

## **What is Software Piracy?**

A preacher will tell you stealing is a sin. A police officer will arrest you for it. A farmer might shoot you if you were on his property stealing something he owns. But these are the same people who often times think nothing of “borrowing” their neighbor’s Windows CD to upgrade their computer or buying a \$10 copy of Microsoft Office 2000 on ebay even though it comes on a CD-R disc that is not the original. Either way, stealing is stealing.

Piracy! What an ugly word. Several years ago I attended a conference put on by Adobe Software. At the big dinner everyone got to wear pirate’s hats, eye patches and head scarfs. They even had fake parrots and swords that you could carry around while you “partook of the festivities”. It was a lot of fun, but the underlying theme was how evil piracy really is. If someone stole the tires off your car you’d be pretty upset wouldn’t you? Then why is it that most computer users feel no guilt in stealing software?

I’m not here to preach morals, but rather to point out some facts. It is estimated that 40% of the software installed on PCS worldwide is stolen or pirated. Stealing software is as simple as installing one copy of software on several computers. Pirating software is when you buy or sell illegal copies of commercial software. Both are illegal, yet most people who would never commit any other crime think its okay to do it because “it’s a victimless crime” because they aren’t stealing something physical like a car or a DVD player. Wrong! You and I are the victims of software theft and piracy. How? In the form of higher prices.

Software companies spend millions of dollars a year in research and development and must charge high prices for their software in order to recoup their investment. The more software gets pirated, the higher the price on a legitimate copy. There are shady companies around the world that specialize in making illegal copies of software - mostly Microsoft product. Sometimes the illegal copies are so good it is hard to tell them apart from the real thing. Chances are, if they’re selling software they claim to be genuine at a fraction of the original price, then it is probably counterfeit. If you ever have suspect you might have bought pirated software you can go to [www.spa.org](http://www.spa.org) to check it out.