

Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS)

Definition - What does *Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS)* mean?

Commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) is a term that references non-developmental items (NDI) sold in the commercial marketplace and used or obtained through government contracts. The set of rules for COTS is defined by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).

A COTS product is usually a computer hardware or software product tailored for specific uses and made available to the general public. Such products are designed to be readily available and user friendly. A typical example of a COTS product is Microsoft Office or antivirus software. A COTS product is generally any product available off-the-shelf and not requiring custom development before installation.

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Techopedia explains *Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS)*

Compared to COTS, a custom designed product is typically more expensive and not as dependable. This is because the product is industrialized from scratch in minimal time with a limited budget. COTS that is modified by a purchaser, vendor or other party to meet customer requirements become modified off-the-shelf (MOTS). Generally once a COT is modified, it is the responsibility of the consumer to manage changes to the product.

Procuring COTS products has become a necessity for several big businesses. It is typical for a large organization to incorporate various COTS products into its system for better functionality, as well as being a relatively risk-free investment. This has shaped a larger market for COTS products.