

# Windows Server

## DOWNGRADE RIGHTS

### Understanding Downgrade Rights

Downgrade and down-edition rights are an end-user right that Microsoft offers to customers for certain OEM products which meet the technical requirements for a Windows software downgrade. Downgrade rights are documented in the Microsoft Software License Terms that customers accept upon first running Windows and Windows Server software. With downgrade rights, end users who purchase current license of the software (such as Windows 10 Pro or Windows Server 2016 Standard) can use an earlier version of the software until they are ready to migrate to a later version technology.

If a product includes downgrade rights, the license terms for that product will indicate which earlier versions of the software may be used.

Downgrade rights will vary depending on whether if the software was acquired via volume licensing, OEMs, or full packaged product (FPP). To learn more about these rights, review the [downgrade rights licensing brief](#).

### Downgrade and Down Edition rights for OEM Windows Server

The following OEM versions of Windows Server software are eligible for downgrade and down-edition.

	WS2016	WS2012 R2	WS2012	WS2008R2	WS2008
WS2016 Datacenter →	Standard Essentials	Datacenter Standard Essentials Foundation	Datacenter Standard Essentials	Datacenter Enterprise Standard	Datacenter Enterprise Standard
WS2016 Standard →	Essentials	Standard Essentials Foundation	Standard Essentials	Enterprise Standard	Enterprise Standard
WS2016 Essentials →		Essentials Foundation	Essentials	N/A	N/A
WS2012R2 Datacenter →		Standard Essentials Foundation	Datacenter Standard Essentials	Datacenter Enterprise Standard	Datacenter Enterprise Standard
WS2012R2 Standard →		Essentials Foundation	Standard Essentials	Enterprise Standard	Enterprise Standard
WS2012 Datacenter →			Standard Essentials	Datacenter Enterprise Standard	Datacenter Enterprise Standard
WS2012 Standard →			Essentials	Enterprise Standard	Enterprise Standard

#### TO DOWNGRADE WINDOWS SERVER SOFTWARE CUSTOMERS MUST:

1. Purchase a Server system licensed with Windows Server software.
2. Accept the Microsoft Software License Terms.
3. Perform the downgrade or down-edition process to the eligible downgrade/down-edition product using the media/key from a genuine, previously licensed OEM, retail or Volume Licensing Server product.

#### TO PERFORM A DOWNGRADE TO AN EARLIER VERSION OF WINDOWS SERVER SOFTWARE, END USERS MUST FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

Use the Windows Server media and a corresponding product key for the version of Windows Server that is eligible for downgrade.

The media/key should come from a previously licensed version.

The media and key used to perform the downgrade must be from the same channel (example: retail, OEM, or VL).

End users can use the following media types for their downgrade: Retail (full packaged product), System builder media, VL software media in accordance with the Microsoft OEM Volume Licensing License Terms.

Install the downgrade-eligible version of Windows Server media.

1. Follow activation guide to install the software.
2. If activation fails, follow the trouble shooting wizard or call your local Activation Support call center and explain your circumstances.

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### What to know about downgrade rights

End users can use the following media for their downgrades: retail (full packaged product), or system builder edge-to-edge media (DVD), provided the software is acquired in accordance with the Microsoft OEM System Builder License. End users can use one legal version of the downgrade media for multiple installations. They don't need to have one set of media for each PC they are downgrading, because they have acquired legitimate full operating system licenses for the most recent version, which gave them the right to downgrade.

In the event the end user opts to downgrade, neither Microsoft nor the hardware manufacturer is obligated to provide customer product support for systems on which downgraded software is installed.

The software may not be installed on any hardware system other than the one that was downgraded under this right.

If downgrading, the end user cannot use the new operating system (for example, Windows Server 2016 Datacenter) and the downgraded operating system (for example, Windows Server 2012 R2 Datacenter) at the same time.

If an end user chooses to downgrade to an approved, prior version of Windows Server, the hardware manufacturer still must apply the Windows Server Certificate of Authenticity (COA) to the hardware.

End users may reinstall the software at any time, provided the downgraded operating system has been removed from the hardware, and that software is reinstalled on the same hardware on which it was originally installed, using the original OEM system builder edge-to-edge media (DVD) distributed with the original hardware. The end user will need to use the product key, located in the center of the Certificate of Authenticity (COA), in order to activate the following products:

Windows Server 2016

Windows Server 2012 R2

Windows Server 2012

Windows Server 2008 R2

Windows Server 2008

For client access license (CAL) downgrades, end users may use Windows Device CALs and Windows User CALs with an earlier version of the software in accordance with the terms of the of the Windows Server 2008 Microsoft Software License Terms.

This summary is intended to be a general informational overview of the downgrade rights outlined in the Microsoft Software License Terms for the indicated Microsoft OEM system builder product. Please refer to the actual license agreement for the precise terms and conditions that govern use of the software.

### FAQ's

**Q: Can my customer downgrade to a product that is no longer supported by Microsoft, such as Windows Server 2003?**

A: End users can downgrade to any version as long as they have the appropriate media and keys.

**Q: How does my customer downgrade their Windows Server?**

A: To downgrade Windows Server software customers must:

1. Purchase a Server system licensed with Windows Server software.
2. Accept the Microsoft Software License Terms.
3. Perform the downgrade or down-edition process to the eligible downgrade/down-edition product using the media/key from a genuine, previously licensed OEM, retail or Volume Licensing Server product.

CTA

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