



Adobe

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Adobe is a software company based in San Jose, California that specializes in creative software such as photo editing, video editing, animation, illustration, web development, and more. Founded in 1982, the company developed the Portable Document Format (PDF) in 1992, as well as a full suite of creative software. Widespread adoption of their products by novices, industry professionals, and nation-states has enabled Adobe to carve out a significant market share in the creative software industry. In FY24, Adobe's Digital Media Segment reported \$15.86 billion in revenue to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). ^[1]

Adobe

Basic information

Consumer impact summary [edit |

[edit source](#)]

Founded	1982
Legal structure	Public
Industry	Software
Official website	https://adobe.com/ ↗

Lack of ownership [edit | edit source]

Adobe has switched from a perpetual license model to a subscription model (Creative Cloud).^{[2][3][4]}

Proprietary file formats [edit | edit source]

Works created in Adobe software come in Adobe-exclusive file formats such as .psd for Photoshop^{[5][6]} and .indd for InDesign.^[7]

Data breaches [edit | edit source]

In 2013, Adobe disclosed a data breach affecting approximately 3 million customers. This number was later revised to approximately 38 million.^[8] This incident resulted in a \$1,000,000 settlement and a promise of new security policies.^[9] In 2019, researchers discovered that Adobe's Elasticsearch database was insecure, which may have exposed approximately 7.5 million users' information.^[10] Breaches impacting U.S. federal agencies and Adobe Commerce/Magento stores also occurred in 2023 and 2024, respectively.^{[11][12]}

Incidents [edit | edit source]

Transition to subscription-based software [edit | edit source]

Read More: [Adobe Lightroom: Perpetual to Subscription Transition](#), [Adobe Subscription](#), [Adobe CS Activation and Adobe Sued by FTC Over Hidden Fees in Subscription Plans](#)

Adobe initially distributed their software with perpetual licenses, allowing their users to make a one-time payment to own and access a specific application or, through Adobe's Creative Suite, a collection of applications. In 2011, Adobe introduced Creative Cloud, a subscription service that provides users access to an individual application or multiple applications for a monthly or yearly fee. In 2013, Adobe discontinued Creative Suite.^{[2][3][4]}

As of 2025, the only means to legally access up-to-date versions of many Adobe applications is through Creative Cloud. Additionally, the activation servers for perpetual licenses of previous versions of these applications have been shut down, which prevents consumers from activating the software using a legitimate copy and a serial number.

Creative Cloud offers various subscription options, including monthly plans (with monthly or annual billing) or prepaid annual plans. There are also plans for individual applications and bundles containing multiple applications. Prices of individual applications range from \$22.99 per month or \$263.88 prepaid annually. The Creative Cloud Pro subscription, which includes 22 applications and some additional extras including 100gb of cloud storage, is priced at \$69.99 per month or \$779.88 prepaid annually.

Plans billed annually but paid monthly have a cancellation fee 14 days after purchase. This fee is set at 50% of the remaining contract balance. For example, if the user cancels the plan in the seventh month of an annual plan that costs \$69.99 per month, they would incur a fee of \$174.98. Prepaid annual plans do not offer refunds or cancellation options after 14 days.

Alleged use of user data for AI training [edit | edit source]

Main article: [Adobe's AI policy](#)

Adobe has been accused of using user information for the purpose of training artificial intelligence. In 2024, Adobe updated its Terms of Service, granting itself a "non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free license" to users' content. This grants Adobe permission to reproduce, distribute, create derivative works from, publicly display, publicly perform, and sublicense their users' content. This change raises concerns over conflicts with existing non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and intellectual

property rights. Users were required to accept the new Terms of Service to access their previously stored content.

Adobe has stated that they do not use user content to train generative AI, but they may use it for improving their machine learning systems, with an opt-out available. However, no opt-out option was presented during acceptance of the Terms of Service.

User documents forced into the cloud with no opt-out [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Some of Adobe's iPad applications, including, but not limited to, the digital painting application Adobe Fresco^[13] and the document scanning application Adobe Scan^[14], require an account to access and do not offer any option to opt out of syncing all documents created in these applications with Adobe's cloud servers. Similarly, the new non-Classic versions of Lightroom are fundamentally built around uploading all images to Adobe's cloud.

There is no end-to-end encryption, i.e., Adobe has full access to all of these files. Disabling internet access makes it possible to work offline, but any files created in the affected apps immediately sync to the cloud in the background as soon as the device is connected to a network again.

As an American company, Adobe is subject to the United States Cloud Act, which requires all US companies to grant the US government access to any user data even if stored on servers outside their jurisdiction and comply with requests to help with spy operations upon request.

Spying on users' eBook reading activities [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

In 2014, it was revealed that Adobe Digital Editions, Adobe's e-book reading application, reported extensive information about users' reading habits back to Adobe. This included several unique identifiers; which e-books were added to the application; when which one was opened, and for how long; percentage read; and page navigation information.

All of this information was transmitted completely unencrypted in plain text. This meant that even someone else who was on the same public Wi-Fi as another user would have been able track their reading activities in real time, entirely undetected.^[15]

Disrespect for user choices [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Adobe uses a [dark pattern](#) where settings which a user has disabled are re-enabled during or after each update. The same choice is presented with the desired setting as a default many times in the hope that the user will either give up or accidentally forget to uncheck the option.

For instance, this happened with the option to automatically install updates in the Adobe Flash installer. The same dark pattern is currently used in the Adobe Creative Cloud Desktop application, which presents the same option on each update and requires the user to disable it manually every single time if they do not wish to relinquish control to Adobe over when updates happen.

Whether this is to be attributed to stupidity or malice is debatable, as for instance Adobe Lightroom Classic also has a habit of resetting the language to the system language after every update instead of what was manually chosen in preferences, and the Windows version of Adobe Illustrator had, for a very long time, required the user to manually maximize the application window and re-enable the document rulers after each startup until the issue was finally addressed when the application was moved to a different GUI framework.

User information leaks and data breaches [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

In 2013, credit card information and personal data of 38 million users was exposed in a data breach.^[16]

In 2019, Adobe left about 7.5 million Creative Cloud customer records in a database publicly accessible online in gross negligence. The database was not even protected with a password.^[17]

Adobe Creative Cloud [[edit](#) | [edit source](#)]

Adobe's previous line of creative software has been joined into a wider ecosystem called the *Adobe Creative Cloud*. The Creative Cloud includes updated versions of the previously purchasable software:

- Photoshop
- Lightroom
- InDesign
- After Effects
- Dreamweaver
- Illustrator
- XD
- and many more

Included with the Creative Cloud, depending on plan options, Adobe also offers cloud based storage, typefaces, and stock photos and other stock files.

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