



Q&A

CISCO IOS SOFTWARE MAJOR RELEASE 12.4

This document was developed to address the most frequently asked questions from our Sales Teams about Cisco IOS® Software Major Release 12.4.

GENERAL

Q. What type of customer will be interested in deploying Release 12.4?

A. Release 12.4 benefits from the new functionality delivered in Release 12.3T, as well as from the stability inherent in a maintenance-only release. Generally, the following customers are likely to benefit from an upgrade to Release 12.4:

- **Customers who are currently running Release 12.3T.** Release 12.4 will provide the maintenance for the Release 12.3T family after it reaches its End of Engineering milestone.

For information about the Cisco IOS Software lifecycle, refer to [Cisco IOS Software Product Lifecycle Dates & Milestones, Product Bulletin No. 2214](#).

- **Customers who require the functionality or hardware support delivered in Release 12.3T coupled with the ongoing maintenance and stability delivered in Release 12.4.**

For detailed descriptions, refer to [Cisco IOS Software Release 12.4 New Features and Hardware Support, Product Bulletin No. 2852](#).

- **Customers who are using any of the Release 12.3 Special Releases**, which are now part of Major Release 12.4. For information about these releases, refer to: http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/sw/iosswrel/ps5413/prod_ios_releases_home.html

Q. Where can customers download Release 12.4?

A. Customers can download any release product from [Software Center](#) (requires Cisco.com login).

This site also provides valuable Cisco IOS Software information about hardware/software compatibility, and ordering procedures. Please ensure that you are entitled to access and download the release through an active SMARTnet contract or purchased feature license.

Q. Are there memory requirements related to the deployment of Release 12.4?

A. Prior to installing Release 12.4, please consult the [Cisco IOS Upgrade Planner](#) (requires Cisco.com login) for memory requirements, which may vary depending upon hardware produce and image feature set selections.

TYPES OF CISCO IOS SOFTWARE RELEASES

Q. What type of release is Release 12.4?

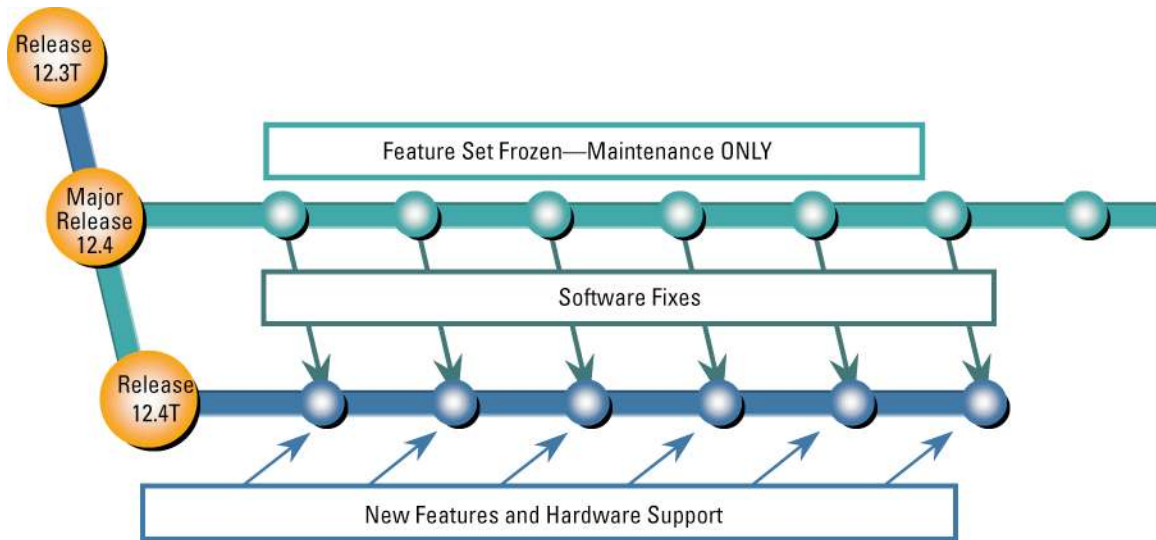
A. Release 12.4 is a major release. Major releases consolidate features/functions previously introduced in technology releases. A major release emphasizes stability and reliability. No features or functions are added after First Commercial Shipment (FCS). Major releases, matured through maintenance releases, are designed for areas of the network carrying business-critical applications.

For additional information about the Cisco IOS Software lifecycle, refer to [Cisco IOS Software Product Lifecycle Dates & Milestones, Product Bulletin No. 2214](#).

Q. What is the relationship between major releases and new technology releases?

A. Technology releases (ie: Release 12.3T) are those Cisco IOS Software releases that introduce new features, functionality, and hardware support. A major release (ie: Release 12.4) consolidates features/functions previously introduced in technology releases. A major release emphasizes stability and reliability.

