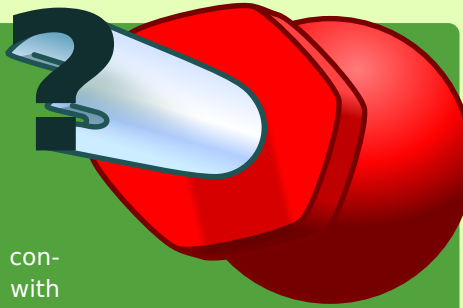


A comparison

Free Software gives us essential freedom that other software denies us. Most of us have gotten used to such serious digital restrictions, which is why an analogy with a very common physical tool is helpful.

Free Software can be used as a tool. Let us paint a picture of the absurd consequences it would have if for example screwdrivers could only be used with the same restrictions as nonfree Software:



Screwdrivers would no longer be standardized and would only work with screws made by the same company.



Screwdrivers licenses would only allow the unscrewing of screws. To fasten one, we would need a more expensive screwdriver from the same manufacturer.



Only one company would be allowed to manufacture screwdrivers because the idea would have been patented. Only an expensive trial might result in the general right to use, for example, pliers in combination with screws.



We would not be allowed to modify screwdrivers that we bought to adapt them to our needs. It would, for example, be forbidden to wrap textured tape around the grip to prevent the screwdriver from slipping out of our hands.



It would be illegal to repair a broken screwdriver without the permission of the manufacturer.



New screwdrivers and screws would be put on the market constantly. They would not be compatible with older models. We would constantly need to buy new screwdrivers to service new appliances or devices.



It would be illegal to lend or resell screwdrivers.



Screwdrivers would secretly spy on us and send insidiously collected information to external unknown persons, without our knowledge.

No-one would use screwdrivers whose use was restricted thusly. There are no reasonable grounds to accept such terms. Not for tools, not for software.

The freedoms we find self-evident with tools, are also possible with computers. Free programs can be installed anywhere without worries. Since Free Software rely on Open Standards, your files can still be opened with multiple programs years later.

On the other hand, software patent, Digital Restriction Management (DRM), closed standards, proprietary software licences or unfair Terms Of Service are ways to restrict the users freedom.

Where can Free Software be used?

On desktop computers and laptops:

There is an incredible number of Free Software available for all your tasks, projects and daily use. Here are some examples:

GNU/Linux is a Free Software operating system. It comes in many different flavours, called distributions. Some are very suitable for beginners, other were made to suit specific professional needs.

Mozilla Firefox, VLC, Audacity or LibreOffice are widely-used Free Software, and there are thousands of others.

On your other devices:

It became common for one to carry around several computers, all the time. We call them 'smart phones' 'tablets' or 'e-readers' but what they are is computers, often badly restricted.

Android phones are one example of devices that can be liberated. For more information, check

<https://freeyourandroid.org>

On all computers, everywhere, all around us:

The list of basic electronic objects controlled by computers, themselves controlled by software, has almost no end. Free Software accounts for a large proportion of those 'embedded software'.

ovens	televisions	heating systems
cd-players	cars	trains
dish-washers	projectors	remote-controlled helicopters...

The infrastructure of the internet as well as the 'web' are also largely relying on Free Software.

modems	DNS servers	mail-servers
routers	data bases	eCommerce software...
VPN	web-servers	

Free as in Freedom not Free as in Free Beer

You do not have to pay for most Free Software. A lot of restricted software is also free of charge, but Free Software is not about price, but liberty.

When you don't control a program, the program controls you. Whoever controls the software therefore controls you.

For example, nobody is allowed to study how a nonfree program works and what it actually does on your computer or phone. Sometimes it 'only' does not do exactly what you expected, but there are also programs and apps that contain malicious 'features' like leaking your data without your knowledge.

Running exclusively Free Software on your computer or device puts you in full control. Even though you may not have the skills to exercise yourself all of the four freedoms, you will benefit from the knowledge and expertise of vibrant communities .

Consider showing your appreciation by paying developers voluntarily. This way you also ensure that you are the customer, and not the product.

What is Free Software?

- 1 Use:** Software that everybody can run freely, for any purpose.
- 2 Study:** Software that everybody can inspect and adapt to special needs or wishes.
- 3 Share:** Software that everybody can copy and share freely.
- 4 Improve:** Software that can be improved and redistributed: the whole community benefits from improvements.

Only if it grants all the four freedoms to everybody, a software is really Free Software.

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About the FSFE

This flyer was printed by the Free Software Foundation Europe (FSFE), a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting Free Software and working to build a free digital society.

Access to software determines how we can take part in our society. Therefore, FSFE is dedicated to ensure equal access and participation in the information age by fighting for digital freedom.



Nobody should ever be forced to use software that does not grant the freedoms to **use, study, share and improve** the software. You should have the right to shape technology as you see fit.

Our work is done by a community of people committed to these goals. If you would like to join and help us to achieve our goals, no matter what is your background, there are many ways to contribute :

<http://fsfe.org/contribute>

Support Our Work

Donations are critical to our strength and help us to act autonomous. You can support our work by joining the Fellowship and enable us to continue fighting for software freedom wherever necessary:

<http://fsfe.org/join>

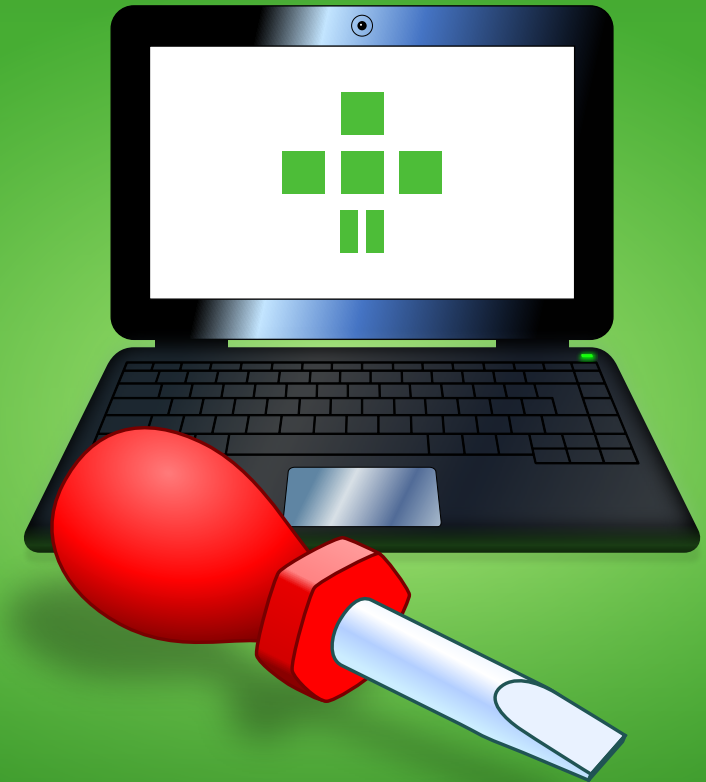


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Freedom



What do Free Software and tools have in common?