



≡ Advanced > **Development Channels**

Advanced

Development Channels

Last updated: 2026-01-21

OpenClaw ships three update channels:

stable: `npm dist-tag latest .`

beta: `npm dist-tag beta (builds under test).`

dev: moving head of `main` (git). `npm dist-tag: dev` (when published).

We ship builds to **beta**, test them, then **promote a vetted build to latest** without changing the version number – dist-tags are the source of truth for npm installs.

Switching channels

Git checkout:

```
openclaw update --channel stable
openclaw update --channel beta
openclaw update --channel dev
```

`stable / beta` check out the latest matching tag (often the same tag).

`dev` switches to `main` and rebases on the upstream.

npm/pnpm global install:



```
openclaw update --channel stable
openclaw update --channel beta
openclaw update --channel dev
```

This updates via the corresponding npm dist-tag (`latest` , `beta` , `dev`).

When you **explicitly** switch channels with `--channel` , OpenClaw also aligns the install method:

`dev` ensures a git checkout (default `~/openclaw` , override with `OPENCLAW_GIT_DIR`), updates it, and installs the global CLI from that checkout.

`stable` / `beta` installs from npm using the matching dist-tag.

Tip: if you want `stable` + `dev` in parallel, keep two clones and point your gateway at the `stable` one.

Plugins and channels

When you switch channels with `openclaw update` , OpenClaw also syncs plugin sources:

`dev` prefers bundled plugins from the git checkout.

`stable` and `beta` restore npm-installed plugin packages.

Tagging best practices

Tag releases you want git checkouts to land on (`vYYYY.M.D` or `vYYYY.M.D-<patch>`).

Keep tags immutable: never move or reuse a tag.



npm dist-tags remain the source of truth for npm installs:

latest → stable

beta › → candidate build

dev → main snapshot (optional)

macOS app availability

Beta and dev builds may **not** include a macOS app release. That's OK:

The git tag and npm dist-tag can still be published.

Call out “no macOS build for this beta” in release notes or changelog.

< [Deploy on Northflank](#)

Powered by [mintlify](#)