Commercial Licensing brief

Licensing Windows Server Remote Desktop Services and Microsoft desktop applications for use with RDS

This brief applies to all Microsoft Commercial Licensing programs.

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Summary

This licensing brief helps to clarify Microsoft licensing policies for Windows Server Remote Desktop Services (RDS) and Microsoft desktop applications for use with Windows Server RDS.

What's new in this brief

This brief replaces previous versions of two briefs: *Licensing Windows Server 2012 R2 Remote Desktop Services* and *Licensing of Microsoft Desktop Application Software for Use with Windows Server Remote Desktop Services*. The content has been combined into this single brief.

Details

Remote Desktop Services (formerly known as Terminal Services) accelerates and extends desktop and application deployments to any device, improving remote worker efficiency, while helping to keep critical intellectual property secure and simplify regulatory compliance. Remote Desktop Services enables virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI), session-based desktops, and applications, allowing users to work anywhere. Microsoft RDS provides three deployment choices so that customers can have the flexibility to deploy the right type of VDI desktop for their users, all from a single platform. Customers can host either sessions-based desktop, pooled virtual machines, or personal virtual machines.

RDS technologies requiring RDS CALs

Microsoft licensing policies for Windows Server Remote Desktop Services (including the components that are included in Windows Server 2008, Windows Server 2008 R2, Windows Server 2012, Windows Server 2012 R2, and Windows Server 2016) require that, in addition to a Windows Server Client Access License (CAL) (acquired either standalone or through Microsoft Core CAL Suite or Microsoft Enterprise CAL Suite), you must acquire a Windows

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Server RDS CAL for each user or device that (i) directly or indirectly accesses any of the RDS functionality and/or (ii) directly or indirectly accesses the server software to interact with a graphical user interface (GUI) using RDS functionality or any other third-party technology.

Remote Desktop Services functionality is defined as those features or services that are running when enabling the Remote Desktop Services role and/or role service(s) in Windows Server 2008, Windows Server 2008 R2, Windows Server 2012, Windows Server 2012 R2, or Windows Server 2016. This includes, but is not limited to, Remote Desktop Gateway, Remote Desktop Web Access, Remote Desktop Connection Broker, Remote Desktop Session Host, and Remote Desktop Virtualization Host.

Note: No RDS CALs are required for up to two users to access instances of the server software for administration purposes.

Available RDS CALs

The following types of RDS Server Client Access Licenses are available:

RDS Device CAL: Permits one device (used by any user) to use Remote Desktop Services functionality on any of your servers.

RDS User CAL: Permits one user (using any device) to use Remote Desktop Services functionality on any of your servers.

RDS External Connector: Permits multiple external users to access a single Remote Desktop server. If you have multiple servers, you need multiple external connectors in addition to any required Windows Server External Connectors.

You may choose to combine RDS Device CALs and RDS User CALs simultaneously with the server software. You may permanently reassign your device CAL from one device to another or your user CAL from one user to another. You may temporarily reassign your device CAL to a loaner device while the first device is out of service, or reassign your user CAL to a temporary worker while the worker is absent.

Licensing Microsoft desktop applications for use with Windows Server RDS

The content below is limited to Microsoft Office per device on-premises licenses and does not include per user Online Services customer scenarios.

Microsoft licenses its desktop applications on a per device basis. Per device licensing means a customer must obtain a license for each desktop on or from which the product is used or accessed. For example, when a desktop application is accessed remotely across an organization using Windows Server Remote Desktop Services, a separate desktop application license is required for each desktop from which the application is accessed.

Use of Microsoft desktop applications in a Remote Desktop Services environment requires that the suite/edition, components, language, and version of the license acquired for the desktops from which the desktop application is remotely accessed matches that of the copy of the application being accessed. For example:

- **Product (or suite)**: Microsoft Office Standard 2016 and Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2016 are different products (or suites). A desktop licensed for Office Standard 2016 may not remotely access and use Office Professional Plus 2016.
- **Components**: A license for a suite (for example, a Microsoft Office suite) for the accessing desktop must have the same components as the copy of the Microsoft Office suite being remotely accessed.
- **Language**: The English/multi-language version of the Microsoft Office suite may not be accessed remotely from a desktop, which is licensed for a single language version of the Microsoft Office suite. Likewise, remote access to a licensed copy of Microsoft Office Multi-Language Pack 2013 requires the accessing desktop be licensed for the Office Multi-Language Pack 2013.

