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It is grouped into families and subfamilies that cater to particular sectors of the computing industry Windows (unqualified) for a consumer or corporate workstation, Windows Server for a server and Windows IoT for an embedded system. Windows is sold as either a consumer retail product or licensed to third-party hardware manufacturers who sell products bundled with Windows.[citation needed]The first version of Windows, Windows 1.0, was released on November 20, 1985, as a graphical operating system shell for MS-DOS in response to the growing interest in graphical user interfaces (GUIs).[12] The name "Windows" is a reference to the windowing system in GUIs.[13] The 1990 release of Windows 3.0 catapulted its market success and led to various other product families, including the now-defunct Windows 9x, Windows Mobile, Windows CE,[citation needed] Compact, Windows Embedded Compact, Windows Server, Windows Preinstallation Environment, and Windows PE.[14] Windows has been released in many versions over the years. It has been released into several families that share some common attributes. As of March 2025[update], according to StatCounter,[14] Windows is the most popular desktop operating system in the world, with a 70% market share as of March 2025[update], according to StatCounter,[14] Windows is the most popular desktop operating system in the world, with a 70% market share as of March 2025[update], according to StatCounter,[14] Windows is Windows 11 Enterprise for corporations, and Windows Server 2025 for servers. Still supported are some editions of Windows 10, Windows Server 2016 or later (and exceptionally with paid support down to Windows Server 2008).[16][17] This section needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources in this section. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. (December 2024) (Learn how and when to remove this message)As of 2025,[update] the only active top-level family is Windows NT.[citation needed] The first version, Windows NT 3.1, was intended for server computing and corporate workstations. It grew into a product line of its own and now consists of four sub-families that tend to be released almost simultaneously and share the same kernel.Windows (unqualified): For a consumer or corporate workstation or tablet. The latest version is Windows 11.[citation needed] Its main competitors are macOS by Apple and Linux for personal computers and iPadOS and Android for tablets (cf. Usage share of operating systems Market share by category).Of note: "Windows" refers to both the overall product line and this sub-family of it.Windows Server: For a server computer. The latest version is Windows Server 2025. Unlike its client sibling, it has adopted a strong naming scheme. The main competitor of this family is Linux. (cf. Usage share of operating systems Market share by category)Windows PE: A lightweight version of its Windows sibling, meant to operate as a live operating system, used for installing Windows on bare-metal computers (especially on many computers at once), recovery, or troubleshooting purposes. The latest version is Windows PE 10.[citation needed]Windows IoT (previously Windows Embedded): For IoT and embedded computing. The latest version is Windows 11 IoT Enterprise.[18] Like Windows Server, the main competitor of this family is Linux. (cf. Usage share of operating systems Market share by category)Some editions of Windows Embedded are also available through Windows Update.[19] Other editions are developed exclusively for the consumer market. The first version was Windows 95, which was followed by Windows 98. The last version of the Windows 9x family was Windows Me. Initially, other families were also prefixed with "Windows" in their names, but Microsoft ceased this practice with the release of Windows XP and Windows Vista. Microsoft also ceased the practice of labeling it as "Microsoft Windows" with the release of Windows 2000 and Windows Server 2003, but still used the "Windows" prefix in its product names for a time, before ceasing this as well. Microsoft also at one time used the "Windows" prefix in the names of several of its unrelated products, such as Windows Live services, Windows Azure, Windows Phone, Windows Mobile, Windows Embedded, Windows Server, Windows Desktop Gadgets, Windows Sidebar, Windows Mail, Windows Media Center, Windows Photo Gallery, Windows Ultimate Extras, Windows Search, Windows Update, Windows Defender, Windows Photo Viewer, Windows Fax and Scan, Windows Ink, Windows Speech, Windows Bluetooth, Windows Calculator, Windows Mail, Windows Messenger, Windows Photo Viewer, Windows Media Player, Windows Mediaroom, Windows Mobile, Windows Phone, Windows Portal, Windows Presentation Foundation, Windows Rally, Windows Sideshow, Windows Vista Aero, Windows DataAccess Components, Windows Driver Foundation, Windows Essential Business Server, Windows Essential Server Solutions, Windows Flip 3D, Windows Fundamental for Legacy PCs, Windows Imaging Component, Windows Messenger, Windows Mobile 2003, Windows Mobile 5, Windows Mobile 6, Windows Mobile Enterprise, Windows Mobile for Smartphone, Windows Peer to Peer Networking, Windows PlayReady, Windows Preinstallation Environment, Windows Preinstallation Environment 1.2legacy, Windows Preinstallation Environment 1.2legacy, Windows Preinstallation Environment 2.0, Windows Preinstallation Environment 2.0 Beta, Windows Preinstallation Environment 2.0 Beta 2, Windows Preinstallation Environment 2.0 Beta 3, Windows Preinstallation Environment 2.0 Beta 4, Windows Preinstallation Environment 2.0 Beta 5, Windows Preinstallation Environment 2.0 Beta 6, Windows Preinstallation Environment 2.0 Beta 7, Windows Preinstallation Environment 2.0 Beta