: Volume Licensing media (provided the user has a Volume 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.

Downgrade rights

4. What are the downgrade rights for Windows?

For Windows 10 Pro licenses acquired through an OEM, you may downgrade to Windows 8.1 Pro or Windows 7 Professional. For Windows 10 licenses acquired through Volume 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	Volume Licensing		
	Windows 10 Pro	Windows 10 Pro	Windows 10 Enterprise	Windows 10 Education
Windows 8/8.1 Enterprise			✓	✓
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 XP ended April 8, 2014.

5. What may I downgrade to if I have Windows 10 Enterprise?

Downgrade rights in Volume Licensing agreements provide you with the right to downgrade to any prior version of the same product. You may downgrade Windows 10 Enterprise to Windows 8/8.1 Enterprise, Windows 7 Enterprise, or Windows Vista Enterprise.

Customers licensed for use of Windows 10 Enterprise are generally licensed for Windows 10 Pro, which may be downgraded to the Windows 8/8.1 Pro, Windows 7 Professional, Windows Vista Business, Windows XP Professional, Windows 2000 Professional, Windows NT 4.0, Windows NT 3.51, Windows 98, or Windows 95 operating system.

6. 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?

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

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

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.

Downgrade rights

Office

8. What products may I downgrade to if I have Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2013?

Downgrade rights in Volume Licensing programs give you the right to downgrade to any prior version of the same product. Therefore, you may downgrade Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2013 to the Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2010, Office Professional Plus 2007, Office Professional Enterprise 2003, Office Professional XP, Office Professional 2000, Office Professional 97, Office Professional 95, or Office Professional 4.3 versions. You may not, however, downgrade to Microsoft Office Standard Edition 2010 because it is a different product and not considered a prior version of Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2013.

In addition, Office Professional Plus 2013 users may not use earlier versions of the Microsoft Office OneNote note-taking program and Microsoft Office Groove software via downgrade rights, because these products are not part of earlier versions of the suite (for example, OneNote 2007 and Groove 2007 are not included with Office Professional Plus 2007).

9. May I downgrade my Office Professional Plus 2013 license to Office Standard 2013 or Office Standard 2010 through my Volume 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 2012 R2 Datacenter, Microsoft SQL Server 2012 Standard/Business Intelligence /Datacenter software).

10. Which Microsoft Visio 2013 licenses are eligible to downgrade to Visio Premium 2010?

Only Software Assurance customers who have exclusively deployed Visio Premium 2010 (that is, are not using any other edition of Microsoft Visio in their organization) and who need additional seats of Visio Premium 2010 may purchase licenses for Visio Professional 2013 and downgrade to Visio Premium 2010. No other downgrades from Visio Professional 2013 to Visio Premium 2010 are permitted.

Skype for Business and SharePoint

11. If I purchase Skype for Business 2015 Client Access Licenses (CALs), which Microsoft Lync Server 2013 CAL may I downgrade to?

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 2015 Standard, Enterprise and Plus CALs to Lync Server 2010 Standard, Enterprise and Plus CALs, respectively.

12. Are there any exceptions for SharePoint Server 2013?

Yes; customers licensed for SharePoint Server 2013 may access and use any of the products listed in the table below in place of SharePoint Server 2013 as follows:

SharePoint Server 2013 Licenses	Downgrade to
SharePoint Server 2013 license	SharePoint Server 2010, or FAST Search Server 2010 for SharePoint Server

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

Downgrade rights

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