## **Software License**

A software license is a legal instrument (usually by way of contract law, with or without printed material) governing the use or redistribution of software. Under United States copyright law all software is copyright protected, except material in the public domain. A typical software license grants an end-user permission to use one or more copies of software in ways where such a use would otherwise potentially constitute copyright infringement of the software owner's exclusive rights under copyright law.

In addition to granting rights and imposing restrictions on the use of software, software licenses typically contain provisions which allocate liability and responsibility between the parties entering into the license agreement. In enterprise and commercial software transactions these terms often include limitations of liability, warranties and warranty disclaimers, and indemnity if the software infringes intellectual property rights of others.

Software licenses can generally be fit into the following categories byroprietary licenses and free and open source. The significant feature that distinguishes them are the terms under which the end-users may further distribute or copy the software.

## Free and open-source software licenses

Free and open-source licenses generally fall under two categories: Those with the aim to have minimal requirements about how the software can be redistributed (permissive licenses), and those that aim to preserve the freedoms that are given to the users by ensuring that all subsequent users receive those rights (copyleft Licenses).

An example of a copyleft free software license is the GNU General Public License (GPL). This license is aimed at giving all user unlimited freedom to use, study, and privately modify the software, and if the user adheres to the terms and conditions of GPL, freedom to redistribute the software or any modifications to it. For instance, any modifications made and redistributed by the end-user must include the source code for these, and the license of any derivative work must not put any additional restrictions beyond what GPL allows.

Examples of permissive free software licenses are the BSD license and the MIT license, which give unlimited permission to use, study, and privately modify the software, and includes only minimal requirements on redistribution. This gives a user the permission to take the code and use it as part of closed-source software or software released under approprietary software license.

Free Software Foundation, the group that maintains The Free Software Definition, maintains a non-exhaustive list of free software licenses. The list distinguishes

between free software licenses that are compatible or incompatible with the FSF license of choice, the GNU General Public License, which is a copyleft license. The list also contains licenses which the FSF considers non-free for various reasons, but which are sometimes mistaken as being free.