

Writing & Copyright

Did you know that copyright protects most kinds of writing? **It protects your original works of nonfiction, poetry, articles, speeches, manuscripts, dissertations, books, brochures, and contributions to periodicals, among other things.**

Copyright even protects your original work when it appears in newer media like blogs, online articles, and some social media.

They are covered as literary works under copyright law.



Copyright only protects works that are original. Originality means that you independently created a work that is sufficiently creative. Copyright protection, however, does not extend to names, titles, short phrases, ideas, methods, facts, or systems. Copyright covers specific creative expression, even if the work includes unprotectable elements. For example, copyright does not protect the general idea of a number of friends who journey on a heroic quest to defeat evil. It does, however, protect the fixed creative expression of this idea, like the book *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle. Another example is that copyright does not protect the ingredients in a recipe for beef bourguignon, but it does protect the rich narrative of Julia Child's time in France, which accompanies her recipes in *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*.

Copyright

Copyright covers your work the moment you create it in a fixed form, like when you write it down. You don't need to register your work with the U.S. Copyright Office to get copyright protection, but timely registration gives you important benefits, including the ability to ask for certain remedies if you bring a claim for copyright infringement.

If you do apply to register your work(s), you have a couple of options. You can register one work with one application and filing fee. The Office also has a few group registration options which allow you to submit one application and filing fee when you meet certain eligibility criteria. A few examples are below:

- Group Registration of Unpublished Works (GRUW) Application, used for unpublished works. For more information on GRUW, see **Circular 24**.
- Group Registration of Short Online Literary Works (GRTX), used for things like blog entries, social media posts, and short online articles. For more information on GRTX, see **Circular 67**.
- Group Registration of Contributions to Periodicals (GRCP), used for works published in periodicals like magazines or journals. For more information on GRCP, see **Circular 62c**.



So what does it mean to be a copyright owner?

It means that you have several exclusive rights related to how you (or others) use your works. You have the right to make and sell copies, make new works based on your works (known as derivative works), and perform and display your works publicly, including on the internet. And if you want to use someone else's writing in these ways, you need permission from that copyright owner or be eligible for one of copyright's exceptions and limitations, like fair use. You can learn more about these topics and others with videos from our Learning Engine Video series.

For general registration information, see **Copyright Registration**.

Visit copyright.gov for more information.

If you belong to a literary group, club, or association that would benefit from a free copyright workshop from one of our copyright experts, contact us at copyinfo@copyright.gov to make arrangements. We are happy to help explain copyright!