

## Copyright Law – Digital and Interactive Media

Before you use any media from someone else, you need to understand how copyright law works.

Copyright protection is a legal status provided to artists or creators of original work. As a general rule, things are protected the moment they are placed in a fixed, tangible form of expression. When you write something down, record it in audio, video or photograph, draw it on paper or on a computer screen, it is protected from another person using it without your permission. There are small exceptions to this rule, but generally, the moment something is recorded or written in some way, it is protected by law. If you say something aloud, it is not protected, but if you write it down, it is.

Contrary to what you may have heard, the small © symbol is not necessary. Generally, your copyright will last for the rest of your life plus seventy years. After that expires, your work goes into the **Public Domain**.

The **Public Domain** is a distinction made for works that are available for use by anyone in the public. There is no copyright protection for works in the public domain.

As a student, you are also afforded some leeway by the **Fair Use** doctrine

Fair use allows you to use some copyrighted work for educational purposes. [This guide is pretty handy, and it explains what you can use for educational purposes.](#)

These resources are very helpful in understanding copyright law:

<http://www.libraryvideo.com/aboutus/lvccopyright.asp>

<http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic24.htm>

<http://www.teachingcopyright.org/curriculum/hs>