FreeBSD Branches

FreeBSD has several channels, or branches, allowing users to customize their installations based on their personal requirements. The top three are **Release**, **Stable** and **Current**.

Bottom line is, use Release for stability, Stable for new features and Current for true bleeding edge. I remember it by “they got it backwards” meaning Stable is not the super stable version for servers.

Comparison of Branches

Each branch has specific purposes and associated maintenance, which the following table summarizes.

Feature	Current	Stable	Release
Purpose	Active development and feature testing	Ongoing development with more stability	Official, stable versions for production
Stability	Least stable, subject to frequent changes	More stable than Current, less frequent changes	Most stable, thoroughly tested
Updates	Continuous changes and new features	Regular updates, with bug fixes and enhancements	Point releases for bug fixes
Target Users	Developers and testers	Users needing a balance between stability and new features	Production environments
Lifecycle	Always evolving, no formal releases	Evolving until the next release	Fixed lifespan, supported for a set period
Deployment	Not recommended for production	Can be used in production, but with caution	Recommended for all production systems
Access to Features	Latest features and enhancements	New features after testing in Current	Only features that are stable and well-tested
Major Updates Timeline	Ongoing, features can change daily	Approximately every 6 months	Every 1-2 years
Minor Updates Timeline	Continuous integration, no set schedule	Every few weeks to a couple of months	Typically every 6 months (for point releases)

Summary of Update Timelines

- **Release** versions typically receive major updates every **1-2 years** and minor updates or point releases approximately every **6 months**.
- **Stable** branches generally receive major updates every **6 months** and minor updates every few weeks to a couple of months.
- **Current** does not have a fixed schedule; features can evolve daily.

Purpose and Usage

- **Release** is tailored for production environments where stability and reliability are crucial. It's recommended for users and organizations who need a dependable OS without the risk of

interruption from continual changes.
- **Stable** is intended for users who want newer features while maintaining reasonable stability. It's suitable for users who are comfortable with potential instability and have the capability to troubleshoot issues.
- **Current** is for users who are willing to help by testing proposed changes, or simply want the latest available features. It is suitable for technically oriented users who want to explore the leading edge of FreeBSD development.

Converting between Branches

Converting between branches is possible but complex. The process varies depending on whether you are using binary installs (pkg) or compiling each application (ports).

I will see about testing and writing it up in the future.

Disclaimer

This document was created with the assistance of AI to help formatting and edit for clarity. However, the content was written by me and reviewed for accuracy after changes.

From:
https://kb.unixservertech.com/ - **Unix Server Tech Knowledge Base**

Permanent link:
https://kb.unixservertech.com/unix/freebsd/forlinuxadmins/branches

Last update: **2026/02/04 21:39**