

Using Images from the Internet Safely in Your Work

The internet is teeming with images and often it is easy to assume that many of them, particularly those seen on many different websites, are free. However, images are copyrighted under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988. This is a checklist that can be used as a general guide for selecting and using images. This is not legal advice and there are exceptions to the rules in many cases that can affect the decision to use an image.

Check #1

Is the image in copyright?

Copyright lasts for life of the creator plus 70 years. Most images on the internet, therefore, are still in copyright. The below image has been made available by The British Library from a book published in 1899. The copyright status of the photo is given as only 'No known copyright restrictions' rather than out of copyright because the law on copyright has changed several times since the publication of the book; it is often difficult to work out if even such an old image is definitely out of copyright. This is made easier in cases where the photo carries the photographer's name or studio's name.



Image from the British Library, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/britishlibrary/11163298233/in/album-72157680728468600/>

Copyright status: No known copyright restrictions

Check #2

Who owns the copyright?

Copyright belongs to the person who has 'created' the image. The law was a little different before 1989 so whether an image was created before or after 1989 can affect who owns the copyright. Photos taken after 1989 are copyrighted to the photographer in most cases (Valentin in case of the photo below).



Image by [Valentin](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Check #3

Do I need to ask the copyright owner for permission for using an image?

If the image is in copyright, for all commercial purposes, i.e., where a product, study, research or activity will lead to/contribute to profit-making, permission is needed.

For non-commercial research or private study, for example, for an assignment, it is permissible to use the image by acknowledging the source and the copyright-owner. Note that they may not always be the same.

The credit for the image below shows that the creator of the image is M Mir, which makes them the copyright owner; but the source is Pixabay, which is an online picture gallery that stocks millions of images by different creators.



Image by M MIR from Pixabay

Check #4

Can I use an image I found on the internet in my presentation at school or at a conference?

If you are being paid for the presentations, or the presentations are made at places that have an entry fee, then you need to ask for permission.

If you are not paid, and the presentation or conference is for educational purposes, you may print/download one copy of an image with due acknowledgement to the owner.



Image by [Nattanan Kanchanaprat](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Check #5

Can I crop, edit or merge images to suit my idea?

This depends on the licence of the image. Most copyrighted images cannot be edited without express permission of the copyright holder.

But a copyright holder can release an image under a licence that allows editing of the image under certain conditions. Below are some examples of such licences with links to the licence showing how the image can be used.

EXAMPLE 1: Image is in copyright, but it has been licenced by the owner for free (adaptation is allowed). However, note restrictions given under 'what is not permitted' heading.



License

Unsplash photos are made to be used freely. Our license reflects that.

- A. All photos can be downloaded and used for free
- B. Commercial and non-commercial purposes
- C. No permission needed (though attribution is appreciated!)

What is not permitted 🗨️

- A. Photos cannot be sold without significant modification.
- B. Compiling photos from Unsplash to replicate a similar or competing service.

Tip: How to give attribution ✎

EXAMPLE 2: Image is out of copyright, but the digital file may be in copyright. It has been released by the owner into the Public Domain (see credits). This means this image can be edited but attribution should be given as good practice, with indications of changes made, if possible. Please see the usage guidelines to the right for best practice.



Still Life with Flowers in a Wan-li Vase - 1619 - Netherlands - Public Domain.

https://www.europeana.eu/item/90402/SK_A_1522.

Image modified with addition of a shadow box.

Public Domain Usage Guidelines

SHARE

Give credit where credit is due.

Protect the reputation of creators and providers.

Show respect for the original work.

Show respect for the creator.

Share knowledge.

Be culturally aware.

Support efforts to enrich the public domain.

Preserve public domain marks and notices.

This usage guide is based on goodwill.

Courtesy: <https://www.europeana.eu/en/rights/public-domain-usage-guidelines>

EXAMPLE 3: Image is out of copyright, but the digital file may be in copyright. It has been licenced by the owner under a CC-BY licence (see credits), which permits adaptation. See panel to the right for licence conditions.



Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

But publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

Licence at: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Image: 1933 - United Kingdom - [CC BY](#). 3D effects have been added to the image.

https://www.europeana.eu/item/2048213/europeana_fashion_http___collections_vam_ac_uk_item_O89436

EXAMPLE 4: Image is out of copyright, but the digital file may be in copyright. It has been licenced by the owner under a CC0 licence (see credits), which permits adaptation. See panel to the right for licence conditions.



Image:

Flag - 1800 - Netherlands - [CC0. https://www.europeana.eu/item/2048221/europeana_fashion_760067](https://www.europeana.eu/item/2048221/europeana_fashion_760067). A black border has been added.

No Copyright

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You copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, all without asking permission. See **Other Information** below.

Other information

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When using or citing the work, you should not imply [endorsement](#) by the author or the affirmer.

Licence at: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/>

EXAMPLE 5: Image is out of copyright, but the digital file may be in copyright. It has been licenced by the owner under a CC-BY-SA licence (see credits), which permits adaptation. See panel to the right for licence conditions.



Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

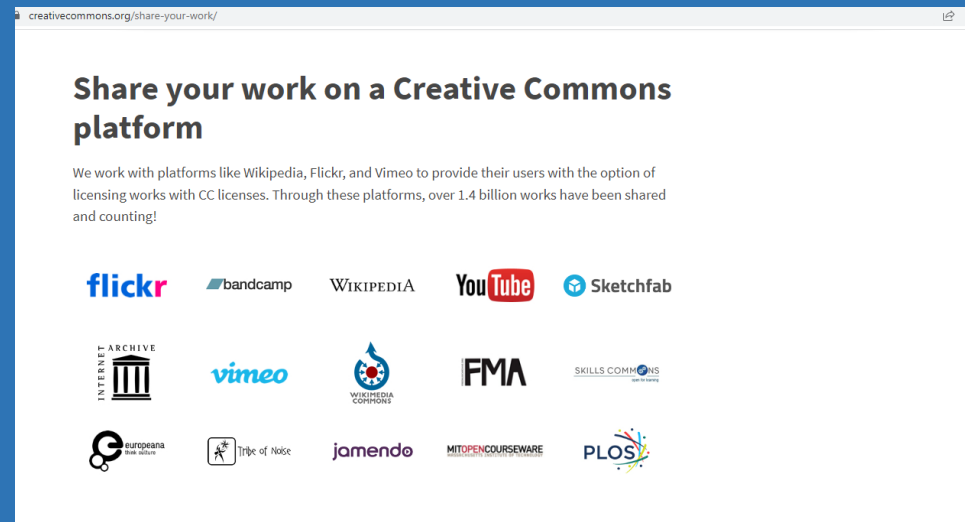
But publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

Licence at: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

fol. 70r, Initiale mit Text by Richter, Regine (Herstellung) (Fotograf) - Germany - [CC BY-SA](#). The edges of the image have been softened.

https://www.europeana.eu/item/440/item_YJGDEO4C7BOGXMGTHV2CNIMORFTUG44R

There are 4 other Creative Commons licences that permit a wide range of non-commercial (with some allowing adaptations but not others) use so long as the few specified conditions are met for each licence. They do not allow use for 'commercial' activities. What is classed as 'commercial' use can vary a little but any use that leads directly or indirectly to profit-making activities is generally considered commercial use. For example, I have not used images under the other licences because my website promotes paid editing services.



For those wishing to use material for non-commercial purposes, a list of platforms that together host over 1 billion items under Creative Commons licences is available at <https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/> (image above).

Check #6

I have found an image that I like but I can't find its licence. What should I do?

For any formal, non-personal, particularly commercial, use it is advisable not to use the image. The safest way may be to check with a picture library. Picture libraries have searchable collections and can provide a licence almost instantly. They do charge fees, however.

Their licences are of two varieties: Royalty-free licences and Rights-managed licences. Royalty-free licences require only a one-off payment and can be used unlimited times after purchase.



