

# S Code and VSCodium: Two 'open-source' versions, but how different are they?

Is VS Code truly open-source software? What makes VSCodium different? This article clearly analyzes the differences between the two tools, from licensing and privacy to the extension repository.

Visual Studio Code (VS Code) has long been the most popular source code editor. It's fast, lightweight, has many extensions, and supports almost every programming language. However, not everyone knows that the version of VS Code you download from Microsoft's website isn't entirely 100% open-source software.

Although the core of VS Code resides in the open-source GitHub repository, the official build released by Microsoft is packaged with several proprietary components, such as a usage tracking service and a private extension repository. This is also the reason VSCodium was created — a community project aimed at providing a **100% open-source** build of VS Code, without any proprietary components.



**The difference lies in how Microsoft "packages" the product.**

The biggest point of confusion is that VS Code *is open source*, but the download from the homepage *isn't* the complete open-source software. Microsoft adds components like telemetry, branding, proprietary licenses, and synchronization services. VSCodium does the opposite: it takes Microsoft's open-source code, rebuilds it from scratch, and removes all code related to data collection or components incompatible with the open license.

In other words: **VS Code is 'open source + closed components', while VSCodium is 'purely open source'.**

## **Expanded warehouse: the most significant difference**

VS Code uses Microsoft's official Marketplace, which is the largest, most diverse, and most powerful open-source repository. However, the Marketplace's license is not open, so VSCodium cannot access it directly.

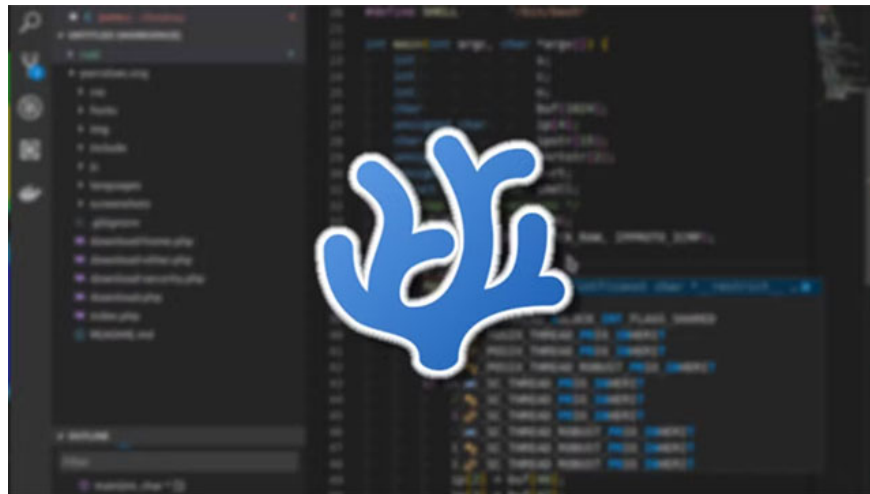
To address this issue, VSCodium uses a community mirror for the Marketplace. Essentially, users can still install most utilities, but some utilities that depend on Microsoft infrastructure (such as Microsoft's own C# or utilities with non-open licenses) may encounter limitations or be unusable.

For programmers who need the entire Microsoft extension ecosystem, VS Code remains the most complete option.

## **Telemetry Issues: The Secret Why Many People Switch to VSCodium**

One of the long-standing controversies surrounding VS Code is its telemetry mechanism—collecting data about how users use the application. Microsoft allows users to disable this feature, but it still persists in the software. VSCodium completely removes it, offering a more 'purely open-source' and private feel.

Privacy-conscious users who frequently use Linux often prefer VSCodium for this reason.



## **Synchronize your Microsoft accounts and services.**

VS Code is integrated into the Microsoft ecosystem: synchronization of settings, themes, extensions, GitHub Codespaces, Azure, etc. VSCodium does not include these proprietary services. Users who want to synchronize must use their own solutions or alternative community-based plugins.

For Windows users or programmers already familiar with GitHub/Azure, VS Code certainly offers a more seamless experience.

## **In terms of performance and user experience.**

Because they share the same source code, VS Code and VSCodium are almost identical in speed and core functionality. If you're just writing normal code, it's difficult to distinguish between the two applications. The main differences lie in the included services, not the editing capabilities.

## Which version should I choose?

If convenience, full functionality, and a robust, expanding ecosystem are your top priorities, VS Code is clearly the more practical choice. While it has closed components and telemetry, disabling tracking is quite simple, and you can use any plugin without worrying about compatibility.

Meanwhile, VSCodium is suitable for those who prefer 'purely open-source' software, don't want even minimal tracking services, or simply use Linux and tend to avoid closed-source software. While the expanded ecosystem isn't 100% perfect like the original, the experience is still very complete for most programming needs.

Ultimately, both versions are robust and reliable — differing only in philosophy: one is open-source with full Microsoft support, while the other is truly 'pure' open-source.

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