

Pascack Valley Regional High School District
Digital Citizenship
Copyright

What is Copyright?

Copyright, simply put, is legal right to material. Ownership of copyrighted material starts with the creator; however, ownership can be transferred or assigned based on many different factors. Similarly, there are several different ways copyrighted material may be used.

The key to copyright is respecting how material is allowed to be used. Use of copyrighted materials for the sake of educational purposes are somewhat relaxed from ability to use outside of education; however, respect for even these relaxed rules is crucial to ensuring owners of such materials receive the credit and/or royalties deserved.

Why is awareness of Copyright important?

Imagine you spend a year writing the next best selling book, Grammy award winning album, Emmy award winning television program, Oscar winning screenplay, or Tony award winning show. After completion, you would likely, and justifiably, expect to receive credit and payment for your hard work. With Copyright laws, you own your material and can require such credit/payment. Without Copyright laws, people would be free to take your material and do with it what they would like.

Violation of copyright is theft that is often overlooked. Making photocopies of a book, copies of a song, recording a musical theater production, all without permission, is theft. Violation of Copyright hurts the owner of the material. Using our example above, if this person's copyrights were violated, they are losing credit/compensation for their hard work - they have been robbed!

What can we do to help students?

Here is a short list of examples educators may use to discuss the relevance of Copyright:

- Discuss recent cases where one musical artist has stolen melodies or lyrics from another to make a hit album. What is the impact on the original artist? The legal system? The thief? The consumer?
- Arrange a class visit with the Media Specialist to discuss the “do’s and don’ts” of copyright in the education world
- Beyond validity of a student’s research, explain why Works Cited gives credit to those who have written original works?
- Discussion: “What’s the big deal if I copy a song and give it to a friend?”
- What are the financial ramifications if someone makes illegal copies of a book, movie or song?

Where can I learn more?

- [Fair Use of Copyrighted Material in Education](#) - 2 page Guide
- [Commonsense Media](#) - click on “Creative Credit and Copyright”
- [Creative Commons](#) - an easy way to navigate copyright of your own material
- [TeachingCopyright.org](#) - Resources for Teachers and Parents
- [Stanford University Library](#) - Copyright and Fair Use Resources
- [Nolo.com](#) - Legal Resources to help you understand your rights with copyright