

Copyright and Attribution

Guidelines for referencing content created by others and respecting content ownership rights

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Extension is known for helping the public sort through the avalanche of information and advice available online and providing unbiased, relevant, practical information. Extension educational materials incorporate and evaluate information developed by others. It is important Extension educators and communicators understand and model lawful and prudent practices related to attribution, copyright and trademark protection, permission, fair use, and endorsement.

Just because an image, diagram, or paragraph is freely available online does not make it appropriate or legal to paste it into your next PowerPoint. Knowing the basics can help avoid embarrassing and potentially costly oversights and keep Extension where it should be – demonstrating research-based best practices in all we do!

Topics Addressed in This Guide

- Policies
- Attribution
- Copyright Definition
- Linking to Original Sources
- Public Domain
- Creative Commons
- Fair Use
- What is Legal to Use
- Ownership of Extension Content
- Photo Releases
- Common Examples in the Extension World
- References for More Information

Do You Know What to Do?

Review these everyday, real life questions involving copyright. Are you confident that you could correctly apply copyright and attribution standards in each scenario? Answers to each of these questions can be found at the end of this document.

- You want to include a recipe from *Good Housekeeping* magazine in your latest blog. Can you?
- You have a favorite *New Yorker* cartoon you have used for years to humorously deliver an educational message. Can you use it in your webinar?
- If you include sources and links to graphics and photos you find online, you're covered, right?
- Designing a flyer for an upcoming event, a colleague offers some candid photos of a previous Extension event from their cell phone. Can you use them?
- You want to provide very specific and practical advice. Is it OK to reference specific brand names of food, equipment, agricultural products, and other commercial items in education materials?
- Developing materials for an upcoming webinar series, you would like to use illustrations and handouts from your favorite class in grad school. Can you?
- Is it OK to embed third-party video clips in webinars?
- Do I need to cite sources and references in shorter written pieces, such as tip sheets, blogs?
- We want to engage hard-to-reach audiences such as younger parents and youth. To help demonstrate cultural currency and generate interest, can we reference and use images or videos of celebrities, popular music, TV shows, films, actors, musicians? What about commercially licensed characters, graphics, slogans, themes, and phrases?
- Do our own Extension materials have copyright protection? How do we protect Extension information from commercial or improper use?

Extension’s Core Policies on Attribution, Copyright, and Fair Use

University of Illinois takes copyright and trademark violations seriously. Illinois Extension will enforce the following policies regarding appropriate use of third-party content.

1. All photos and graphics must be originally taken/created by Extension, purchased through a photo/graphic service, in the public domain, available with a Creative Commons or open access license (with attribution as required), or used with permission. Staff must be able to document where a photo was obtained and permission received. Citing the photographer/designer does not absolve staff from copyright infringement. Extension photos of identifiable people must have photo release forms on file.
2. Music in presentations and public events must be purchased through a commercial licensing service, in the public domain, available with a Creative Commons or open access license (with attribution as required), or used with permission of the copyright holder.
3. Staff may not include copyrighted video in a presentation that is being recorded and posted for public viewing.
4. Staff may not use or reproduce trademarked images, characterizations, storylines, videos, or graphics, including, but not limited to popular TV shows, movie characters, book characters, video games, actors, musicians, slogans, cartoon, and phrases.
5. Staff should not plagiarize content of any kind from other authors, including Extension staff in other states. Include citations of referenced works. If saying “research says,” the source of the research should be cited.
6. No graphic or text can imply endorsement of a company’s product or services. A disclaimer should be included if it is unclear.

First Things First: Attribution vs. Copyright

Two practices are often confused and conflated: 1) the scholarly practice of citing your sources and avoiding plagiarism; and 2) citation and other steps that may be required to legally use other authors’ copyrighted material in your own work. These are distinct ideas. Both are important.

Citation and Attribution

It’s appropriate to incorporate facts, analysis, insights, and conclusions from multiple sources in your education materials. You can summarize, paraphrase, and directly quote information from publications, statistics, and content originating from other sources. Cite your source. “According to researchers at Cornell...” or “*Illinois Issues* reports in a recent article...”

To properly acknowledge sources of information and avoid plagiarism, educators should cite sources consulted when preparing Extension materials, handouts and fact sheets, blog posts, news columns, and PowerPoints. The citation format

will vary by context, but may include author, institution/agency, title, publication, date, institution/agency, and URL.

Citing sources is best practice for university-based educators for several reasons, distinct from the legal requirements governing copyright and fair use (discussed below). Public domain, open-source, and other freely available information sources should still be properly cited, with an exception for specific graphic and design elements where citation is not required and serve no educational purpose.

