

COPYRIGHT



What is Copyright?

Copyright is a form of protection given to the authors or creators of "original works of authorship," including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic and other intellectual works. What this means to a volunteer is that you should not make copies of anything that says it is copyrighted and shouldn't be copied unless given the right by the publisher. The exception to this is when teachers or schools have purchased the material and thus have been giving the right to copy.

Which Works Are Not Protected by Copyright?

Not everything is protected by copyright law. The following are categories of things not protected:

- Ideas, procedures, methods, systems, processes, concepts, principles, discoveries, or devices, (but written or recorded descriptions, explanations, or illustrations of such things are protected copyright);
- Titles, names, short phrases, and slogans; mere listings of ingredients or contents (but some titles and words might be protected under trademark law if their use is associated with a particular product or service);
- Works that are not fixed in a tangible form of expression, such as an improvised speech or performance that is not written down or otherwise recorded;
- Works consisting entirely of information that is commonly available and contains no originality (for example, standard calendars, standard measures and rulers, lists or tables compiled from public documents or other common sources); and
- Works by the US government.

What is Copyright Infringement?

Anyone who exploits any of the exclusive rights of copyright without the copyright owner's permission commits copyright infringement. If a lawsuit is brought in a court, the infringer will have to pay the copyright owner the amount of money the infringer made from using the work or that the owner would have made if the infringement had not happened. If the copyright is registered with the U.S. Copyright Office, the infringer may also have to pay copyright owner what's called statutory damages -- an amount set by the judge that will usually be higher. In addition, an infringer may be found guilty on criminal charges and have to pay criminal penalties. Moreover, the infringer will also be stopped from making any further use of the work.