

Are you using Elasticsearch? You are probably paying too much

Daniel Gleim · 2025-04-01



The rising cost of enterprise-grade software has left many businesses searching for alternatives that meet their needs without breaking the budget. For users of Elasticsearch Enterprise, the free Search Guard Community Edition offers an excellent way to transition while retaining—and sometimes enhancing—key security features. This isn't a limited free tier or trial version, but rather a fully-featured security solution available at no cost.

Understanding the Cost Advantage

The cost implications are straightforward: Elasticsearch Enterprise requires substantial licensing fees that increase with deployment size. In contrast, Search Guard Community Edition provides enterprise-grade security features completely free of charge. This represents a permanent commitment to providing advanced security capabilities without licensing costs.

Security Features That Matter

Free doesn't mean limited. Search Guard Community Edition offers an impressive array of security features that rival those of paid enterprise solutions. While the following comparison highlights some of its key capabilities, [Search Guard Community Edition's full feature set](#) extends well beyond these examples:

Encryption

Feature	Search Guard Community	Elasticsearch Basic	Elasticsearch Enterprise
REST Encryption	✓	✓	✓

Feature	Search Guard Community	Elasticsearch Basic	Elasticsearch Enterprise
PEM and JKS Support	✓	✓	✓

Access Control

Feature	Search Guard Community	Elasticsearch Basic	Elasticsearch Enterprise
Role-based Access Control	✓	✓	✓
Transport & HTTP Access Control	✓	✓	✓

Authentication

Feature	Search Guard Community	Elasticsearch Basic	Elasticsearch Enterprise
HTTP Basic Authentication	✓	✓	✓
Proxy Authentication	✓	-	✓
PKI Authentication	✓	-	✓

Alerting

Feature	Search Guard Community	Elasticsearch Basic	Elasticsearch Enterprise
Email, Slack and Webhook Actions	✓	-	✓

Advanced Security Capabilities with Search Guard Community Edition

Security is a key concern for organizations handling sensitive data. Search Guard Community Edition provides strong protection beyond basic measures, offering encryption, authentication, and monitoring tools that help secure critical systems.

Strong Encryption

Protecting data is essential. Search Guard Community Edition includes:

- Encryption for REST APIs
- Certificate management with support for PEM and JKS formats
- Integration with OpenSSL for better security

Flexible Authentication System

A reliable authentication system ensures only authorized users can access data. Search Guard Community Edition supports:

- Different authentication protocols to meet various needs
- PKI certificate-based authentication for secure access

- Proxy authentication for better integration with existing systems
- Detailed access control to manage user permissions

Monitoring and Alerts

Keeping track of security events is important for detecting threats. Search Guard Community Edition provides:

- Email alerts for security issues
 - Slack integration for instant notifications
 - Custom webhooks for tailored alerts
 - Logging and monitoring of security events
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Business Impact

Using Search Guard Community Edition brings clear benefits to organizations by reducing costs and improving security management.

Lower Costs

Eliminating Elasticsearch licensing fees helps businesses save money while still maintaining strong security measures. This allows organizations to invest resources elsewhere without compromising data protection.

Reliable Security

Search Guard Community Edition helps protect data through:

- Strong encryption and security measures
- Multiple authentication options
- Detailed access control to prevent unauthorized access
- Constant monitoring to identify and address threats

Operational Benefits

In addition to security, Search Guard Community Edition improves daily operations by offering:

- Easy integration with existing IT setups
- A flexible deployment model to fit different use cases
- Regular updates to keep security measures up to date
- Community support for troubleshooting and guidance

Easy Migration Process

Switching to Search Guard Community Edition is straightforward and designed to minimize disruptions. Key features include:

- Full compatibility with Elasticsearch
- Clear technical documentation for setup and configuration
- A step-by-step configuration process
- Minimal impact on ongoing operations

Key Advantages of Search Guard Community Edition

1. **Cost Savings** – Strong security without expensive licensing fees
2. **Better Protection** – A full set of security tools to protect data
3. **Simple Migration** – A structured transition plan
4. **Regular Updates** – Ongoing security improvements
5. **Community Support** – Helpful documentation and user forums

Final Thoughts

Search Guard Community Edition is a strong alternative to Elasticsearch Enterprise, offering essential security features without licensing costs. It provides encryption, authentication, monitoring tools and more that help organizations protect their data while keeping expenses low.

Beyond cost savings, it integrates well with existing systems, offers flexible deployment options, and receives regular updates to address emerging security threats. With active community support and clear documentation, businesses can implement and manage security with confidence. If you want to get started right away, [check out this blog](#) on how to transition from Elasticsearch to Search Guard Community Edition or contact us directly!

This article was published on the Search Guard blog: <https://search-guard.com/blog/are-you-using-elasticsearch-you-are-probably-paying-too-much/>

Search Guard is Security and Alerting for Elasticsearch and Kibana — search-guard.com · [Start a free trial](#)