

Product Activation Questions and Answers

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1. Introduction

1.1 What is Product Activation?

Product activation is a software-based license management technology incorporated into many Autodesk® products. It is a secure and hassle-free process that authenticates licensed users running Autodesk software. The process verifies that the serial number is legitimate and has not been activated on more computers than are eligible. It does not affect the ability of licensed users to use their software the way they have always done. It is similar to the activation mechanism in Autodesk products in the past but provides additional capabilities for security and new sales models.

1.2 What happens during Product Activation?

Product activation is a series of simple steps that takes place during the start-up of your Autodesk software. Users transmit their serial number, a request code and registration data, which is authenticated with the Autodesk back-office system to activate the product. The entire activation and registration process is quick and easy, and the majority of users will experience the process only once.

1.3 How does Product Activation work?

The activation process uses minimal information about the software and computer to create a request for a product license.

The activation request is composed of the software serial number, product version and language. In addition, a machine ID and request codes are created. The machine ID is a 64-bit randomly computed value and cannot be used to identify the make or model of your computer or any of its components. The machine ID is then embedded within the request code.

The request code is a unique number that is generated by the activation technology and is required, along with a serial number, for product registration and activation. The request code is displayed next to the serial number in the Register Today interface within the software. The request code is used to identify an individual activation request and contains no other information about the product or hardware.

The activation request is sent to Autodesk either through a secure Internet connection or via email. If the request is valid, a valid activation code is returned that enables the product immediately.

1.4 Does this mean I can't use the product on my desktop and laptop? How many activations are permitted per license?

Autodesk recognizes you may sometimes need to operate the software when you are away from your usual work location, such as while working from home. To accommodate

this need, product activation for standalone licenses lets you install and activate the software on a second computer owned or controlled by you. Please note that the software may be used by only one person and that only one of the two copies may be used at a time. Consult your Autodesk End User License Agreement for complete details for using the software on a second computer.

1.5 I usually buy multiple boxes or copies of Autodesk software, but use just one of the CD serial numbers to install on all of my computers. Will product activation prevent this?

Yes. In cases such as this, Autodesk highly recommends purchasing software as a “multi-seat standalone” deployment. With a multi-seat standalone deployment, you receive a single CD and a single serial number that can be used on as many computers as you buy licenses for. Contact your reseller for more details.

1.6 What if I buy a new computer and want to use the software on this new computer?

If you upgrade or replace your computer, you can transfer your license using the Portable License utility or you may be able to activate your software on the new computer.

1.8 I use a network license server (FLEXlm™) to manage my Autodesk software licenses. How does product activation affect my licenses?

Product activation only applies to standalone and multi-seat standalone licenses. Network licenses are not affected in any way by product activation.

1.9 What common changes can trigger the need for reactivation?

Significantly changing the primary boot disk.
Tampering with any of the activation services or software license files.
Modifying the system date/time properties on a computer that has a time-limited software license.
Reinstalling your operating system.

1.10 Does the activation process ever send data to Autodesk after I activate my product?

No. No data is transmitted unless reactivation of your software license is required. If your software license becomes invalid, re-activation will be required.

1.10 What if the company shuts down? I paid for the product and should be able to use it in perpetuity.

The Software End User License Agreement grants the user of an Autodesk product the right to use it in perpetuity. In the unlikely event of the company's shutting down, we will enable automatic approval of all activation requests or provide other technical means allowing users to continue using our products.

1.7 I re-format my hard drive often. What impact does activation have in this situation?

You may need to reactivate your software license if you reformat your primary boot disk, although reactivation can be avoided. The Autodesk Standalone Licensing Guide (available in the Help system) outlines a few simple steps that help prevent the need for reactivation when you reformat the hard drive.

2. Product Activation Details

2.1 Why does Autodesk require Autodesk customers to activate their software?

Autodesk has embraced an industry standard in order to deter casual copying and unauthorized use of Autodesk software.

Casual copying is the sharing of software among more computers or users than the Autodesk Software License Agreement permits. Product activation helps discourage

casual copying with minimal impact to loyal customers.

2.2 Which Autodesk products use this activation technology?

Most Autodesk products currently use, or will use this technology in future.

2.3 How do I activate my software?

Use the activation and registration screens that are displayed the first time you run the software. You can activate your product 24 hours a day, seven days a week over the Internet or by email. Either option takes only a few steps to complete.

