Copyright Registration at a Glance

What you need to know

Who is the U.S. Copyright Office?

The U.S. Copyright Office is part of the Library of Congress and administers copyright law in the United States.

What is Copyright?

Copyright is a form of legal protection for the authors of original and creative works of expression—such as books, poetry, music, movies, paintings, photography, and computer software—fixed in all media, including physical and digital forms. Copyright law does not protect things like ideas, inventions, names or brand names, titles, or short phrases.

When is my work protected by copyright?

Copyright protection exists from the moment a creative work is fixed in a tangible form—for example, when a story is written down, when a musician records a song, or when a photographer takes a picture. Registration is ***not required*** for copyright protection.

Copyright

Why should I register my work with the Copyright Office?

Registering your work is a good idea because it establishes a public record of your copyright claim. You must register your work with the U.S. Copyright Office (or had your application refused) before bringing an infringement lawsuit when your work is used unlawfully. Timely registration may also provide additional benefits in litigation.

How can I register my work?

You can apply for registration by submitting a completed application form, a nonrefundable filing fee, and a nonreturnable deposit—that is, a copy or copies of the work being registered and "deposited" with the Copyright Office.

You can submit these materials either online at copyright.gov or by mailing them to the Copyright Office. The fee for a basic registration is $55 online or $85 by mail and is payable by check or money order. Generally, you can only submit one work with each application but there are some limited exceptions. The Office has different options for registering groups of related works using one application. Each option has very strict requirements so for more information you should visit our website or contact us.

Where can I find more information?

Visit copyright.gov for more information, including FAQs, circulars, and more.

You can also contact us at:
U.S. Copyright Office
1 (877) 476–0778 (toll free)
Email: copyinfo@copyright.gov
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M-321 11/2019