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What every programmer should know about licenses

Create usable code while abiding by the law

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Learning Goals

- write me last

Why you should care

What happens if you don't use a license? [1]

- If a repository has no license, then **all rights are reserved!**
- This means that normal copyright laws apply.
- Therefore, nobody is allowed to:
 - ▶ Copy
 - ▶ Modify
 - ▶ Distribute
- If someone else contributes, this includes you!

If you want to share your code, you need a license!

Overview of Code Licenses

Licenses can be divided into three categories:

- Public Domain-like
 - ▶ The Unlicense
- Permissive
 - ▶ MIT
 - ▶ Apache 2.0
 - ▶ BSD-3-Clause
- Copyleft
 - ▶ GPL

Public Domain (Gemeinfreiheit)

- Releases code into the public domain
- Thus, everybody can
 - ▶ Use (commercially)
 - ▶ Modify
 - ▶ Distribute / Copy / Publish
 - ▶ Sell
- No attribution required
- Changes can be kept closed-source
- Example: The Unlicense [2]

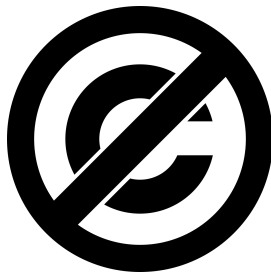


Figure: Unlicense logo [2]

Permissive Licenses

- Sometimes also called BSD-like [3]
- Also allow everybody to
 - ▶ Use (commercially)
 - ▶ Modify
 - ▶ Distribute / Copy / Publish
 - ▶ Sell
- Requires attribution, at least in the source code
- Example licenses:
 - ▶ MIT: Most commonly used
 - ▶ Apache 2.0 [4]: Like MIT, but with a patent clause [5]
 - If you are a contributor with a relevant patent, you grant a license to the patent
 - ▶ BSD-3: Similar to MIT but adds a no-endorsement clause
 - If you use our tool, don't use us to endorse or promote your product

Copyleft Licenses

- For Code: Gnu Public Licenses (GPL)
- Allow for any usage and modification
- Source has to be made available
- Modifications need to have same license
- Example: GPLv3

Four Freedoms [6]

- 1 Run the program for any purpose
- 2 Be able to the source code
- 3 Distribute the program as you wish
- 4 Distribute your modified versions

GPL-2.0 vs GPL-3.0

- Both versions are copyleft licenses.
- Key differences between GPL-2.0 and GPL-3.0 include:
 - ▶ Tivoization: GPL-3.0 addresses device lockdown.
 - ▶ Patent clauses: GPL-3.0 explicitly covers patent grants from contributors.
 - ▶ Compatibility: GPL-3.0 is not backwards compatible with GPL-2.0.
- Choose based on project needs and compatibility requirements.

Font Licenses

■ item

Creative Commons Licenses

- Explain the mapping
- public domain == CC0
- CC-BY == permissive
- CC-BY-SA == copyleft

Conclusion

Summary

- Write me last, together with learning goals

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Summary

- Write me last, together with learning goals

If you need further help

- <https://choosealicense.com>
- <https://tldrlegal.com>
- <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/license-list.en.html>
- <https://opensource.org/licenses>
- <https://creativecommons.org/>

References

No License. Choose a License. URL: <https://choosealicense.com/no-permission/> (visited on 07/11/2023).

The Unlicense. URL: <https://unlicense.org/> (visited on 08/21/2023).

Open Source Licensing Guide | New Media Rights. URL:
https://www.newmediarights.org/open_source/new_media_rights_open_source_licensing_guide
(visited on 08/21/2023).

Apache License, Version 2.0. URL: <https://www.apache.org/licenses/LICENSE-2.0> (visited on 08/21/2023).

Top 10 Questions About the Apache License. Mend. URL:
<https://www.mend.io/blog/top-10-apache-license-questions-answered/> (visited on 08/21/2023).

What is Free Software? - GNU Project - Free Software Foundation. URL:
<https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.en.html> (visited on 08/21/2023).