

Key Generator (Keygen) - What it is, hidden risks, and safe alternatives

Gridinsoft Help Center

What it is

A key generator or keygen is a program that creates fake software license keys so paid apps can run without a real purchase. Keygens are tightly linked to software piracy and are a common way attackers hide malware inside "free" downloads.

Why it matters

Most keygens are bait - you get a "free" unlock and also trojans, spyware, or ransomware. Even clean-looking keygens can break updates, block security features, and expose you to lawsuits or account bans.

How it works - quick tour

- Mimics a vendor's license check or patches files to skip it
- Often disables updates or security checks to keep the crack working
- Bundles adware or trojans in the installer or loader
- Spreads via warez sites, forums, and fake "fix" videos

If you already ran one

- Disconnect from the internet.
- Run a full anti-malware scan, reboot, then scan again.
- Remove unknown startup items, services, and browser extensions.
- From a clean device, change passwords and enable MFA.
- Reinstall the affected app from an official source.

Safer alternatives

- Use the official license or a free/open-source alternative.
- Watch for legit discounts and vendor trials instead of cracks.
- Keep apps updated - don't apply patches from unknown sites.