**What is copyright?**

A simple definition of copyright is that it is a bunch of rights in certain creative material such as [text](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/text/), [artistic works](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/artistic-works/), [music](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/musical-works/), computer programs, [sound recordings](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/sound-recordings/)  and [films](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/film/).

The copyright owner has the right to control how their material is used. Copyright owners can prevent others from [copying](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/reproduction/) or [communicating](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/communicate/) their material without their permission.

Copyright does not protect ideas, concepts, styles or techniques. For example, copyright will not protect an idea for a [film](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/film/) or book, but it will protect a script or even a storyboard for the [film](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/film/).

Copyright is a separate right to the property right in an object. This means that the person who owns a book or painting will not own copyright in the book or painting unless it has been specifically [assigned](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/assign/) to them.

In Australia, copyright protection is automatic. There is no need for copyright registration in Australia, nor is there a legal requirement to [publish](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/published/) the material or to put a copyright notice on it. Material will be protected as soon as it is put into [material form](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/material-form/), such as being written down or recorded in some way (eg filmed or recorded).

In Australia, copyright law is contained in the [Copyright Act 1968](http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ca1968133/).

**Some common misconceptions**

Here are some common copyright myths:

* **You must register copyright in Australia otherwise the material is copyright free.**

No formal registration of copyright is required in Australia. This means you should generally assume that content will be protected by copyright.

* **If there is no copyright symbol or notice, then the material is copyright free.**

The absence of a copyright symbol or notice on material does not mean that the copyright owner has abandoned their copyright or has granted an implied [licence](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/licence/) for anyone to use or[reproduce](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/reproduction/) or [communicate](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/communicate/) their [m](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/works/)aterial.

* **Once material is**[**published**](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/published/)**or in the public domain, anyone can use it.**

The fact that material has been [published](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/published/) or is made freely available does not mean that the:

o   copyright owner has abandoned their copyright or

o   material has entered the public domain and is no longer protected by copyright.

If you wish to [copy](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/copy/) and/or [communicate](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/communicate/) the [m](https://smartcopying.edu.au/glossary/works/)aterial, you must:

o   rely on one of the [statutory or voluntary licences](https://smartcopying.edu.au/guidelines/copyright-basics/statutory-and-voluntary-licences/)

o   rely on one of the [copyright exceptions](https://smartcopying.edu.au/guidelines/copyright-basics/copyright-exceptions/) or

o   obtain [permission](https://smartcopying.edu.au/guidelines/permissions-and-consents/permissions/) from the copyright owner.

* **I am not infringing copyright if I am not making any money from my use of the material.**

Your use may infringe copyright irrespective of whether you are making any money or profit from the use.