

Primary school student handbook on copyright

Introduction

This handbook is part of a series of Hellenic Copyright Organization's instructive materials. It aims to provide useful information on basic questions related to copyright. Before reading it keep in mind; each of us, you, your friends, your classmates, and your parents are creators. We all create! And we all make use of works that others have created. Copyright exists to allow creators to keep creating so that anyone who reads books, listens to music, or watches films, continues doing it. Being the competent authority, Hellenic Copyright Organization (HCO) is there to ensure copyright is given the respect it deserves. For any queries on copyright feel free to contact us or visit our website.

Irini Stamatoudi, LL.M., Ph.D.

Director, Hellenic Copyright Organization

1. Why is copyright important?

Don't you feel proud of yourself when you create something?

Don't you feel creative when you write a composition, sketch a drawing, write a poem for your mother as a gift for Mother's Day, or even write an article for your school newspaper?

And how would you feel if someone copies or, to put it differently, "steals" your creations without your permission?

This is why copyright is so important. It enables you to prevent other people from copying and exploiting your work. Copyright gives you the right to control what people can and cannot do with your work. No one is allowed to steal what you own; in the same way, no one is allowed to take your creation and use it as he pleases, if he doesn't get your permission first.

2. So it seems copyright is important; but what is it all about?

Let's take it a step at a time. Owning a property means that you are the owner of a house, a plot of land, a car, just like you own your backpack or even of your clothes. All of these things are material, which means you can actually touch them. Yet, many of our everyday pleasures in life are based on someone else's idea; for instance, let's take a book, a song, a film, or a videogame. They all start from an idea and when the idea becomes specific in the form of a musical piece, a book or a drawing then the idea becomes a creation. The owner of these works is the one who created them, the one who gave them their specific form. All these works are considered property and because they started as an idea in someone's mind, this property is called intellectual property broadly speaking, and more particular copyright.

For example...

Let's take an example from the music world. Suppose your favorite singer's CD comes into your possession. The songs and music included in your CD are something you cannot touch, though you can listen to them and thoroughly enjoy them. Even if the CD

belongs to you, assuming you are the one who bought it or the one to whom it was given as a gift, the song itself belongs to the person who created it. In this case, it is the person who wrote the lyrics and composed the music. You can offer a friend the CD or decide to throw it away, if you don't like it any more. Yet, this does not give you the right to change the music or alter the lyrics and upload it on the internet. By doing this, you are violating the creator's copyright.

Nowadays more than ever, internet plays an important role in everyday lives, with more and more people making use of it, so copying someone else's work has become an easy thing to do. The fact that it is easy, however, does not mean it is also permitted. **This is not so.**

It is not permitted to 'download' songs, films and web programs without getting the author's permission first. You are not allowed to 'upload' works other people created without first taking their permission.

3. Who is winning out of copyright?

Many creators earn their livelihood and offer employment to many others through the creation of their works. Numerous people have worked really hard to create the music you listen to, the videogame you play with on the computer or the film you watch over and over again. They cannot be recognized as creators of these artistic works and cannot get paid for their labor if you 'steal' their works.

By respecting the authors' work you reward their effort; that's how they can distribute the work they created without being afraid that they might be copied illegally. More importantly, you help them create even more artistic works; that way you help contribute to the dissemination of culture, knowledge and entertainment to the whole world.

4. What does copyright protect?

Copyright protects all original works with a specific form.

Original works are creations that did not exist beforehand; and if someone were to try and create them from scratch, then his artistic result would not be the same.

Copyright protects literary works (like a poem or a novel), musical compositions, theatrical works, drawings, choreographies, audiovisual works as well as architectural designs and computer programs.

NOTE: Copyright protects only those ideas that have a specific form (as explained above), which means that bare ideas cannot be copyright protected.

Example: Your teacher asks you to make a drawing. Suppose you have the idea of drawing the Parthenon. You cannot prevent others from doing the same. However, if you draw the Parthenon and someone else makes an exact copy of your painting then you have the right to forbid that.

5. What does copyright not protect?

Besides bare ideas, copyright does not protect news, simple facts and information that bears no originality. Mathematical formulas, procedures and different types of methods cannot be copyright protected either. It stands to reason: if they had been copyright protected, it would have an obstacle to further development and progress. Imagine a world in which they were copyright protected; if a great mathematician were to formulate a theory and that theory was copyright protected and not used, then progress would stop.

6. So, can I only use works which are copyright protected?

This is not exactly true. There are exceptions to the rule. In other words, in some cases you can even use works that someone else created as long as you comply with specific requirements.

To make things clear: Your teacher gives you a homework assignment at school. When you do your homework, you search and find on the internet several photos, lyrics and videos related to your assignment. Can you use them freely?

Yes, you can! But only if you cite the source where you found them on the internet and the authors' name. **Keep in mind:** you can only do this for things that had to do with your homework assignment.

What **you cannot do** is create a poem using parts of someone else's poem and 'upload' it on the internet as your own. In this case, you have to ask for the authors' permission first.

7. How long does copyright last?

Copyright does not last forever. What does this mean? It lasts from the date of the creation of the work to 70 years after the author's death.

Example: If someone wrote a book at the age of 19 in 1950 and died at the age of 79 in the year of 2010, copyright shall last until 70 years after his death, namely until 2081 (the 70 years period is calculated from the following year, in this particular case, from 1.1.2011).

8. What happens next? Can I use the authors' work without permission?

Yes, you can. When copyright expires you can freely use the works without asking for anyone's permission. Take care not to sign your own name as the author in the work you are using. **The work in no way becomes yours!** You are simply allowed to use it freely, that is all.

9. Who does copyright protect?

Copyright exists from the moment someone creates a work, irrespective of the form it might be in. However, only the author of the work can be protected by copyright. In most cases it is easy to identify who the author of a work is because his name is mentioned on it; for instance, in the case of a book the author's name appears on the book cover.

10. What about student group assignments? What happens when I am assigned a project together with my classmates?

Many a times, at class, the teacher assigns a project not to an individual student but jointly, to a group of students in the classroom. In this case, each member of this group is considered a co-author of this work i.e. there is not one author but many co-authors.

11. What can happen to me if I do not respect copyright?

You may think that, since many people 'download' films and songs from the internet, copy them and present them as their own, this is allowed. You may also think that everything found on the internet can be used for free; **This is not true.** It is illegal and there are sanctions for anyone who breaks the law.

Besides from the sanctions provided by law, what you should be most concerned about is that by violating copyright you deprive an author, a singer, a performer or even your favorite film actor of the right to get paid for his work or performance. It is as if someone takes your pocket money before you notice it. The fact that you don't take notice of them does not mean that what they are doing is legal.

For further information on copyright contact us at (+ 30 213 214 7800 or info@opi.gr) or you visit the Hellenic Copyright Organization's website at www.opi.gr).