



Copyright Law: Your College Career and Beyond

The purpose of this publication is to raise your awareness of the importance of copyright law as you work towards your degree here at Purdue. Copyright law is complex and it is beyond the scope of this publication to address all the aspects of the law. Instead, we have highlighted parts of the law that are most relevant to the kinds of activities you will engage in as a student.

Most importantly, we hope that the information presented here will encourage you to consider copyright law by remembering to ask yourself “Am I violating copyright law if I...?” as you write and research in your role as a student, as well as when you use the Internet as a means of communicating with others. Copyright law will continue to be important even after you obtain your degree as any company you work for will expect you to understand and abide by copyright law.

What is copyright?

Copyright is a federal law allowing people to control the use of their original works for a certain period of time.

What can and cannot be copyrighted?

The word ‘works’ refers to a wide range of materials, not just written. Works are considered protected by copyright law from the moment they are created—even if the copyright symbol “©” is not present. Works that are not copyrightable include ideas, procedures, methods, systems, titles, names, or slogans.

Can I ever use a work without getting explicit permission from the copyright holder?

Works published in the US prior to 1923 or works created by the US government are in the public domain—meaning they are free to use without seeking permission of the copyright owner and/or without paying royalty fees.

What about works on the Internet?

Just because a work is freely available to the public on the Internet does not mean it is in the public domain. It is critical that you assume all information on the Internet is protected by copyright unless otherwise specifically indicated. One way an author can indicate his or her permission to use a work without having to obtain explicit permission is by assigning it a Creative Commons license. When you see this symbol, the author is granting you permission to use the work provided the use is not for commercial gain. For more information about Creative Commons licenses please see <http://creativecommons.org>



Are there exceptions to the copyright law in higher education?

Copyright law does provide some exceptions for educational activities. One such exception is known as fair use. Fair use allows you to use copyrighted works without seeking permission provided that: 1) the use is for educational purposes; 2) the work is more factual than creative; 3) only a small amount of the work is used; and 4) it is not something you would normally purchase. Works you use in preparation of the academic materials that you will submit to your professors are many times covered under the fair use provision. However, you could risk violating copyright laws once you broaden the scope of your audience beyond the classroom setting—for example, by posting your work on the Internet where anyone can access it. For more detailed information about copyright issues please visit our website at <http://lib.purdue.edu/uco> or call us at 765-496-3864.

On the back page you will find some copyright law do’s and don’ts that are directly relevant to the kinds of activities you will engage in as a Purdue student, writer, and researcher.

Works protected by copyright law include:

- Books
- Papers
- Music
- Images
- Cartoons
- Sculptures
- YouTube videos
- Articles
- Emails
- Movies
- Drawings
- Photos
- Web site content
- Computer programs

Research/Writing Papers:

You should be aware that copyright infringement and plagiarism are different but both can have serious consequences personally and academically. Plagiarism occurs when you fail to properly cite the source of your information—in effect you claim the work of another as your own. Copyright infringement, on the other hand, can occur when you use too much of the work without seeking permission from the copyright owner, even if you cited the source. Consider the following do's and don'ts:

<u>Do:</u>	<u>Don't:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use your library databases as research tools rather than simply googling for sources and information• Properly and completely cite your sources• Use resources such as Purdue's online writing lab (http://owl.english.purdue.edu) and/or ask a librarian for assistance if you are unsure about citing sources or about following copyright law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Copy entire papers• Post your finished papers on a non academic, non-password protected website (such as MySpace)• Assume that just because you cited a source you are not violating copyright law

Presentations:

Generally if your classroom-related presentation materials (such as a power point presentation) are text only, you can be fairly certain you have not violated copyright. However, many times you will want to use copyrighted images, music, and video to make your presentations more interactive and interesting. Some uses of these works will be covered under the fair use provision if you meet the criteria discussed on the front page. Whether or not you are violating copyright will many times depend on who you are sharing the presentation with and where it is being presented. Consider the following as you prepare and present your work:

<u>Do:</u>	<u>Don't:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know who your audience is and add or delete works as necessary. Re-evaluate your use of works as your audience broadens (i.e. from the classroom to the web)• Use short clips of music or video rather than entire songs or movies• Utilize the subject expertise of your librarians and the technical expertise available at the Digital Learning Collaboratory in the Undergraduate Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post your finished presentation on a non-academic, non-password protected website unless you remove all copyrighted images, videos, or songs before doing so• Distribute print copies of your presentation with copyrighted images included• Use illegal download procedures to obtain the music, videos, or images you want to use in your presentation

Personal Web Sites/Social Networking Sites :

Many times people are unaware that they are violating copyright when they are posting others' images, songs, or video clips to their personal web sites or social network profiles. Being unaware of the law is not a valid defense for copyright infringement. Personal web sites and social networking sites are commercial sites and the content on them is available to the world. On the other hand, the academic, password-protected sites you use in the classroom, such as Blackboard, have restricted access. Again, once you broaden the scope of access, the more carefully you need to examine your use of others' works:

<u>Do:</u>	<u>Don't:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Post links to content you want your visitors to view rather than posting the actual work on your site• Freely post text, images, pictures, and videos that <i>you create yourself</i>. These are your works and you are the author and the copyright holder• Have fun and be creative within legal boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Download, share, or post protected music, movies, images, or cartoons on your site without the copyright holder's expressed permission• Assume a work is not protected by copyright because it is available for free on the Internet