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The Genuine Article

The internet is full of deals for cheap computer software, but you may not receive a unique, genuine software license. Is there any harm in installing copied or pirated software that is a fraction of the normal retail price or borrowed from your friend? How can you tell if it is a genuine, legal software product? This month we explore how pirated software can affect you and how to avoid it.

Consequences

Hidden surprises – In a recent IDG report, 25% of the web sites studied offering pirated Windows software also attempted to install spyware or Trojan software to compromise the security of your systems.

Reduced functionality – Many of the key features in Windows Vista are disabled if a valid license key has not been entered, e.g. the visual Windows Aero interface and the performance-enhancing ReadyBoost USB feature. If a genuine license is not activated, the computer will go into reduced functionality mode, with no desktop, no start menu or task bar and access only to the web browser for 1 hour periods.

No support or upgrades – Product support from the manufacturer and some software upgrades (e.g. Internet Explorer 7) are only available with a genuine license.

Legal action – Companies like Microsoft take this issue very seriously and regularly gather evidence and file legal proceedings against those who infringe on their software copyrights. Without a genuine license, your possession of the software is also counted as a breach of the copyright protection laws.

How to tell

Reputable reseller – Computer Troubleshooters are committed to honest,

ethical business practices and will only sell and install genuine, legal software products.

Media – With most software purchases you should receive a CD or DVD. Check any product-specific security features such as holographic labels. If the software was pre-installed on your new computer, you may get a 'Recovery' CD branded with your PC manufacturer's name. Note: Pre-installed Microsoft Office 2007 can now ship with a 'Medialess License Kit' with no CD present. Certificate of Authenticity – Genuine Microsoft software is shipped with a bar code label on the packaging or on your computer. Ensure that it is intact and does not show signs of being tampered with.

Versions – Manufacturers price their products according to their target market, so you may find a cheaper price on 'Home' or 'Student and Teacher' versions. Make sure you are purchasing the correct version for your intended use and that you comply with any rules in the license agreement, including how many computers your software can be installed on.

If in doubt – check with the manufacturer. They are more than happy to answer your questions to ensure you are getting a genuine product for your money. Their website may also have additional information on what to look for (e.g. www.microsoft.com/howtotell)

Talk to your local Computer Troubleshooter about reviewing your current computer software and ensuring you have sufficient genuine, legal licenses. An internal audit now may save you the heartache of legal action or fines in the future.

**Contact your local Computer
Troubleshooters**

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