Troubleshooting Windows volume activation

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Product activation is the process of validating software after it's installed on a specific computer. Activation confirms that the product is genuine (not a fraudulent copy) and that the product key or serial number is valid and has not been compromised or revoked. Activation also establishes a link or relationship between the product key and the installation.

Volume activation is the process of activating volume-licensed products. To become a volume licensing customer, an organization must set up a volume licensing agreement with Microsoft. Microsoft offers customized volume licensing programs that accommodate the organization's size and purchasing preference. For more information, see the Microsoft Volume Licensing Service Center ☒ .

The Windows Server 2016 Activation Guide focuses on the Key Management Service (KMS) activation technology. This section addresses common issues and provides troubleshooting guidelines for KMS and several other volume activation technologies.

Best practices for volume activation

The following articles provide technical information and best practices for Microsoft's volume activation technologies.

Key Management Service (KMS)

- Plan for volume activation
- Understanding KMS
- Deploying KMS Activation
- Configuring KMS Hosts
- Configuring DNS
- Activate using Key Management Service

Active Directory-based activation (ADBA)

- Deploy Active-Directory-based Activation
- Activate using Active Directory-based activation
- Active Directory-Based Activation overview

Multiple Activation Key (MAK) activation

- Using MAK Activation
- Understanding MAK Activation
- Activating MAK Clients

Subscription activation

- Windows 10 Subscription Activation
- Deploy Windows 10 Enterprise licenses
- Windows 10 Enterprise E3 in CSP

Resources for troubleshooting activation issues

The following articles provide guidelines and information about tools for troubleshooting volume activation issues:

- Guidelines for troubleshooting the Key Management Service (KMS)
- Slmgr.vbs options for obtaining volume activation information
- Example: Troubleshooting ADBA clients that do not activate

The following articles provide guidance for addressing more specific activation issues:

- Resolving common activation error codes
- KMS activation: known issues
- MAK activation: known issues
- Guidelines for troubleshooting DNS-related activation issues
- How to rebuild the Tokens.dat file