

Types of Software

When you write content, create a piece of art, or engineer something, your work is protected for your use and distribution. There's usually some other caveats depending on the laws in your country. But in general, copyright is used when creating original work. Software that's written is also protected by copyright. Software developers can choose what they do with their software. For commercial software, it's common to let someone else use their software if they pay for a license. For non-commercial software, a popular option is making it open source. This means that developers will let other developers share, modify, and distribute their software for free. Score, some amazing software efforts have been developed and advanced because of open source. One major example is the Linux kernel, which is used in the Android OS, and in enterprise and personal computers. Hundreds of millions of devices are running Linux at this very second. LibreOffice, GIMP, and Firefox are other examples of open-source software. Open-source projects are usually contributed by developers who work on the project for free in their free time. These massive software development efforts were essentially built by a community of volunteers. How great is that? In an IT environment, you'll have to pay special attention to the types of software you use. Some may require you to pay multiple licenses to use it, others might be free and open source. It's important to check the license agreement of any software before you install it. We've talked about some of the basics of software, but now let's shift to the two types of software you'll encounter categorized by function. Application software is any software created to fulfill a specific need, like a text editor, web browser, or graphic editor. System software is software used to keep our core system running, like operating system tools and utilities. There's also a type of system software that we haven't defined yet called firmware. Firmware is software that's permanently stored on a computer component. Can you think of a firmware that we've talked about already? If you thought of the BIOS, you're right. The BIOS helps start up the hardware on your computer, and also helps load up your operating system, so it's important that it's in a permanent location. I should also call out software versions. These are important because they tell us what features were added to a specific software iteration. You'll encounter lots of software versions while you work with software. Developers might sometimes use a different standard when distinguishing a version, but in general, the majority of versions follow a sequential numbering trend. You might see something like this, 1.2.5 or 1.3.4. Which of these do you think is the newer version? It's 1.3.4 because it's a larger number than 1.2.5. You can read more about software versioning in the supplemental reading. You'll have to work with all kinds of software. Fortunately, it basically all works the same way. Once you learn how one piece of software works, you'll understand how others might function.

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