

# What Small Business Owners Should Know About Copyright

Copyright is a type of intellectual property that provides legal protection for **original works of authorship**. A “work” includes many different types of creative output. As a business owner, a work may be considered a business asset. Consider some examples:



**computer programs;**



**website content, including blogs;**



**marketing and advertising materials, such as videos, jingles, brochures, flyers, and logo artwork;**



**technical drawings and labels for products; and**



**manuals and handbooks, whether for your business model or the products you sell.**

## Key Copyright Takeaways for Businesses

- Copyright is different from other forms of intellectual property, such as patents and trademarks, because the legal protection exists automatically as soon as your work is “fixed” in a tangible form.
  - ▶ [Learn more about copyright basics, including fixation, in our video “What is Copyright?”](#)
- Once you have a copyright-protected work, you can prevent other people from copying, selling, or using it without your permission. This also means you can license your work for profit.
  - ▶ [Learn more about your exclusive rights as a copyright owner in our video “Copyright Holder’s Exclusive Rights.”](#)
- Even though your work is protected by copyright from the moment it is fixed, you can register it with the U.S. Copyright Office for additional benefits, including for U.S. works, access to federal courts and the Copyright Claims Board in the case of copyright infringement.
  - ▶ [Learn more about copyright registration and its benefits in our video “Copyright Registration.”](#)
- Generally, the creator of a work is its author, and the author is also the copyright owner. An exception to this is what’s known as a “work made for hire,” in which case the employer or commissioning party of a work is the author and owner.
  - ▶ [Learn more about works made for hire in our video “Works Made for Hire.”](#)

View all of our Learning Engine Series educational videos at [copyright.gov/learning-engine](https://copyright.gov/learning-engine).

**For more information about copyright, including registration and other services provided by the U.S. Copyright Office, contact us:**

**Phone:** (202) 707-3000 or 1-877-476-0778 (toll-free)

**Website:** [copyright.gov](https://copyright.gov)

**Email:** [copyinfo@copyright.gov](mailto:copyinfo@copyright.gov)

**Mail:** U.S. Copyright Office  
101 Independence Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20559-6000

Other legal protections, like trademark, patent, or trade secret protection, may be available to you as a business owner. Learn more at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office’s website: [uspto.gov](https://uspto.gov).

