

Richard Matthew Stallman (born March 16, 1953), often shortened to **rms**,^[2] is an American software freedom activist and [computer programmer](#). In September 1983, he launched the [GNU Project](#)^[3] to create a free [Unix-like](#) operating system, and has been the project's lead architect and organizer. With the launch of the GNU Project, he initiated the [free software movement](#); in October 1985 he founded the [Free Software Foundation](#).

Stallman pioneered the concept of [copyleft](#) and he is the main author of several copyleft licenses including the [GNU General Public License](#), the most widely used [free software license](#).^[4] Since the mid-1990s, Stallman has spent most of his time advocating for free software, as well as campaigning against both [software patents](#) and what he sees as excessive extension of copyright laws. Stallman has also developed a number of pieces of widely used software, including the original [Emacs](#),^[5] the [GNU Compiler Collection](#),^[6] the [GNU Debugger](#),^[7] and many tools in the GNU [Coreutils](#).^[citation needed] He co-founded the [League for Programming Freedom](#) in 1989.