

Understanding Image Copyright

How to legally use images anywhere...

Introduction

With websites and social media all a big part of our everyday lives, we can often forget our legal responsibilities when using images and photos online. Situations such as taking a photo on your smartphone and uploading it to a website or copying one of your friend's photos on Facebook, even downloading images from Google (or other search engines) can all lead to copyright infringements if you are not careful.

What is copyright?

Copyright is an automatic right and there are no official formalities to acquire copyright protection. There is no public or Government register of copyright in the UK.

You automatically get copyright protection when you create:

- original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including illustration and photography
- original non-literary written work, such as software, web content and databases
- sound and music recordings
- film and television recordings
- broadcasts
- the layout of published editions of written, dramatic and musical works

You can mark your work with the copyright symbol (©), your name and the year of creation. Whether you mark the work or not doesn't affect the level of protection you have.

To find out more check out the government website: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/intellectual-property/copyright> | **Copyright notice:** [digital images, photographs and the internet](#)

What's at stake?

If caught you could be hit with anything from a takedown notice (where you are asked to remove the image/item in question) through to a prison sentence/unlimited fine.

It's probably now looking more serious than you thought?

How can I avoid it?

It's always best when using images to either pay for a license (image provider such as shutterstock or gettyimages) or where possible find copyright free images.

Where can I get Copyright Free images?

There are many types of copyright each with differing levels, allowing you to use images in different situations such as available free for non profits, etc. most of which will state that you have to leave an attribute to the author/artist.

Be very careful with all websites and make sure you look at the individual copyright notices, some websites like 'Flickr' have different copyright/attribution conditions for each individual image.

What you really want to be looking for is CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) images – there is a much smaller range of images however if an image is licenced under CC0 then you are free to use this image in any situation (literally), no attribution needed (although they do ask if you're willing).

Copyright law can be a little confusing and not all websites give clear license terms if you're really concerned then just take your own photos and offer them to the group for free, make sure when including people that you have their permissions (ideally in writing)

Paid image websites

Including but not limited to:

- [Adobe Stock](#)
- [Alamy](#)
- [Deposit Photos](#)
- [Getty Images](#)
- [iStock](#)
- [Shutterstock](#)

CC0 websites

Including but not limited to:

- [Pixabay](#)
- [Pexels](#)
- [Stocksnap.io](#)
- [Unsplash](#)
- [visualhunt](#)