

free software: a quick overview

different kinds of free

freeware

software available for free but not modifiable
e.g. Picasa, Internet Explorer, iTunes, etc.

free software

“software that can be used, studied, and modified without restriction, and which can be copied and redistributed in modified or unmodified form without restriction”
(Wikipedia) Also called open source software.

Unless you are a programmer, this is largely a philosophical distinction.

pros and cons of free

pros

free!
flexible—e. g. Open Office can open and save as many different file formats

cons

documentation & support sometimes lacking
functions are a little different

free software

Open Office
openoffice.org

A full suite of programs to replace Microsoft Office

the GIMP (Gnu Image Manipulation Program)

An alternative to Adobe Photoshop.

Firefox
mozilla.com

Internet Explorer is free, but Firefox is a much more powerful and customizable web browser.

VLC media player
videolan.org

Supports multiple formats of streaming video.

Stellarium
stellarium.org

A fun application for tracking the night sky.

More
icanhaz.com/oss

A huge list of open source software from Wikipedia, including everything from assistive technology to chat clients to games.

free operating systems

Open SUSE
opensuse.org

The system our Linux laptops use.

Ubuntu / Edubuntu
ubuntu.org / edubuntu.org

Another popular alternative.

[an online version of this handout is at parkcountylibrary.org/classes/freesoftware]