

## **What is copyright?**

Given that it is so easy to reproduce, manipulate, store and distribute digital material these days with increasing numbers of laptop computers and whiteboards in classrooms generally, are teachers unwittingly, or otherwise, falling foul of copyright law?

Just buying or owning a copy of a copyright work does not give us permission to use it how we wish. For example, buying a copy of a book, cd, video, computer program etc does not necessarily give us the right to make copies (even for private use), play or show them in public. Other everyday uses of copyright material, such as photocopying, scanning, downloading from a cd-rom or online database, all involve copying the work, so permission is generally needed.

In the case of material recorded from free-to-air broadcasts on British television, educational establishments can obtain a license from the Educational Recording Agency which operates a licensing scheme for educational use of copyright-protected material. Visit [www.era.org.uk](http://www.era.org.uk) for more details.

## **What is the purpose of copyright?**

Copyright allows the creators of the work in question to gain economic rewards for their efforts and so encourage future creativity and the development of new material, which benefits us all. Copyright material is usually the result of creative skill and/or significant labour and/or investment and without protection it would often be very easy for others to exploit material without paying the creator.

**Can I put copyright work on my network without permission?**

**Can I use excerpts in a PowerPoint presentation without permission?**

**Can I copy a video I already own and make it into a dvd?**

The answer to these three common questions is **NO**.

## **How can I avoid falling foul of copyright law?**

Copyright is a type of intellectual property. Like physical property, it cannot usually be used without the owner's permission. Of course, the copyright owner may refuse to give permission for use of their work, or ask for payment to allow their material to be used in that manner.

Some **minor** uses may fall within the scope of one of the exceptions to copyright, but if you want to use a copyright work, you will usually need to approach the copyright owner and ask for a license to cover the use you require. A license is a contract between you and the copyright owner and it is for both parties to negotiate the terms and conditions, including the payment or royalty for the use.

## **What practical steps can departments follow to keep on the right side of the law?**

Firstly, ensure that resources are bought from reputable educational suppliers, where most will come with the license required, or the supplier can help secure necessary licensing.

Secondly, keep adequate departmental records of all purchases, including suppliers, so that retrospective licenses, where necessary, can be sourced.

**For more detailed information about copyright law**, please follow the links listed below, which have provided the background for much of this article.

<http://www.ipo.gov.uk>

[http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/p01\\_uk\\_copyright\\_law](http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/p01_uk_copyright_law)

[http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/uk\\_law\\_summary](http://www.copyrightservice.co.uk/copyright/uk_law_summary)

<http://www.era.org.uk/>

<http://www.tasi.ac.uk/advice/managing/copyright.html> - cp2