- **Version**: Microsoft Office 2016 and Microsoft Office 2013 are different versions. You may not remotely access Microsoft Office 2016 from a desktop that is licensed for Microsoft Office 2013.

Microsoft Office retail (full packaged product) and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) products released in 2007 or later do not permit network use.

Windows Server 2016 is licensed under a Per Core + Client Access License (CAL) model. The Per Core + CAL model provides both user and device licensing options. Customers with more devices than users can license users rather than devices. In contrast, Microsoft desktop applications are licensed under a device-based model. This means, while user CALs permit a user to access the server software from any device in a Remote Desktop Services environment, a Microsoft desktop application license permits that user to access the application only from the desktop to which the license is assigned.

Remote Desktop Services can be used by both Windows desktops and non-Windows desktops (for example, Linux PCs or thin client devices). Microsoft desktop applications must be licensed for every desktop from which they are remotely accessed regardless of whether that desktop is a Windows desktop.

Dos and *don'ts* of using Microsoft Office with Windows Server Remote Desktop Services: sample scenarios

Remote Desktop Services functionality provides a rich Windows desktop experience and delivers Microsoft desktop applications such as Microsoft Office to users of hardware running earlier operating systems that are licensed for those applications. Remote Desktop Services can help you centrally manage and support deploying Microsoft Office in your organization.

Note: Every device that uses Windows Server Remote Desktop Services to remotely access Microsoft Office requires a Remote Desktop Services CAL, in addition to Windows Server CAL and a Microsoft Office license. Dedicate a Microsoft Office license for every desktop on or from which you plan to use or access Microsoft Office, even if that use is only occasional. Examples of desktops that might access Microsoft Office using Windows Server Remote Desktop Services functionality include Windows-based workstations, Macintosh computers, and UNIX workstations. The servers hosting the applications do not require Microsoft Office licenses.

Scenario 1: Remote use in a call center

A customer has 50 Windows-based desktops in a call center and would like to use Microsoft Office on these. Two servers running Windows Server Remote Desktop Services support using Microsoft Office on these desktops. The customer needs to acquire 50 Microsoft Office licenses—one for each desktop that accesses Microsoft Office on the servers.

Even if a desktop is expected to use Microsoft Office infrequently, the customer still needs to acquire and assign a Microsoft Office license to that desktop. If 20 of these desktops never use Microsoft Office, then the customer only needs to acquire 30 Microsoft Office licenses. In addition, the customer needs RDS CALs and Windows CALs for each device or user and one or more Windows Server licenses for each server.

Scenario 2: Call centers with multiple shifts

A customer has 100 Windows-based desktops in a call center and would like to use Microsoft Office on all of them using Remote Desktop Services. The workers who sit at these desktops work in three eight-hour shifts, so the 100 desktops support 300 workers. Whenever a shift change takes place, the current worker closes Microsoft Office and logs off the server so that a new worker can log on and begin running Microsoft Office.

The customer needs to acquire 100 Microsoft Office licenses—one for each desktop from which Microsoft Office is used. Windows Server licenses and Windows and RDS CALs are also required. Device-based CALs may be the right option when the users outnumber the devices.

Note: The number of desktops, and not the number of workers, is important to this licensing scenario.

Scenario 3: Desktop licenses for employees

A customer has 40 Windows-based desktops and 30 employees who use Microsoft Office on all 40 desktops.

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The customer needs to acquire 40 Microsoft Office licenses. This is consistent with the per device licensing policy.

Scenario 4: Laptops as secondary portable devices

A customer has 20 portable desktops (for example, laptop computers) in addition to 100 desktop devices licensed under a Select Agreement.

Under Select and Open Programs, Microsoft Office licenses include secondary or portable device rights for those 20 laptops. Users may not remotely access Office software running in a Windows Server Remote Desktop Services environment from those 20 secondary, portable devices. Secondary portable device rights do not cover network use.