2.4 Do I need to be online to use Autodesk software that includes activation?

No. However, we recommend that you register and activate (or reactivate) your software over the Internet because it is the easiest and fastest method. Once you have activated the product, you do not need to be online to use the software.

A fast and easy alternative to activating online is to use the email option in your product activation and registration screens.

If you do not have Internet access, and do not have access to email, you can activate the software using one of the alternate methods available in the activation and registration screens in your Autodesk software.

2.5 How long does Product Activation take to complete?

Using the internet method typically takes between 1 to 2 minutes to complete.

2.6 How soon must I activate my product?

Typically, you must activate your product within 30 days after you first use the software. Most products have a "grace period" before you have to activate, and the product will cease working.

2.7 Will the product work without activation when first installed?

Yes. However, the product will work without activation only during the initial grace period.

2.8 What happens if I don't activate my product?

If you don't activate your product by the last day of the grace period, you will be unable to use the software until you activate it.

2.9 What if I can't activate my software immediately by Internet?

You have a grace period after your first launch to activate the product. The software is fully functional during the grace period and will automatically remind you to activate each time you launch the software. After the grace period ends, the software will stop working until you activate it.

2.10 What if I don't have an Internet connection?

If your Internet connection is temporarily unavailable, you can activate the next time it becomes available. Once the software is activated, you no longer need an Internet connection. If you do not have Internet access, you can use one of the alternate methods available in the activation and registration screens in your Autodesk software.

2.11 What if I need to get activation during non-business hours?

You can activate your product 24 hours a day, seven days a week over the Internet or via email.

2.12 What technology does Autodesk use to implement Product Activation?

Autodesk products use SafeCast[®], an industry standard technology provided by Macrovision[®]. Over the years, Autodesk has worked closely with Macrovision to help ensure that the activation technology meets our customers' needs.

2.13 Do other software companies use this technology?

Yes, other companies such as Macromedia[®], Adobe[®], and Intuit[®] use the SafeCast activation technology from Macrovision.

2.14 Does product activation make the software more difficult to use?

No, activation is an easy, one-time process that does not affect the use of the product at all.

Autodesk products released in recent years have included an interface for registration and authorization. Because product activation employs the same interface, customers who have used recent releases of Autodesk products will find product activation familiar and uncomplicated.

2.15 I've heard that the activation technology stores data to the hard drive, outside the normal file system. Isn't that dangerous?

Product activation uses a well-tested process to safely write license data to an unused sector of the hard drive located in track zero. This procedure has proven to be reliable in software installed on millions of computers worldwide. Storing license data in track zero keeps the data safe, even when the software must be reinstalled. This process does not affect the integrity of your hard disk in any way.

In rare cases in which the algorithm determines that writing to track zero may cause a conflict, an alternative file-system-based anchor is used for the license data.

2.16 What information is collected and transmitted in the Product Activation process?

Autodesk collects the minimum information required to validate the authenticity of a product activation request. Most of the data identifies the product, including serial number, language, product name, and version. A machine ID is also generated. The machine ID is a randomly computed 64-bit value, which cannot be used to identify the make, model, or components of your computer.

The product data and the machine ID are transmitted securely to Autodesk for validation.

2.17 Does Product Activation slow down my computer?

No. The activation technology has no effect on the overall performance of your computer.

2.18 Can I use my activation code on multiple machines?

No. A unique activation transaction is required per computer. Once a product has been activated, the software license is assigned only to that specific computer.

2.19 Will reinstalling the software provide a new grace period?

No. Only one initial grace period is supported per software application, per computer.

2.20 When is reactivation required?

Product reactivation is required only when your computer environment has changed significantly — if, for example, you upgrade or replace your computer, or if the activation process detects that the license has been improperly altered.

Reactivation is quicker and easier than the initial activation process, since you have already registered your software.

2.21 If I need another activation code, can a previous activation code be used?

No. The activation code is unique in every case and cannot be used more than once.

2.22 Is a request code also required for reactivation?

Yes. For reactivation, a new request code is generated and transmitted to Autodesk along with the software serial number, name, version, and language.

2.23 Does uninstalling and reinstalling the software require a new activation code?

No. You can uninstall and reinstall your software without affecting the software license.

