

Open Source Software Licensing

Open-source *adj.* /oʊ.pən soʊɪs/

Of, or relating to a product which is licensed to permit modifications and redistribution of its source code. [5]

License Release Dates



“ Making Linux GPL'd was definitely the best thing I ever did.



Linus Torvalds

	Copyright	Copyleft	Allows proprietary use	Standard disclaimer	Name usable in promotion
GNU GPL	●	●	●	●	●
GNU LGPL	●	●	●	●	●
MIT/X11	●	●	●	●	●
BSD (3 clause)	●	●	●	●	●
Artistic License	●	●	●	●	●
Apache	●	●	●	●	●
Public Domain	●	●	●	●	●

Copyleft *adj.* /kɒpiːləft/

Allowing use, distribution, and modification on the condition that any redistributions or modifications also be licensed under the same condition and, in the case of computer software, are accompanied by source code. [2]

Public Domain *n.* /pʌblɪk dəʊmeɪn/

The feature of intellectual property being not protected under patent or copyright, i.e. no person or other legal entity can establish proprietary interests. [3]

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

The idea of using other peoples work and ideas to help with your own is not new; in fact the phrase “standing on the shoulders of giants” has been around since the twelfth century. The free software movement has embraced this idea, by enabling people to access, extend and reuse source code written under an open source licence. This idea is considered to be the antithesis of “reinventing the wheel”, a practice which is common when software is protected by copyright and hidden behind binaries. Because of these restrictive licences, a lot of a programmer’s productivity is spent re-implementing something that has been done a thousand times before. With many open source licences, the only restrictions enforced are those of attribution, such that all contributing authors may be recognised for their work, and that any derivative works are released under the same licence, leading to more available code for people to use.

Choosing An Open Source License

