

Computer Bits by Mark Eggert of Raad One Network Solutions, Inc.

Welcome to Computer Bits, a series of articles on computers and network information. This is another article with Questions & Answers.

The following question was asked a few weeks ago and I think it is something that needs to be addressed. **I've been seeing in magazine and on the web OEM versions or software for sale. It's cheaper than Full versions of the software, so what's the catch?**

This is a very good question as we are all looking for ways to keep our operating budgets low. OEM stands for Original Equipment Manufacturer, these are the companies that assemble and sell their own brand of computers. These companies include OEM versions of software with the computers they sell. This software is the operating system, MS Windows, and applications such as MS Office or MS Word. We all know the major ones; HP, Dell, Gateway, IBM, Compaq, Milwaukee PC, Inet Computers, etc.. But did you know that companies that sell hardware components; such as hard drives, motherboards, CPUs, and memory, are also OEMs? And it is these companies that are selling the OEM versions of software you're seeing in magazine ads and on the web.

OEM software is meant to be preloaded on the computer before it is sold. Therefore, you will not get any media or manuals for it. This makes it cheaper for the company and for you. Now the separate OEM software you can purchase does come on a CD but that's all you get. Since it is meant to be preloaded, the companies selling it separately will usually ship an old hard drive or motherboard with the software to be legal. The major restriction on OEM software is that it's non-transferable and non-upgradeable. This means that when you replace the computer the software came on or you installed it on, the software is also retired. **That's the catch!**

In summary, it's fine to get and use OEM software that comes preloaded on a computer. But I strongly advise you against buying separate OEM software as you'll have to buy the software again when you want to upgrade it or you replace the computer it was loaded on.

If you have a computer or network question you'd like answered and you think others would like to know the answer too, please forward them to me. My email address is meggert@wi.rr.com, my phone number is 262-679-7704 and my fax number is 262-679-7664.