2.24 Will changes to the system date and time properties on my computer require reactivation?

No. If your software license is not time-limited, there are no restrictions to adjusting your system date and time properties.

If your software license is time-limited, only changes that result in moving the system date and time properties back more than two days would trigger reactivation. If the system date and time properties are wound back by more than two days, you will have a chance to reset the date and time in order to avoid reactivation.

2.25 Do I have to reactivate my software if I reinstall or install a new operating system?

Yes, you may need to reactivate your software license if you reinstall the operating system that your software is installed to.

2.26 Does updating BIOS require reactivation?

No. BIOS changes will not require reactivation.

2.27 Does performing a disk image restore of the primary boot disk require reactivation?

Yes. However, you can avoid the need to reactivate. The Autodesk Standalone Licensing Guide (available in the Help system) outlines a few simple steps that help prevent the need for reactivation when you restore a disk image.

2.28 My hard drive died. Will I be able to reinstall the software and reactivate it?

Yes. The software can be successfully reactivated in most cases after the hardware problem has been resolved.

2.29 Does adding a new hard disk require reactivation?

No. Only changes to the primary boot disk may require reactivation.

2.30 When I launch the software, I see a directory named “C:\Documents and Settings\All Users\Application Data\Autodesk\Software Licenses” created on my computer. What is this?

This directory and its contents are used by the activation technology. The files in this directory contain valuable information about the Autodesk software license(s) on the computer. Tampering with this directory or the files in it may cause software errors that require you to reactivate your software license(s).

2.31 When I launch the software, a process named “AdskScSrv.exe” starts running on my computer. What is this?

This is the Autodesk Licensing Service used by the activation technology to manage your local Autodesk software licenses. Tampering with this service may cause software errors that require you to reactivate your software license(s).

2.32 When I start the software, a process named AdskCleanup.xxxx runs on my computer and a similarly named folder is created in my local Temp directory. What is this?

This is a temporary process and set of files used by the activation technology created when you run your Autodesk software product(s). Tampering with this process or the files may result in an error with the software and the need to reactivate your software license(s).

2.33 Is the activation technology removed when I uninstall the software?

The licensing service and files required for the activation technology are removed when the software is uninstalled. The software license and track zero license data are not removed when the software is uninstalled. This information remains persistent to avoid the need for license reactivation if you reinstall the software.

2.34 What has changed in AutoCAD 2007?

The activation code length currently is 28-48 alphanumeric characters and the typical being 32. In AutoCAD 2007, the new code length will be 56 – 80 alphanumeric characters, with the typical being 64. As a result of the new length of the code, a format entry option will be provided on the Registration / Activation code length screen. There is now a check box providing the ability to paste the activation code in directly from an email or a type option, which segments the code into boxes accepting 4 characters each. This new option facilitates the manual input and reduces the likelihood of errors.

Why has the activation code length increased for AutoCAD 2007?

This change has been made for security reasons.

3. The Portable License Utility

3.1 Can I move my software license to another computer?

Yes. The Portable License Utility (PLU) allows you to transfer your software license from one machine to another. Transferring the software license disables the software on the original computer and enables it on the destination computer.

3.2 Can I make changes to my computer without having to reactivate my software?

Yes. Follow this procedure: Use the PLU to transfer your software license to a different computer before updating your current computer. After making the computer changes, reinstall your Autodesk software and use the PLU to transfer the license back to the updated computer.

3.3 Is there documentation explaining how to use the PLU?

Yes. The PLU documentation is installed with your Autodesk software.

3.4 Is there a limit to the number of times I can transfer a license?

There is no limit to the number of license transfers you can perform using the PLU.

4. Product Registration

4.1 Is product registration required?

Yes. Product registration is required for most Autodesk software products. This helps you to prevent unauthorized use of your product by another person.

4.2 Is product activation the same as product registration?

No. They are different, but connected, procedures. Product activation is a process that verifies your product serial number and license. Product registration is a process that collects customer information, which entitles you to receive product updates and special offers from Autodesk.

4.3 What information is required for product registration?

Product registration requires you to provide your serial number, and some identifying information such as company name, user name, address, and a contact method.

4.4 Is product registration required for reactivation of my software license?

No. Product registration is required only the first time you activate your software license.