Scenario 5: Laptops as qualified desktops

An Enterprise Agreement customer has 20 portable desktops (for example, laptop computers) that already have Microsoft Office licensed and installed on them.

Under an Enterprise Agreement, all devices should be counted as qualified desktops and separately licensed for Enterprise products (for example, Office), including those 20 portable devices. The users of these 20 portable desktops occasionally connect to a server running Windows Server Remote Desktop Services to access Microsoft Office remotely while they are using a dial-up or broadband connection. As long the 20 portable desktops are licensed for the same edition, language, and version of Microsoft Office being remotely accessed, that use is covered under the licenses assigned to those 20 portable desktops. For both the licensed desktop and the separately licensed portable desktop, Microsoft Office may be used locally or accessed remotely using Remote Desktop Services or similar functionality.

Note: Do not deploy and use Microsoft Office with Windows Server Remote Desktop Services with the expectation to just count and license the greatest number of desktops from which Microsoft Office is accessed at any one time. The Microsoft Office licenses may not be shared or used concurrently for different desktops. Even if you have fewer sessions active at any given time than the overall number of desktops from which you access the software, you must still count all the desktops. Every desktop must have a license regardless of whether it is used at any given point in time.

Frequently asked questions

1. **Do I need an RDS CAL if I am using a third-party technology like Citrix XenApp, Citrix XenDesktop, Ericom PowerTerm WebConnect, Quest Virtual Access Suite, GraphOn Go-Global, and so on to directly or indirectly access the server software to interact with the GUI?**

   Yes. An RDS CAL is required for any technology used to directly or indirectly interact with the GUI. This includes (but is not limited to) using Microsoft Remote Desktop Services or other third-party software that enables multiuser scenarios on Windows Server.

2. **What version of the RDS CALs do I need?**

   The CAL version must correspond to the server software version it accesses. Older version of CALs cannot be used with the newer version of the server software, but newer version RDS CALs can be used with an older version of the server software as defined in the interoperability matrix at http://social.technet.microsoft.com/wiki/contents/articles/14988.rds-and-ts-cal-interoperability-matrix.aspx.

   The only exception to this rule are the R2 server releases where the older CALs can sometimes work with the newer R2 release of server software. For example, Windows Server 2012 RDS CALs can be used with Windows Server 2012 R2, and there are no new Windows Server 2012 R2 RDS CALs required.

3. **Do I need an RDS CAL if I am not running a multiuser environment but use functionality in Remote Desktop Services—for example, Remote Desktop Gateway?**

   Yes. An RDS CAL is required to use any functionality included in the Remote Desktop Services role in Windows Server. For example, if you are using RDS Gateway and/or Remote Desktop Web Access to provide access to a Windows client operating system on an individual PC, both an RDS CAL and Windows Server CAL are required.

4. **Do I have to acquire RDS CALs if I am only remotely administering Windows Server operating systems by using Remote Desktop for Administration?**

   No. Up to two users may connect to the Windows Server operating system simultaneously to perform administrative functions without needing any RDS CALs. Additional administrative users need the appropriate RDS CALs.

5. **If I am using VMware to enable a VDI solution, do I need an RDS CAL?**

   If the solution uses any RDS roles (Remote Desktop (RD) Gateway, RD Web Access, RD Connection Broker, RD Session Host, or RD Virtualization Host), then an RDS CAL is required.

6. **What are the use terms for desktop applications in a Remote Desktop Services environment (where the application runs on the server and not on the client desktop)?**

   Device-based licensing means a license must be obtained for each desktop on or from which the product is used or accessed. You may not share a license for the product with another desktop or assign it to different desktops. Therefore, in a Remote Desktop Services environment, you must acquire a license for all desktops that access the product running on the server.

   Note: Microsoft Office retail (full packaged product) and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) products released in 2007 or later do not permit network use.

7. **Is there a separate desktop application licensing model for use of software with Windows Server Remote Desktop Services?**

   No. Use of applications with Windows Server Remote Desktop Services does not change the Microsoft per device desktop application licensing model. Each desktop on or from which the software is accessed or used requires a desktop application license.

