

## Is Java Still Free To Oracle Users?

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## Is Java still free?

### Changing Commercial Access

From January 2019 Oracle has charged commercial users to access updates to Java SE 8. Combined with other changes made by Oracle since 2017, this has naturally raised concerns that Java is no longer free.

However, although Oracle has indeed made some significant changes to Java licensing and distribution, the impact is much less than first feared.

Essentially, Oracle hasn't started charging commercial users for any Java functionality or services that were historically free. Nevertheless, some organisations in the future may need to switch to a different Java distribution.

- Java SE is the “officially” supported Java platform, developed by Sun and now stewarded by Oracle. It is based on the open source OpenJDK, although until Java 11, the two (Java SE and OpenJDK) were not wholly interchangeable. In addition to Java SE, various vendors provide OpenJDK distributions, including, for example, AdoptOpenJDK, RedHat, IBM and SAP as well as Oracle. Thus, Oracle has two Java distributions: Java SE and Oracle OpenJDK.
- Java SE could be used by personal and commercial users without any license fees.
- Additional features of Java for commercial users were available from Oracle, which required license purchasing.
- Updates to a version of Java SE were freely available to all users (personal and commercial) until that version reached its end of life (EOL). At this point, organisations had a choice; either continue using the EOL version without updates or upgrade to a newer version.

The alternative to Java was to use another distribution that received free updates, pay Oracle or another organisation for continual updates.

- Java support, from Oracle and other vendors, has only ever been available via a commercial support agreement.

### Oracle Announcement

Oracle recently announced various unrelated changes leading up to Java SE 8's EOL in January 2019. The combination of these changes led to fears that Java is no longer free.

### What's changed in the Java world?

1. Unlimited free updates for Java SE 8 stopped when it reached EOL in January 2019. It is normal practice that free updates to Java SE have an end date. This previously happened for Java 7 (April 2015), Java 6 (April 2013), Java 5 (April 2009) and so on. That end of life had now arrived for Java SE 8.

***Oracle has extended the free availability of Java SE 8 updates for non-commercial users until December 2020, but commercial users must now either accept the unavailability of updates to Java SE 8; upgrade to a later version; use a different distribution that receives updates or pay for further releases.***

- From version 11, Java SE (Oracle JDK) and Oracle OpenJDK are fully interchangeable. Previously there were functional differences, hence Java SE was the “gold standard” and OpenJDK was a good, but incomplete alternative.
- Oracle’s old model of perpetual licenses for commercial features and a subscription model for support has been replaced with a single Java SE subscription that gives access to support, updates and commercial features for all versions of Java SE. However, as part of this change, commercial users may only use Java SE 11+ if they purchase this Java SE subscription.
- Updates to Oracle’s OpenJDK are freely available to all users until a new version is released. However, Oracle has accelerated its release cycle to every 6 months, thus commercial users of given release of Oracle’s OpenJDK receive free updates for a shorter period than previously. Again, they can upgrade, pay for the Java SE subscription or use another distribution. This latter option is worth serious consideration and is credible given the interchangeability (from version 11) between Java SE and OpenJDK. Periodic releases of Java are long.

### Is Oracle charging for something that was previously free?

From version 11, yes, but that doesn’t mean Java is no longer free. Oracle has aligned its products (Java SE and Oracle OpenJDK) with different levels of service and offers these as alternative Java packages.

Buy a subscription to use Java SE and benefit from support and updates or use the free Oracle OpenJDK. These changes allow Oracle to focus on its position leading Java development while enabling other organisations and open source distributions to deliver robust, enterprise-grade long term support.

### Oracle licencing offers Java

It is worth noting that licenses for some Oracle products, e.g. WebLogic & E-Business Suite, grant access to Oracle’s commercial Oracle JDK license, including support & updates, for the servers and/ or PCs where that product is used. Furthermore, if the Oracle JDK is licensed on a machine via another Oracle product’s license, that install of Java SE may be used with any other products on that machine. Similarly, software vendors other than Oracle whose products require Java may include Java update subscriptions in their licenses.

### Business as usual

Changes to commercial support for Java SE 8 were announced some years ago as part of the normal, long-term Java lifecycle, rather than being the result of an Oracle policy or service change. Having addressed Java SE 8 de-support, the bigger question for commercial users, often overlooked with the focus on Java SE 8, is which distribution should be used from version 11. Java SE 11+ may only be used with an Oracle subscription. Therefore, customers must decide whether to purchase a subscription or use an OpenJDK distribution instead of Java SE.

#### Bibliography

The following document (and the documents it cites) provides further useful background information relating to Java support and updates:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nFGazvrCvHMZJgFstlbzoHjpAVwv5DEdnaBr\\_5pKuHo/mobilebasic](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nFGazvrCvHMZJgFstlbzoHjpAVwv5DEdnaBr_5pKuHo/mobilebasic)

The following blog from Oracle’s Senior Director of Product Management is also useful, especially in stressing the interchangeability of Oracle JDK 11 & Oracle OpenJDK 11:

<https://blogs.oracle.com/java-platform-group/oracle-jdk-releases-for-java-11-and-later>

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