

Computer Tips

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Michael's Computer Services

Is Your Software Legal?

Suppose you spend months creating a piece of music. You put time, money, and many late nights into it, and finally it is finished. The next day, someone comes and copies your work and freely gives it away to everyone. How would you feel?

When we were kids, we would read stories of pirates with their daring raids on merchant ships, and their buried treasure on some out-of-the-way island. However, in spite of their intrigue, pirates were really common thieves, who eventually met the strong arm of the law.

Today, we do not see much of the pirates of our story books. However, a modern form of our storybook tale has emerged.

Software piracy is a major problem, driven largely by the fact that we all love something free. If we can save money no matter how we might do it, then we think it a good thing.

Software comes under the category known as 'intellectual property'. An author, whether of a book, piece of music, painting, or software, all own that work because they created it. To keep the integrity of their work and to provide them with control of its distribution, the author takes out a copyright on their work.

All computer software is copyrighted. However, software is different in its copyright than are books or paintings, in that the software is only licensed. When you purchase software for your computer, you do not actually own the software; rather you have paid for the license to use that software on your computer. Your continued use of the software is governed by whether or not you abide by the terms of the license.

All software, unless it is specifically licensed for several computers, is licensed for use on a single computer only. Most current software titles have product keys, which uniquely identifies each software disk. This no doubt arouses the resentment of many, as it means you must buy multiple copies if you have more than one computer. Many folk do not like this restriction, and they freely copy and distribute software to others, thus avoiding the need for them to buy the software.

While it is allowed under the software copyright law to make a backup copy of your own original software, it is a breach of that law to copy and distribute the software to anyone else. Software piracy is very common, and because of this it is regarded as 'cool' and OK, but in reality it is illegal. If caught, these software pirates face hefty fines and possible jail sentences.

The better way is buy your own original software from its manufacturer. Not only do you have a clear conscience, but you also are guaranteed a good clean copy of the software, with a warranty as well. With illegal software, you frequently get a bad copy, a suspect product key, and very often, viruses. You are also excluded from any technical support if you run into difficulties.

For further information or help with your PC, please call us on 4171 0981, or email us at info@mcsit.com.au.

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