

Copyright

The basic underlying issue about copyright and plagiarism is honesty. It is dishonest to take credit for someone else's work. It is theft to take someone's work (songs, movies, publications) without paying for it. It is stealing to use someone else's academic work without acknowledging them.

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas (or illustrations or trademarks) without appropriate permission or acknowledgement. If someone copies entire sections or even uses ideas from someone else's work, he must identify the source of this material in his paper or speech to acknowledge that the material is not his own.

Copyright refers to legal protection for the intellectual or creative properties of people—whether authors or illustrators or composers or performers or others who originated the material. These owners and/or originators will be robbed of sales or royalties or credit if others use their material without permission. So there are specific laws set up to protect them, and many of these laws carry heavy penalties. You can read more about these copyright laws at <http://www.copyright.gov/>

What is Fair Use?

Court cases have established some guidelines for using small portions of works that do not take away the possibility for creators of copyrighted materials to lose potential income. These guidelines consider the extent and significance of the portion used. (Read more at <http://www.educationworld.com/acurr/curr280b.shtml>)

Fair use includes some instances where copyrighted materials may be used in educational instruction. These are generally limited, still considering the guidelines above. The Association of Research Libraries has interpreted these guidelines in a scholarly discussion at <http://www.arl.org/pp/ppcopyright/codefairuse/code/index.shtml>.

How does this look when I am writing a paper?

- If your paper is entirely reflection on your own ideas, there is no issue of plagiarism.
- If you use someone else's exact words, enclose them in quotation marks (or indented sections for lengthier quotations) and give credit in a footnote, endnote, or within the text of your paper.
- If you paraphrase someone else's words, expressing their ideas in your own vocabulary, you must give them credit in a footnote, endnote, or within the text.
- If you incorporate someone else's ideas, reformatting them into the text of your paper with your own words, you must still give credit in a footnote, endnote, or within the text.
- The librarian and library manager would be happy to help you know how to cite your sources.

How does this look when I am preparing a speech or a sermon?

Just as you would give written credit or attribution to the original author, you would give verbal credit in a speech or a sermon. "Eric Metaxas writes in his biography that Bonhoeffer..." or "To quote the church father, Augustine,..." or "Some of these ideas originated with Herbert Hoover in his essay on criminal justice...." You get the idea.

How does this look when I am copying or downloading from a textbook or other published book?

Copyright laws allow some leeway for fair use, especially in an educational setting. When would you be breaking the law?

- You are *not* breaking the law by reading from a book in the library. You did not purchase this book, but the library did.
- You are not breaking the law by making a copy for personal use of a magazine article or a chapter in a book.

But remember, the principles of fair use are concerned about protecting the potential for the creator of the work to make income from the work.

- You *may be* breaking the law when you copy *more than* one chapter from a book. This is considered beyond the fair use principle.
- You *may be* in violation of copyright when you make multiple copies for distribution.
- You *would be* breaking copyright law if, without permissions, you repackage a collection of copyrighted materials and publish and sell them for a profit (like *Best Explanations of Hard Algebra Formulas* or *My Favorite Sermons Preached by Billy Graham*).

How does this look when I am downloading music or watching a video or viewing an image?

When a musical piece or video is under copyright, you must purchase it or the rights to use it. You cannot simply download it without paying for it. Such piracy is illegal and immoral. Even if you “innocently” trace a copyrighted image for a bulletin board or a poster, you have broken the law.

What about software?

Generally, software licenses apply to one computer. You risk breaking the law if you copy the computer program or software to another computer.

What is public domain?

Some information belongs to general knowledge; it is not owned by anyone. General, readily-available facts do not have to have footnotes or end notes when used in your papers. Facts and dates belong to the public.

After a period of time, printed materials move from copyright protection to the public domain, allowing others to reproduce them without penalty. Anything published before 1923 is in the public domain. For instance, a hymn originally published in 1800 can be reproduced in any hymnal without concern for copyright compliance. Materials (articles, songs, books, cartoons, etc.) published between 1923 and 1978 *may* be in the public domain if the creators did not renew the copyright or gave permission for the work to be in the public domain. You would be safer, though, to assume that anything published after 1978 is under copyright (until it is at least 95 years old—2073 at the earliest!). You can read more about the public domain at http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr280a.shtml.

However, when you are writing a paper and use information, no matter what age the source is, you should give credit to the originator of the material in a footnote, endnote, or within the text.

What is the Creative Commons?

Some originators of information have chosen to allow others to freely use their work, as long as others appropriately recognize the source of the work. There are books, illustrations, photos, music, and a host of other creative works available without charge. Read more about the Creative Commons at <http://creativecommons.org>.