

Copy-left and Copy-right

what you need to know

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First of All...

Always License your Code!

(Everyone will Agree)

“If you stumble across some code with no attached licensing information, copyright laws would have you treat it as ‘all privileges retained’, even if its author in fact was just trying to make it available with no strings attached.”

Arto Bendican

Free Software...

Free as in Freedom, not Price

- the freedom to use the software for any purpose
- the freedom to change the software to suit your needs
- the freedom to share the software with your friends and neighbors
- the freedom to share the changes you make

Permissive

- or -

Non-permissive?

BSD/MIT-style

- vs -

GPL-style?

So What's the Difference?

GPL

“Sticky” or “Viral” license

If software incorporates/builds on any GPL-derived code, then the entire package must be GPL-licensed.

BSD/MIT

“Permissive” license

Derived software is free to have any license: code can be incorporated in closed projects.

This difference leads to a surprising amount of contention.



Jake Vanderplas

@jakevdp

I was going to do some real work this morning, but there was a GPL vs. BSD email flame-war to attend to...



RETWEETS

3

FAVORITES

11



10:50 AM - 8 Sep 2014

Why Use One Over Another?

GPL-style:

- Free software should stay free.
- Software provenance & attribution maintained.
- Unfair for private entities to profit from free and open community effort.

BSD-style:

- Licensing restrictions on derived software are against the “Free” philosophy.
- Attribution should not be guaranteed by a legal statement, but by academic norms.
- Ability of private entities to adapt code leads to upstream contribution.

BSD-style



GPL-style



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MySQL®





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For More Information and references on
licensing, see my AstroBetter blog post, *The
Whys and Hows of Licensing Scientific Code*

[http://www.astrobetter.com/
the-whys-and-hows-of-licensing-scientific-code/](http://www.astrobetter.com/the-whys-and-hows-of-licensing-scientific-code/)