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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:

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

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

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