Rights-managed licences have restrictions on when, where and for how long can the images be used. Licence fees vary depending on the use and the Picture Library being used.

A comprehensive list of picture libraries can be found at <https://bapla.org.uk/image-suppliers/>

Check #7

I have my own images of artworks that I want to use on my website/in my presentation/in my book. Do I need permission?

If they are images of **permanent** art installations in a **public** place, it is permissible to use the images. If they were taken during a temporary exhibition or a permanent exhibition indoors, permission is needed from the artist (if the work is still in copyright) and the exhibition venue.



Image 1: Angel of the North, from Barly...,
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/red-mandy/6150534524/>,
used under [CC BY 2.0 licence](#)

**Permanent art installation
in a public place**

Copyrighted Work



Image 2: Meiping-shaped bottle of cobalt blue porcelain - Greece - CC BY-SA.

<https://www.europeana.eu/item/526/https://www.searchculture.gr/aggregator/edm/benaki/collections/000146/Benaki/CMS/279470>

Permanent art installation in an indoor place. Used here only because it has been released by the owner under a CC-BY-SA licence.

Check #8

I have taken photos for my workplace. Should I put a copyright symbol © and my name with them?

No. Images created in the course of employment are the property of the employer and not the employee. Those images are copyrighted to your workplace. The image below was created by an employee at Google and thus Google has been able to release it under a Creative Commons licence.

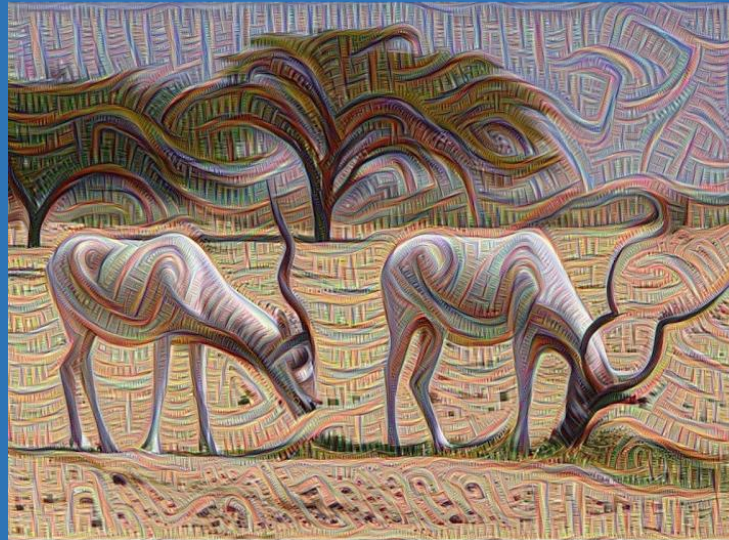


Image: <https://ai.googleblog.com/2015/06/inceptionism-going-deeper-into-neural.html>, used under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Check #9

I have taken photos at my friend's wedding. Can I put them in my book?

No. Photos commissioned for domestic celebrations belong to those who commissioned them. Any images with recognisable people should always be used carefully because people have a legal Moral Right not to be shown in a certain way or in a certain place that can be established in a court of law.



Image: Photo by Marc A. Sporys on [Unsplash](#),

[Two people standing on brown wooden floor photo – Free Wedding Image on Unsplash](#)

Check #10

I want to show screenshots of work I have created in MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint in my book. Do I need permission from Microsoft?



Photo by [Windows on Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/photos/dcmEQYoLYpg) <https://unsplash.com/photos/dcmEQYoLYpg>

Microsoft's page at <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/legal/intellectualproperty/copyright/permissions> gives detailed guidance on how to use their trademarks and other Intellectual Property correctly. Express permission is not always required, provided these guidelines and the acknowledgements they specify are followed.

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Disclaimer: This advice is based on experience in the publishing industry. It is not legal advice. In case of any doubt, seek advice from a qualified legal professional.