# The end of polished and perfect software
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Once upon a time, testing an unfinished app before it was publicly available was an ultimate nerd badge of honor*. Today, "beta testing" is just something we all do -- whether we realize it or not.

Mass-scale beta testing been a reality for close to a decade now, but Apple's recent announcement that the next version of its OS X operating system would release in public beta all but drove the point home: the era of the polished final release is over.

In the 1990's and early 2000's, a company would only release software it spent years developing and refining. Users would buy and install that software, and that was the end of the process until a fundamentally new version came out -- save for a couple of minor updates that relatively few users would install. If there were any major problems with the software, the consequences could be catastrophic. That's no longer the case.

Ubiquitous* broadband* Internet gave way to new forms of digital distribution and advanced user feedback, which has allowed developers to effectively tweak*, tinker*, fix and overhaul* their products at an unprecedented rate. Microsoft and Adobe have been releasing public beta versions of Windows and Photoshop for years now. Google's Gmail initially launched as an invite-only beta app in 2004, and it famously maintained its beta tag until 2009. Today, many new Google products launch in "public beta."

PC gamers are no strangers to the beta culture either. In recent years, the Gaming portal Steam has allowed developers to make incomplete versions of their games available to whomever desires to play it. On the console side, Electronic Arts and Microsoft recently let gamers spend a weekend playing a pre-release version of the Xbox One game Titanfall to test for online multiplayer bugs.

Some companies don't even bother telling you if they're testing out a beta feature for release anymore. Facebook is constantly playing around with new features on its website, making changes for a select group of users for days or weeks at a time before reverting back to the standard design (or revealing a new update to the public).

But this shift in software cycles has also required an adjustment in consumer expectations as well. When a product releases early, there's now an implicit understanding that what's broken will soon be fixed. And when a problematic update rolls out for an app, it's not unthinkable to see changes in a matter of days.

Thanks to the rise of app stores, it's nearly effortless for users to be notified when new versions of programs are available, significantly increasing adoption rates for developers. Less than a year after its release, 87% of all iPhone users are currently using the overhauled iOS 7, which has been updated eight times since September.

While it may not be labeled as "beta," software like iOS 7 stands as proof that everything is in beta now. Nothing is ever really "finished" until we're done using it. That's making technology better as a result.

*A badge of honor : une consécration*
*Ubiquitous : omniprésent*
*Broadband : l'ADSL*

*To tweak / To tinker : bidouiller, bricoler*
*To overhaul : refondre*

**Answer the following questions in the form of an essay, NOT question by question. DO NOT copy the text.**
**What is « beta testing » or « public beta », as opposed to the way software used to be developed and sold ?**
**What advantages does it have for developers and for us and what (little) inconveniences does it seem to provoke ?**
**What does it change in the job of software developers ?**

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