

Six Strategies for Using Copyright Materials

1. Create it yourself

Firstly, wherever possible, create material yourself from scratch or pay for its creation. This is the simplest way to ensure that you can do whatever you like with the content.

2. Ask permission

Obviously this is not always going to be practical or even desirable – at the very least we want to expose students to a diversity of opinion and ideas. The next piece of advice then is: if you want to use something that someone else created, ask them for permission to use it. This includes web pages, images, audio, video... in short, everything. If you ask nicely and explain how you are intending to use the material, many creators will be happy to share. After all, much of what you might want to use in a teaching context is likely to have been created by academics in a similar position themselves. When accessing material from the web, check and see if there is a page describing the terms and conditions of use: many web sites freely allow reuse and copying, particularly for educational purposes.

3. Keep records

By getting explicit permission from the creator, you get to avoid any concerns about the legal details, just like you created it yourself. However, it is very important to keep good records of this permission – particularly if it is limited to particular uses. In fact, you should keep good records of where you obtain all of the content that you use in your courses. Some of the licenses that the University has entered into allow for audits or spot-checks of content use and you may be required to prove that you have sourced all of your course materials (digital and non-digital) legally. When using licensed material you must fully reference the source and be sure to use in the manner prescribed by the licence.

4. Use Student Notes

If you can't get explicit permission, for example, because you can't find the owner, the next best thing is to get implicit permission through the terms of our license. The easiest way, and usually the most effective way for large quantities of text material (more than half a page really), is to make use of Student Notes. From a practical perspective, if you plan on getting your students to read a lot of text, it's usually better to provide it in hard-copy. They're just going to print it out anyway and we have a lot of evidence to suggest that students resent having to print out material that lecturers provide. The main advantage is that copyright compliance and record keeping stops being your problem and is resolved efficiently through the Student Notes service.

5. Don't copy - link

However, if you need or want to provide access to material electronically that other people have created, then the safest way is by linking to the original source. If it's a web page, just include the URL. For images on web pages, you should generally use the page URL rather than the image URL directly. For material sourced from databases, you may be able to provide a static URL; otherwise you might have to provide instructions and a reference. Generally you cannot provide students with copies of material directly removed yourself from databases- the licenses usually prohibit this. From an etiquette perspective, if you want to refer lots of students to someone else's pages, particularly individual ones rather than large organizations, you should also contact them and check that they don't mind.

6. Copy with care, following the license

Finally, our licenses also allow you to take material that was originally distributed on paper and make it available to students in a variety of ways, but with key conditions.