Copyright – What Is It?

Almost all information is subject to copyright protection. It applies broadly to creative works, and copyright law grants exclusive rights over the use and distribution to the creators of those works. What is a work? Books, images, music, video, art, and more. Copyright applies as soon as the work is in a fixed state, whether or not the work includes a copyright notice — including email, handwritten notes, sketches, or drafts. Creative works are protected. Ideas, facts, procedures, and methods are generally not. Presume all materials are subject to copyright protection until you have evidence otherwise. University of Illinois maintains [an excellent website and guide](#) to copyright. If you have doubts about a work you would like to incorporate into your Extension material, contact the communications team for guidance.

Safe Methods for Including Third-party Content in Extension Educational Materials Embedding or Linking Media

If you embed a video in a website or provide a link to an external website, you are not copying the original work, but directing your audience/reader to the original work in its original or authorized form. The advantage of this method is that you can freely reference content you cannot copy and distribute directly. A disadvantage is that since Extension is not hosting the content, only pointing to it, the content could change, move, or disappear.

When linking to external sources, make sure the context is clear that Extension and University of Illinois is not endorsing a product or service. A [disclaimer should be displayed](#) if non-endorsement is not evident from the context.

Materials In the Public Domain

Works in the public domain are free to copy and use without further permission. Public domain materials include:

- General facts, words, ideas, names, short phrases, and methods.
- Works published in the United States earlier than 95 years ago. (For example, in 2020, this would include works published before 1925).
- Works published between 1925 and 1978 that did not contain a valid copyright notice.
- Works published between 1925 and 1978 for which the copyright was not renewed.

- Works from the federal government and its employees.
- Works the copyright owner has freely granted to the public domain.

Public domain materials may be used freely in Extension education materials. In most cases, a **citation is appropriate**.

Creative Commons and Open Access Licenses

Creative Commons and other open access licensing systems allow for straightforward reproduction and use of copyrighted materials subject to certain terms, which usually includes attribution to the work's creator, not allowing commercial use, and requiring Creative Commons licensing for adaptations and modifications of the work. **Creative Commons license terms** are well documented, easy to understand, and simple to implement.

Need help finding public domain and open source resources? These links are a great place to start your search.

- [Public domain and open source content.](#)
- [Public domain and open source images.](#)
- [Public domain and open source music and sounds.](#)
- [YouTube audio library.](#)

Fair Use

Fair use is a legal principle that **allows educational, journalistic, and noncommercial reproduction and use of copyrighted material** without prior permission under certain conditions. Use must be brief, noncommercial, and spontaneous, with consideration given to the cumulative effect of such use. The source must be acknowledged, and repeated or perpetual use is generally not allowed without obtaining permission.

Extension is educational and noncommercial. But the widely-cited concept of “educational fair use” does not apply to many common Extension uses, such as webinars. Extension makes materials freely available on the web, social media, and other sites, such as YouTube. These factors weigh against fair use because free online copies are not brief and spontaneous uses of work, but repeated and perpetual.

Fair use is a subtle legal concept often requiring judgment by marketing and legal experts. **Columbia University’s fair use checklist** helps organizations consider (and document) four factors – the purpose, amount, nature, and effect of each use of copyrighted materials.

Fair use exemptions widely used in higher education settings are a poor fit for Extension, in part because access and delivery of our materials is widespread. However, if you conduct a good faith analysis and believe your use constitutes a fair use, consult with Extension marketing staff, who will assess your situation with campus experts.

What Materials Can I Use with Full Confidence?

An employee of University of Illinois Extension may use:

- Original material created by Extension and ACES faculty and staff, such as news stories, newsletters, or publications, with attribution.
- Creative designs, images, graphics, photos, music, or illustrations created by University of Illinois, ACES, or Extension marketing and communication offices, with documented permissions and releases on file. Contact the Extension marketing office for access.
- Cited and attributed information, such as paraphrasing or quotations, from publications, statistics, or content originating from other sources: “According to researchers at Cornell...” or “*Illinois Issues* reports in a recent article...” Summarize or paraphrase the information as original text. These kinds of small reproductions or quotations are considered to be fair use.
- Documents from other state Extension offices, after obtaining permission to reprint or revise, with credit to the originator.
- Public domain materials, open access and creative commons materials, and paid licensed content provided through the Extension marketing office.
- Links to websites and other online information, with URL.

Copyright for University of Illinois Extension Materials

University of Illinois holds the copyright on work products of its employees, including Extension educators and staff.

