

Richard Stallman's personal site.

<https://stallman.org>

For current political commentary, see the [daily political notes](#).

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A Serious Bio

Richard Matthew Stallman leads the Free Software Movement, which shows how the usual non-free software subjects users to the unjust power of its developers, plus their spying and manipulation, and campaigns to replace it with free (freedom-respecting) software.

Born in 1953, Stallman graduated Harvard in 1974 in physics. He worked at the MIT Artificial Intelligence Lab from 1971 to 1984, developing system software including the first extensible text editor Emacs (1976), plus the AI technique of dependency-directed backtracking, also known as truth maintenance (1975).

In 1983 Stallman launched the Free Software Movement by announcing the project to develop the [GNU operating system](#), planned to consist entirely of free software. Stallman began working on GNU on January 5, 1984, resigning from MIT employment in order to do so. In October 1985 he established the [Free Software Foundation](#), of which he is president as a full-time volunteer.

Stallman invented the concept of [copyleft](#), "Change it and redistribute it but don't strip off this freedom," and wrote (with lawyers) the [GNU General Public License](#), which implements copyleft. This inspired Creative Commons.

Stallman personally developed a number of widely used software components of the GNU system: the [GNU Compiler Collection](#), the [GNU symbolic debugger \(gdb\)](#), [GNU Emacs](#), and various others.

The [GNU/Linux](#) system, which is a variant of GNU that also contains the kernel Linux developed by Linus Torvalds, is used in tens or hundreds of millions of computers. Alas, people often [call the system "Linux"](#), giving the GNU Project none of the credit.

Their versions of GNU/Linux often disregard the ideas of freedom which make free software important, and even [include nonfree software in those systems](#).

Nowadays, Stallman focuses on political advocacy for free software and its ethical ideas. He spends most of the year travelling to speak on topics such as "Free Software And Your Freedom" and "Copyright vs Community in the Age of the Computer Networks". Another topic is "A Free Digital Society", which treats several different threats to the freedom of computer users today.

In 1999, Stallman called for development of a [free on-line encyclopedia](#) through inviting the public to contribute articles. This idea helped inspire Wikipedia.

Stallman is officially a Visiting Scientist at MIT.

[Free Software, Free Society](#) is Stallman's book of essays. His semiautobiography, [Free as in Freedom](#), provides further biographical information.

He has received the following awards:

- 1986: Honorary life time membership in the Chalmers Computer Society
- 1990: MacArthur Foundation Fellowship
- 1990: The Association for Computing Machinery's Grace Murray Hopper Award "For pioneering work in the development of the extensible editor EMACS (Editing Macros)."
- 1996: Doctorate honoris causa from Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology
- 1998: Electronic Frontier Foundation's Pioneer award
- 1999: Yuri Rubinsky Memorial Award
- 2001: The Takeda Techno-Entrepreneurship Award for Social/Economic Well-Being
- 2001: Doctorate honoris causa from the University of Glasgow
- 2002: United States National Academy of Engineering membership
- 2003: Doctorate honoris causa from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- 2003: Honorary professorship from the Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería del Perú
- 2004: Doctorate honoris causa from the Universidad Nacional de Salta, in Argentina
- 2004: Honorary professorship from the Universidad Tecnológica del Perú
- 2005: Fondazione Pistoletto prize
- 2007: Honorary professorship from the Universidad Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, in Peru
- 2007: First Premio Internacional Extremadura al Conocimiento Libre
- 2007: Doctorate honoris causa from the Universidad de Los Angeles de Chimbote, in Peru
- 2007: Doctorate honoris causa from the University of Pavia
- 2008: Doctorate honoris causa from the Universidad Nacional de Trujillo, in Peru
- 2009: Doctor of Science honoris causa from Lakehead University in Canada
- 2011: Doctorate honoris causa from the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, in Argentina
- 2012: Honorary professorship from the Universidad César Vallejo de Trujillo, in Peru
- 2012: Doctorate honoris causa from the Universidad Latinoamericana Cima de Tacna, in Peru
- 2012: Doctorate honoris causa from the Universidad José Faustino Sanchez Carrión, in Peru
- 2013: Inducted into the [Internet Hall of Fame](#)
- 2014: Doctorate honoris causa from Concordia University in Canada
- 2015: Doctorate honoris causa from Universidad las Américas in Peru.
- 2016: The Association for Computing Machinery's Software and Systems Award for development of GCC, the GNU Compiler Collection.
- 2016: Doctorate honoris causa from Université Pierre et Marie Curie in France.
- 2017: Doctorate honoris causa from the Universidad Nacional de Jujuy in Argentina.
- 2018: Doctorate honoris causa from the Universidad de Tucumán, in Argentina.
- 2018: Honorary professorship from the Universidad Tecnológica Nacional in Mendoza, in Argentina.

Richard Stallman's 1983 biography

(This biography was published in the first edition of "The Hacker's Dictionary". It is copyright 1983 Richard Stallman and released under the Creative Commons Sharealike license 3.0.)

I was built at a laboratory in Manhattan around 1953, and moved to the MIT Artificial Intelligence Lab in 1971. My hobbies include affection, international folk dance, flying, cooking, physics, recorder, puns, science fiction fandom, and programming; I magically get paid for doing the last one. About a year ago I split up with the PDP-10 computer to which I was married for ten years. We still love each other, but the world is taking us in different directions. For the moment I still live in Cambridge, Massachusetts, among our old memories. "Richard Stallman" is just my mundane name; you can call me "rms".