Figure 1. Major Release and New Technology Release Relationship



Note: Technology releases are those Cisco IOS Software releases that introduce new features, functionality, and hardware support.

CISCO IOS SOFTWARE RELEASE PORTFOLIO

Q. How is Release 12.4 positioned within the Cisco IOS Software release portfolio?

A. The Cisco IOS Software Release Portfolio currently includes:

- Developed for wide deployment in the world's most demanding Enterprise, Access, and Service Provider Aggregation networks, [Major Release 12.4](#) (April 2005) is a comprehensive portfolio of Cisco technologies, including the leading-edge functionality and hardware support introduced in Release 12.3T, anchored by an intensive stability and testing program.
- The [Release 12.3T family](#) (July 2003) delivers advanced technologies that drive business productivity by delivering Security, Voice, and Wireless innovations to Enterprise, Access, and Service Provider Aggregation customers. Cisco is issuing the Release 12.3T family as a series of individual releases, each of which creates significant revenue opportunities. Release 12.3(4)T, the second of these 12.3T releases, supports nearly one hundred new features across more than thirty Cisco platforms.
- [Release 12.2S](#) is designed for Enterprise campus and Service Provider edge networks that require world-class IP and Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) services. The Cisco Catalyst Switches and high-end routers in Release 12.2S provide secure, converged network services in the most demanding Enterprise and Service Provider environments, from the wiring closet and data center to the WAN edge.

CISCO IOS SOFTWARE MAJOR RELEASE 12.4

Q. What new hardware support is delivered in Release 12.4?

A. Coupled with industry-leading Cisco IOS Software, Cisco redefines best in class routing with the industry's first portfolio engineered for secure, wire-speed delivery of concurrent data, voice and video services---Cisco Integrated Services Routers (ISR), which includes the flagship [Cisco 3800 Series](#), [Cisco 2800 Series](#), and the [Cisco 1841 Router](#).

For the first time in a major release, the [Cisco 830 Series Router](#) combines the power of an integrated router and a security appliance. It leverages Major Release 12.4 to deliver the industry's lowest total cost of ownership for the small remote offices and teleworkers who depend on secure Internet and corporate network access.

Q. What new features are highlighted in Release 12.4?

A. Major Release 12.4 introduces more than 700 industry-leading features across the widest range of hardware in the industry. These key innovations span multiple technology areas, including Security, Voice, High Availability, IP Routing, Quality of Service (QoS), IP Multicast, IP Addressing, IP Mobility, Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS), and VPNs.

For detailed descriptions, refer to [Cisco IOS Software Product Lifecycle Dates & Milestones, Product Bulletin No. 2214](#).

CISCO IOS SOFTWARE RELEASE POLICY

Q. What is the Cisco IOS Software Release Policy?

A. The Cisco IOS Software Release Policy is a structured plan that addresses the Cisco IOS Software Lifecycle from First Commercial Shipment (FCS) through End of Life (EoL). The Release Policy addresses lifecycle guidelines and migration planning.

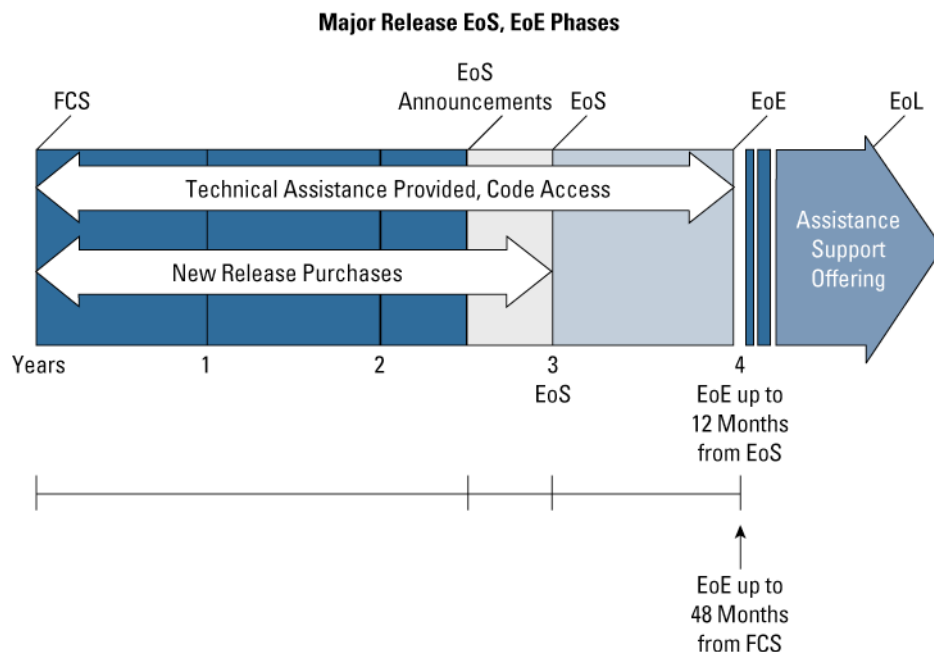
For additional information, refer to [Cisco IOS Software Product Lifecycle Dates & Milestones, Product Bulletin No. 2214](#).