All published original educational work from University of Illinois Extension **should carry the following copyright statement**:

© 2020 University of Illinois Board of Trustees.
For permission to reprint, revise or otherwise use material, contact extension@illinois.edu.

Third-party Video and Image Tools and Services

Because we prefer to have exclusive copyright as well as clear branding on materials we produce, it is preferred practice for Extension not to use free software tools that stamp third party branding on the content.

Permissions and Photo Release Policy

Extension and **University policy** requires proper media release forms on file when photos or video includes identifiable images of people. Access photo release forms in **English** and **Spanish** on our marketing intranet page.

Campus guidelines require photo releases on file for any identifiable person in a photo, including crowd photos at public events.

Questions Answered: Do You Know What to Do?

You're writing a blog post and want to include a recipe from *Good Housekeeping* magazine. Can you?

A list of ingredients and basic methods are not subject to copyright. Photography and creative writing are subject to copyright. If you simply re-use the recipe itself and credit the source, you may do so legally. Avoid multiple recipes from the same source, which may begin to infringe on copyright.

You have a favorite *New Yorker* cartoon you have used for years to humorously deliver an educational message – can you use it in your webinar?

Original works, such as an illustrated cartoon, are a classic example of copyrighted material that we cannot reuse online as part of our own materials. If you can't find an open source alternative, your options are to request permission or avoid it.

If you always include sources, with links, for graphics and photos you find online, you're covered, right?

No. Copyrighted materials that don't meet fair use criteria require express permission of the copyright holder.

Designing a flyer for an upcoming event, a colleague offers some candid photos of a previous Extension event from their cell phone. Can you use them?

Maybe. Make sure a photo release form is on file for people identifiable in the photo. Be especially vigilant about minors.

You want to provide very specific and practical advice. Is it OK to reference specific brand names of food, equipment, agricultural products, and other commercial items in education materials?

No graphic or text may imply University of Illinois endorsement of commercial products or services. A disclaimer should be displayed if non-endorsement is not evident from the context.

Developing materials for an upcoming webinar series, you would like to use illustrations and handouts from your favorite class in grad school. Can you?

Content from textbooks is almost certainly subject to copyright. Course materials prepared by professors are also protected. Seek permission if you need to use substantial portions of the original materials, and as always, cite sources.

Is it OK to embed third-party video clips in webinars?

If you are playing video for others in the webinar and the recording/archive contains the third-party content, no. If the webinar notes link to legitimate copies of third-party content, including video, yes.

Do I need to cite sources and references in shorter written pieces such as tip sheets, blogs?

Citing sources is always appropriate. Talk to the Extension marketing team about a citation format for your piece.

We want to engage hard-to-reach audiences such as younger parents and youth. Can we reference and use images or videos of celebrities, popular music, TV shows, films, actors, musicians? What about commercially licensed characters, graphics, slogans, themes, and phrases?

All of these examples invoke likely copyrighted and licensed images, often with legal divisions and enforcement mechanisms designed to monitor and protect them. Resist the temptation to incorporate popular culture in Extension materials and marketing. It sets a bad example, appears careless and uninformed, creates legal and financial risk for the University, and damages our brand.

Do our own Extension materials have copyright protection? How do we protect Extension information from improper use?

Include the following in your work: © [year] University of Illinois Board of Trustees. Copyright protection exists even without the ©, but the notation reinforces proper ownership of content.

Dig Deeper

- [University of Illinois Copyright Resources](#)
- [University of Illinois Copyright Reference Guide](#)
- [University of Illinois Copyright Compliance](#)
- [University of Illinois Plagiarism Guidelines](#)
- [Course Materials and Copyright for Professors](#)
- [Columbia University Copyright Quick Guide](#)
- [IUPUI Copyright and Fair Use Guidance](#)
- [Copyright Issues in a Digital World](#)
- [Thinking Through Fair Use](#)
- [Copyright FAQ](#)
- [Facebook Terms of Service and Copyright](#)
- [Instagram Terms of Service and Copyright](#)
- [Twitter Terms of Service and Copyright](#)
- [Pinterest Terms of Service and Copyright](#)
- [YouTube Terms of Service and Copyright](#)

Ask Questions

Have a situation that doesn't seem to fit one of these scenarios or not sure about how to apply these guidelines to a project you're working on? Contact the Extension communications team for a consultation. For help with trickier situations, we often turn to our peers on campus for guidance, such as the copyright librarian or university counsel with specializations in intellectual property and copyright law.

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