



Copyright Guidelines

From time to time we are asked to copy something that, legally, we cannot. Here are some basic guidelines on what is legal and what is not.

U.S. Paper Currency

Illegal: full-sized, full color, double-sided copies of U.S. currency.

Legal: one-sided, full color, less than 75 percent or more than 150 percent of the original size copies of U.S. currency. After the reproduction is complete, the things used to make it, such as photographs, computer files, photographic negatives and digital media, must be destroyed or erased.

*Tracked by the Secret Service

Coins

Illegal: the creation of tokens, discs and other devices that resemble U.S. coins.

Legal: photographs, printed illustrations, motion picture film or slides of United States and foreign coins may be used for any purpose.

Uncanceled (unused) United States and Foreign Postage Stamps

Illegal: Full color, full size, copies of uncanceled United States and foreign postage stamps

Legal: Black and white copies of uncanceled United States and foreign postage stamps in any size. Full color copies of uncanceled United States and foreign postage stamps must be less than three-fourths or more than one and one-half times the size of the genuine stamp. After the reproduction is complete, the things used to make it, such as photographs, computer files, photographic negatives and digital media, must be destroyed or erased.

Canceled (used) United States and Foreign Postage Stamps

Illegal: Canceled United States and foreign postage stamps of any size, color or black and white, without an official cancellation mark

Legal: Canceled United States and foreign postage stamps of any size, color or black and white, bearing an official cancellation mark, i.e., the stamps must have been used for postage. After the reproduction is complete, the things used to make it, such as photographs, computer files, photographic negatives and digital media, must be destroyed or erased.

Revenue Stamps

Illegal: Printed copies of United States and foreign revenue stamps in color at any size.

Legal: Printed copies of United States and foreign revenue stamps in black and white at any size. After the reproduction is complete, the things used to make it, such as photographs, computer files, photographic negatives and digital media, must be destroyed or erased.

U.S. Treasury Checks

Illegal: Full color copies of U.S. Treasury checks.

Legal: Black and white copies of U.S. Treasury checks at 75 percent of the original size.

Copyright Guidelines

Another Person's Property (These include, but are not limited to, bank statements, phone records, medical records, drivers licenses, social security cards, passports, birth certificates, credit cards)

Illegal: Copies of items that do not belong to you

Legal: Copies of items that belong to you (and you can provide proof of your identity.)

* While it is legal to copy a Military ID for the use of the person to which it belongs, copying is generally prohibited and should be avoided.

Documents Marked "Do Not Photocopy"

Illegal: Copying any document that has a written prohibition of "Do Not Copy" on it.

Legal: There is nothing legal about this.

Books & Magazines (without written permission from the author or copyright agency)

Illegal: Copying of copyrighted books and magazines for any other purpose than "fair use" (see below), without written permission.

Legal: Copying of copyrighted books and magazines for the use for which you are given written permission.

Legal: Copying of copyrighted books and magazines for "fair use" purposes(see below).

Photographs & Artwork

Illegal: Copying any photograph or artwork which you did not, yourself, create, for which you do not have written permission, or for non-"fair use" purposes (see below)

Legal: Copying anything that you, yourself have created, such a photo or piece of artwork.

Legal: Copying any photograph or artwork for the use for which you are given written permission by the original creator.

Legal: Copying any photograph or artwork for "fair use" purposes (see below)

* All photographs and artwork (regardless of media) are automatically copyrighted by the person who created them. If you took a photo, you automatically own the rights to it.

Internet Copying

Illegal: Reuse, in anyway, of anything on the Internet, graphics and text, without permission, for non-"fair use" purposes(see below)

Legal: Reuse of a specific element from the internet with written permission.

Legal: Reuse of a specific element from the internet for non-"fair use" purposes(see below)

Fair Use

You may claim that you are using a copyrighted work for "fair use" if you are (1 of the below):

- criticizing and/or commenting on the work
- reporting news
- including in research
- teaching or using in classroom setting
- using for purposes of scholarship
- changing the work to make a humorous point as in comedy and satire

AND you are (all of the below):

- giving credit to the original source
- using only a small excerpt or single image
- using only what is needed to make the comment/point.
- not infringing on the copyright holder's ability to market the work herself/himself

Exceptions to these rules

You can use a work without the author's permission for non "fair-use" purposes if it's in the public domain. You should assume that a work is copyrighted unless you can prove its in the public domain. There are a number of factors to determine whether a work is in the public domain including age, copyright expiration, whether it was published by a government official, whether it was donated to the public domain, etc..

For more information and specific guidelines on determining whether a work is in the public domain visit this link:

<http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/works-public-domain-permission-29523.html>

To sum it up

If you didn't create it, you don't own it.

If you don't own it, you can't copy or distribute it.

If you want to use it, ask permission.