

Copyright - quick guide for voluntary organisations

What is Copyright?

Copyright protects the rights the owner of a creative work to use that work, or licence it to others to use and to be credited as the originator of the work.

What does that mean?

If you write a book, take a photograph, make a painting, compose a song, create a dance or produce any other literary, dramatic or artistic creation, you own the copyright to that work.

Copyright gives you economic rights and moral rights. Economic rights enable you to benefit from the economic value of the work by allowing others to reproduce and use it. For example a freelance writer publishing a story in a magazine or book or an artists illustrations being used for a campaign. Moral rights protect your right to have your name associated with the work you create, along with your right to object to your work being used in a way that distorts or misrepresents it in some way.

Creative Commons

You may want to use Creative Commons to licence your work. Creative Commons 'works alongside copyright' providing six different licences that control the way in which others can use your work. Creative Commons licences are designed to allow other people to share

and use your creative work, for example letting people use your photographs (but not allowing companies to sell them), or encouraging others to republish written articles and reports.

How do I register my copyright?

Copyright is automatic to the person who has created the literary, artistic or dramatic work.

Unlike patents or trademarks no official body exists to register copyright with and there are no fees to pay.

If you commission someone to make a creative work, it is the person who created the work who has copyright not you as the commissioner, unless you both agree in writing to share or transfer copyright. However if an employee creates the work, copyright belongs to the employing organisation unless the contract of employment states otherwise.

How long does copyright last for?

The time copyright lasts for varies depending on what it is you have produced. For example, the copyright on literary, artistic or dramatic works lasts for the life of the author or creator plus 70 years. Copyright for a sound recording and broadcasts lasts for 50 years after the recording was made. There are different terms for copyright of films, unpublished work and typographical

arrangements. Moral rights last for as long as the copyright of the work lasts.

How do I protect my copyright?

You can protect your copyright by use the symbol © and adding your name and date the work was created. Alternatively, you can lodge a copy of the work with a solicitor or post yourself a copy, leaving the letter or parcel unopened when it arrives. Either method will provide you with a date from when the work was in existence. If someone or some organisation is infringing your copyright you may have to take civil action in the courts to protect your rights.

Are there any exceptions to copyright?

Exceptions to copyright are allowed for research or private study, criticism or review and teaching in schools, universities or other educational establishments. These circumstances all allow limited copying of copyright material provided the sources are properly acknowledged. There are also circumstances that allow copies of copyright material to be made that enable people

who have a visual impairment or people who are deaf to be able to enjoy the work. For example, making a sound recording or converting text into brail.

More information about copyright and other forms of intellectual property, such as trademarks, patents and registering designs

This guide provides only a basic introduction to copyright. More information is available for the organisations listed below. The provisions to protect your copyright and other intellectual property can be complicated however and you may need specialist advice.

Business and IP Centre Newcastle
Newcastle City Library
Newcastle upon Tyne
www.bipcnewcastle.co.uk

Intellectual Property Office
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office

British Copyright Council
www.britishcopyright.org

FACT – Federation Against Copyright Theft
www.fact.co.uk

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