8. **In addition to licensing the desktops that are accessing Microsoft Office using Remote Desktop Services, do I need to purchase a license for Microsoft Office for the server that is hosting the application for other desktops to access?**

   No. A license is not required for the copy installed on the server.

9. **Can I install a retail or OEM version of Microsoft Office on a network server?**

   Microsoft Office retail (full packaged product) and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) products released in 2007 or later do not permit network use.

10. **If a desktop is licensed for a Microsoft desktop application, can I use that application both locally on the desktop and remotely using Remote Desktop Services?**

    Yes, if that license was acquired in Commercial Licensing. Commercial Licensing desktop application licenses give the customer the right to locally install the software and to use the same software remotely from a network server using Windows Server Remote Desktop Services (or similar technology). Local installation is not a prerequisite for network use. In some cases, local installation may not be technically possible or desired.

    However, Microsoft Office retail (full packaged product) and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) products released in 2007 or later do not permit network use, but only locally installed software.

11. **If I already have a desktop license for a desktop application, what additional licenses do I need for a desktop to use the software from that desktop remotely in a Remote Desktop Services environment?**

    In addition to the license for the desktop application, you need Windows Server and Remote Desktop Services Client Access Licenses for that desktop for remote access using Remote Desktop Services.

12. **I have installed Microsoft Office on a network server for access and use using Windows Server Remote Desktop Services. I have acquired Remote Desktop Services User Client Access Licenses for each of my employees. I want my employees to be able to access Microsoft Office from any company managed desktop. What licenses are needed to properly license Microsoft Office within this environment?**

Because Microsoft Office is licensed through a device-based licensing model only, each desktop that is used to access Microsoft Office using Remote Desktop Services must have a separate Microsoft Office license dedicated to it. Licenses for Microsoft Office cannot be shared across desktops to support concurrent use. In addition, you may not reassign a license within 90 days of the last assignment. Furthermore, Microsoft Office retail (full packaged product) and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) products released in 2007 or later do not permit network use.

13. **I have installed Microsoft Office on a network server for access and use using Windows Server Remote Desktop Services. I want my employees to be able to access Microsoft Office from third-party devices. What licenses are needed to properly license Microsoft Office within this environment?**

    With active Software Assurance for Office in Commercial Licensing, you can exercise your roaming rights benefit to enable users to remotely access the Office software on a qualified third-party device, regardless of the technology used to access the software. Roaming rights do not permit the Office software be installed and run locally on the third-party device. Roaming rights also apply only to the primary user of a licensed device with Software Assurance coverage, and are subject to the limitation on the number of users in the base license terms.

14. **I have just purchased several new desktops from an OEM with preinstalled licenses for Microsoft Office Professional 2016. Can I install the software on a network server and use these desktops to remotely access it? What if the copy running on the server is licensed under my Commercial Licensing agreement—does that change the answer?**

    The answer is no in both cases. First, the OEM license does not permit access and use from a network server. Even if you are licensed under your Commercial Licensing agreement to use the software on a network server from licensed desktops, your OEM Office licenses do not permit you to access the Commercial Licensing software on the server. The OEM versions and Commercial Licensing editions of Microsoft Office are not the same. However, within 90 days of purchase, you can acquire Software Assurance coverage for your OEM licenses under your Commercial Licensing agreement. Doing so gives you rights to a Commercial Licensing Office Standard edition (please refer to the Product Terms for a more complete description of the rules related to purchasing Software Assurance for OEM software). You may use the software locally on those licensed desktops enrolled in Software Assurance or remotely from a network server (for example, using Remote Desktop Services).

15. **I have Office Professional Plus 2016 installed on a network server. Can I access this copy of Microsoft Office using Remote Desktop Services from a desktop that has Office Professional Plus 2013 installed and is covered by Software Assurance?**

    Yes. To use Office Professional Plus 2016 in this scenario, you would need to be licensed for Office Professional Plus 2016. A desktop that is licensed for and has Office Professional Plus 2013 installed and is covered by active Software Assurance is licensed for Office Professional Plus 2016.

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