# Software Activation Explained

## What is software activation?

Software activation is a method some software publishers use in an effort to reduce software piracy.

The software activation process validates that customers own a valid license to use the product and prevents them installing the software on more computers than they are permitted to.

Software activation usually involves the program communicating with the software publisher's server over the Internet and exchanging license and/or other information. Some software activation processes may alternatively occur over the phone, by copying a file or string of information sent in an email, or in some cases, by plugging a special device into a computer's USB port.

Activation processes vary from one software publisher to another. Many publishers do not use software activation at all.

## When does software activation occur?

In most cases, users are asked to activate software either immediately after installation, or within a few days thereafter. The software will usually not work and/or display reminder messages until activation has occurred.

Some products may proceed with software activation on a regular basis, for example, before software updates are installed.

## Obtaining the consent of users

It is recommended that software publishers who choose to implement activation into their products follow the industry best practice of requiring the fully informed consent of a user before the software activation process begins. In other words, it is recommended that software activation should not occur without the user's knowledge.

It is also best practise to give users the option to decline software activation, although this means that they will be unable to use the product.

In some cases, product packaging might indicate if a product requires activation.

## Protecting the privacy of users

Some software activation processes do not transmit any personally identifying information about a user, while others may do so.

Software publishing companies should always put the privacy and interests of their customers first and ensure that any personally identifying data that may be collected about a user is adequately protected in accordance with privacy legislation, and that people know exactly what information about themselves is being transmitted.

It is recommended that consumers always fully inform themselves of the software activation process before it begins.