Q. What are the milestones of the Cisco IOS Software Release Lifecycle?

A.

- **First Commercial Shipment (FCS):** release is first available to customers on Cisco.com (ie: first release of Cisco IOS Software Release 12.3)
- **End of Sales (EoS) Announcement:** notification of EoS; occurs at least six months in advance of formal ending of orderability for Major releases
- **End of Sales (EoS):** release is no longer orderable or included in manufacturing shipments
- **End of Engineering (EoE):** end of software fixes and standard software maintenance support. All Major releases receive maintenance updates during the period between FCS and EoE. End of Engineering typically occurs, but does not exceed, 48 months from FCS ship. Support is provided via successor releases, beginning at the next sequential release.

Figure 2. Lifecycle Durations for Major Releases



CISCO IOS PACKAGING

Q. What is Cisco IOS Packaging?

A. Cisco IOS Packaging is an initiative that simplifies the image selection process by consolidating the number of packages and using consistent package names across platforms.

It is fully implemented in Cisco IOS Software Releases 12.3, 12.3T, and 12.4.

Q. How is Cisco IOS Packaging implemented in Release 12.4?

A. Cisco IOS Software Release 12.4 introduces support for management access using Secure Shell (SSH), HTTPS and Simple Network Management Protocol version 3 (SNMPv3) on the Cisco 1800, 2800, and 3800 Series Access Routers. These three features work with other device management features (ie: image verification, role-based CLI views, user authentication, and VTY access control lists) to provide flexible and secure management access to any remote router, regardless of which Release 12.4 feature set it is configured on the router.

- **SSHv2** client and server functionality provides a secure, encrypted alternative to traditional telnet for router configuration and administration.
- **SSL Server** functionality provides an HTTPS-based secure, encrypted complement to access graphical user interfaces (ie: Router and Security Device Manager).
- **SNMPv3** Server functionality includes authPriv mode, which provides authentication and encryption of SNMP messages.

Note: Export controls on strong encryption vary according to type, strength, territory, end-use, and end-user. Visit the [Cisco Encryption Sales Support Tool](#) to determine eligibility for Cisco strong encryption solutions. Send an email to Export Compliance (export@cisco.com) for clarification. Encryption-free versions of IP Base, IP Voice, Enterprise Base, and Enterprise Services feature sets will continue to be available.

Q. Where can I find additional information on Cisco IOS Packaging?

A. Visit the [Cisco IOS Packaging](#) web site for additional information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Q. What are release notes and caveats?

A. [Release notes](#) are detailed descriptions of the features and hardware support available in Release 12.4. [Caveats](#) describe unexpected behavior (ie: software defect) in Cisco IOS Software releases. Release notes include a list of resolved caveats from the most recent maintenance release, as well as a list of open caveats and any existing workaround.

Q. Where can I find additional information?

A.

- **Release 12.4:** <http://www.cisco.com/go/release124/>
- **Cisco IOS Software Release Questions and Feedback:** <http://www.cisco.com/warp/public/732/feedback/release/>
- **Software Center**
 - Download Cisco IOS Software releases and access software upgrade planners: <http://www.cisco.com/kobayashi/sw-center/sw-ios.shtml> (requires Cisco.com login)
- **Cisco Feature Navigator**
 - A web-based application that allows users to quickly match Cisco IOS Software releases to features to hardware: <http://www.cisco.com/go/fn/>
- **Cisco Software Advisor**
 - Determine the minimum supported software for selected hardware: <http://www.cisco.com/pcgi-bin/front.x/Support/HWSWmatrix/hwswwmatrix.cgi> (requires Cisco.com login)

- **Cisco IOS Upgrade Planner**

- View all major releases, hardware, and software features from a single interface: <http://www.cisco.com/go/iosplanner> (requires Cisco.com login)

- **Cisco IOS Software Cisco IOS Software Product Lifecycle Dates & Milestones, Product Bulletin No. 2214:**

- http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/sw/iosswrel/ps5187/prod_bulletin0900aecd801eda8a.html

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Printed in the USA

