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Creative Commons, Public Domain, and Why You Should Care

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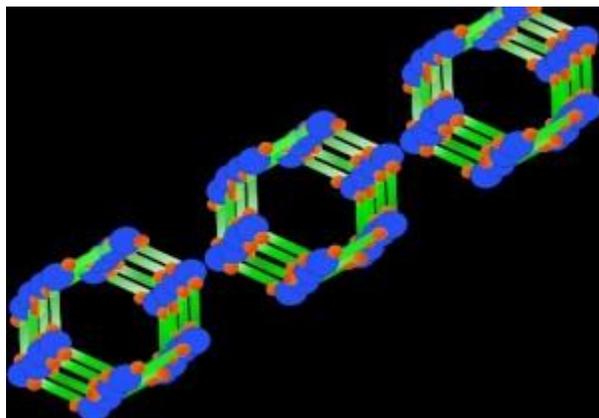
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Creative Commons, Public Domain, and Why You Should Care

By Kiyomi D. Deards

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It's Saturday night and you're writing about molecules, you saw a great picture on someone's website and you want to use it in your blog, surely that's okay right? Maybe, maybe not. It all depends on the copyright that the person chose to enforce on their image, and if the image was theirs to distribute.

A lot of people get complacent about using things they find on the web. There are a couple of reasons people use to justify their complacency, "If it's on the web anyone can find it so why shouldn't I use it." And "No one will notice". Check out [Photos, Flames, and Copyright](#) by Bug Girl, and the comments, if you don't believe these are serious issues. There are so many copyright issues we could talk about that if we tried to discuss them all this post would be as long as one of those oversized dictionaries we used to use in school. In reality every single image, sound file, and multimedia clip online has some sort of copyright applied to it. If no copyright is explicitly stated you should assume that is it under copyright by the creator of the work and that you can't use it without asking permission. There are some exceptions for Fair Use but I'm not going to get into them here but am providing some resources on fair use.

Fair Use:

These are some good resources about Fair Use but, remember **if you aren't sure if Fair Use applies the only person who can answer a question about copyright from a legal standpoint is a lawyer.**

[Fair Use Evaluator](#) – [Michael Brewer](#) & [ALA Office for Information Technology Policy](#)

[Stanford Copyright & Fair Use Center](#) – “This site is sponsored by [Stanford University Libraries and Academic Information Resources](#), [Justia](#), [NOLO](#), [LibraryLaw.com](#) & [Onecl. Hug the Pug!](#)“

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Creative Commons and the Public Domain are wonderful things; they allow people the ability to reuse works without necessarily having to pay royalties. It is very important that you always read the terms of the copyright on a work that is licensed under a creative commons or any other type of license. Not all licenses allow you to adapt the work, many require that you attribute the work to the original creator and some allow only education or non-profit use. In general I like to avoid thorny questions like, does writing a piece I don't get paid for but that will count toward promotion and tenure count as for profit? Because of that my favorite Creative Commons Licenses are those that either place works in the Public Domain (CC0) which is very uncommon, or those which do not restrict commercial use (Non-Commercial licenses do not allow commercial use).

Finding Images and Multimedia Files You Can Legally Use

The information provided below should help you locate items you can use but remember:

- 1) You must read every license individually and follow the terms of use listed.
- 2) **Only a lawyer can give you a legal opinion if you are uncertain of your interpretation of a license, if you're unsure talk with a lawyer before use.**

[CreativeCommons.org](#) provides one stop shopping to search the major images, multi-media, and music sites that host content which you can legally reuse. You need to check the license of every single item which you wish to use. Not all licenses are created equally and on Wikimedia Commons, and some of the other sites, there are several different types of licenses being used, not just Creative Commons licenses.

More Music

[AudionautiX](#) – All music is by Jason Shaw licensed under CC by 3.0 Attribution, see the site for specifics.

[CCMixer](#) – Music and Remixes under Creative Commons licenses with the option to search Free for Commercial Use only items.

[Free Music Archive \(Beta\)](#) – The mix here is very eclectic, and the licenses vary, but there are some real gems.

[Free PD](#) – Public Domain Music

SectionZ – Browse by Creative Commons License (Some allow Commercial use some are Non-Commercial only, pay attention!)

More Images (Although many of the images on these websites are in the public domain you must check each images license to see who own the rights, any restrictions placed on, and how and if attribution is required.)

Images in the Public Domain – Slippery Rock University, David Daily

JSC Image Collection – NASA

National Digital Library – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

NOAA Photo Library – U.S. National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

Public Health Image Library – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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<http://creativecommons.org/choose/>

Other Copyright Resources

U.S. Copyright Office

10 Big Myths about copyright explained by [Brad Templeton](#)

Copyright Advisory Network – “A community of librarians, copyright scholars, policy wonks.”

Copyright Term and the Public Domain in the United States (by the [Cornell Copyright Information Center](#))