

Software Types & Distribution Methods

Software can be distributed in a variety of ways, from being sold in retail outlets to being distributed online. This fact sheet outlines some of the most common software distribution methods.

Retail software

Packaged software which is sold in shops. It usually contains a CD or DVD, and is generally more expensive due to the higher costs of manufacture, distribution and sale.

ESD (Electronic Software Distribution)

Software which is purchased and downloaded entirely online. This method of distribution has become very popular over recent years and is now offered by most software publishers. Benefits include users having access to the latest version, lower cost licenses, as well as environmental benefits due to less packaging.

Shareware, Trial, and Trialware

Potential customers are offered a time or functionality-limited evaluation version of a software program. After trying the software, users can then decide whether they want to purchase it.

The terms shareware, trialware, and trial software have an identical meaning.

Freeware

Fully functional software which can be used and distributed without payment.

Open Source

Software whose source code is published.

OEM Software

Stands for "Original Equipment Manufacturer". Software which is licensed with the purchase of new computer hardware. It is usually cheaper than licenses purchased separately.

Adware

Software which displays ads to users in exchange for letting them use the product.

Demo

Only partial functionality, or a demonstration of a programs' functionality is available.

Crippleware

Similar to trial software, but key features are disabled after a period of time unless the full version is purchased.

A warning about malicious software

You should always ensure that the software you choose is from a reputable publisher because some software is distributed by people with malicious intentions.

For example, some software programs "spy" on a user's computer and collect sensitive data such as Internet banking details and send them back to the programs' creator.

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