

**Intellectual  
Property for  
Physicists**

*or*

***“I found it on the Internet and I can use it, right?”***

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Today, we'll talk about the various legal protections for intellectual property.

Scientists must understand the distinction between copyright infringement, which violates the law, and plagiarism, which violates professional ethics.

Disclaimer: I cannot provide definitive answers intellectual-property questions—that far outstrips my expertise. My purpose today is to make you aware of the issues so that you will know to seek help from experts when you need it.

As we speak, Georgia State University (GSU) is being hauled into court again by several major academic publishers (Cambridge, Oxford, and Sage) over the extent to which copyrighted materials were uploaded and distributed via GSU's electronic reserve system. The publishers allege that GSU, which hosted more than 6700 separate copyrighted works for more than 600 classes, committed direct copyright infringement and asked for draconian penalties. In a lengthy (>350 pages), complicated decision in May 2012, the courts rules mainly for GSU. The plaintiffs promptly appealed, and the case is now dragging through the appellate courts. The cost in legal fees to all parties is staggering. (q.v. <http://www.educause.edu/focus-areas-and-initiatives/policy-and-security/educause-policy/issues-and-positions/intellectual-property/georgia-state-copy>).

## **First, understand the law**

***Copyright* protects original works of  
“authorship”**

***Trademark* or (*service mark*) protects words,  
phrases, symbols, or designs identifying  
the source of goods or services of one  
entity and distinguishing them from  
others’**

***Patent* protects inventions, discoveries,  
processes, and methods**

**Case law establishes ownership rights to intellectual property  
and provides remedies to those whose property is taken without  
their consent, even if they do not suffer monetary loss**

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In US law, intellectual property is considered the same as any other form of property. No entity can take an owner’s property without lawfully buying it (and paying the price the owner agrees to) or by “due process,” whereby a court orders the property to be transferred from the owner to another party (including a government entity).

What is protected by copyright, trade and service marks, and patents is the property owner’s right to control the property and profit from its use.

“Works of authorship” include any form of artistic or creative expression of ideas.

## **What is the difference between copyright infringement and plagiarism?**

**Short answer: \$\$\$**

**Copyright infringement—an author's work is reused or republished without permission of the copyright holder, regardless of attribution**

**Plagiarism—an author's work is presented as someone else's original work or reused without attribution**

**Copyright infringement is illegal;  
plagiarism is unethical**

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Proper credit of the source is not sufficient to avoid charges of copyright infringement; explicit permission must be granted by the owner of the copyright to reuse copyrighted material.

## **Copyright law for printed materials is well established—electronic and digital is evolving**

**Copyright owner has the *exclusive* right to reproduce, distribute, sell, or *adapt* a work**

**Once a work is “committed to form,” a copyright exists in favor of the author**

**Authors transfer copyright to the publisher when a manuscript is printed**

**Mere ownership of a book, painting, or image does not give the possessor copyright (thus it may not be reproduced, distributed, or adapted without permission)**

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Once the narrative is written down, the painting is painted, the camera shutter snaps, the saxophone plays—a copyright of those words or images or sounds exists in favor of the creator. Intellectual property does not have to be “registered” with any government agency for a copyright to exist.

When a journal publishes a scientific article, the author(s) assign their rights to the publisher. Thus, an author may not reproduce even his or her own published work without explicit permission of the publisher.

The term of a US copyright is the author’s life plus 70 years, unless extended (or 75 years for a work of corporate authorship).

## What is likely to be protected by copyright?

Written material, published or unpublished

Artwork, photographs, illustrations

Charts, tables, graphs

Music and musical performances

Performance art

Computer software, including screen shots

Reproductions of brand-name goods

Logos

**Reuse at your own risk!**

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Assume that anything that is printed on paper, shows up on your monitor, or is played on some kind of electronic device is copyrighted.

After a copyright, trademark or service mark, or patent expires, ownership of the intellectual property passes to the “public domain” in US law and is no longer subject to private ownership. Thus, you may reprint Newton’s original works in their entirety, *verbatim*, and sell them or perform Mozart’s *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* from the original score and charge admission, without violating copyright.

**However**, reproducing somebody else’s version of *The Principia*, which modernized Newton’s 18th-century spelling and added useful illustrations, or performing a later composer’s arrangement of Mozart, may indeed be an infringement of copyright.

## Some things cannot be copyrighted

**Titles, names, short phrases, slogans**

**Familiar symbols or designs**

**Ideas, procedures, methods, systems, concepts, principles, discoveries—  
*as distinguished from a description, explanation, or illustration of same***

**Works consisting entirely of information that is common property and containing no original authorship**

**Public domain materials**

**All official U.S. government publications**

**Materials for which copyright has expired**



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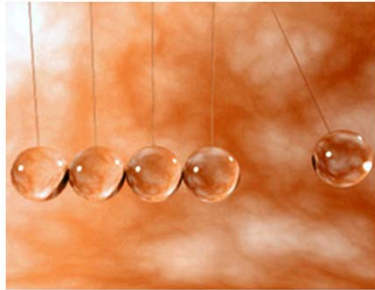
Ideas, procedures, methods, concepts, and processes are protected by **patent**. As in copyright, items protected by patent may not be reproduced, disseminated, or adapted without permission from the patent holder. Same goes for trademarks and service marks.

**Most** materials appearing in US government publications or on government websites (URLs ending in .gov or .mil) are assumed to be in the public domain and thus not subject to copyright. However, individual images might be copyrighted by the artist or photographer and should not be used without permission.

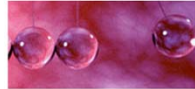
Companies are particularly sensitive about the unauthorized use of their service marks or trademarks. Just because they put it on their website for the world to see does NOT mean that you can grab it and put it on something of yours.

When in doubt, **ask permission**.

## What if I change it?



original artwork



my adaptation

**Copyright owner has *exclusive* right to reproduce, distribute, sell, or adapt a work**

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Copyright not only protects the original form of the property, it also restricts the right to adapt the work to the copyright owner.

## **How do I obtain permission to use copyrighted material?**

**Send a written request to the *publisher* of the material you wish to use, regardless of who you *think* holds the copyright**

**Enclose a photocopy of the material you wish to reproduce**

**If you wish to delete or edit portions of the material, say so in the request**

**Request permission early and expect delays**

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It is a courtesy to inform the author that you plan to use his work, but you **must** get formal permission from the copyright holder, which is unlikely to be the original author, for published work.

## **Giving credit**

**Whether or not permission is needed for its use, acknowledge all material taken from other sources**

**The copyright owner may specify the form or location of the credit line**

**Indicate that the material is being used with permission**

**From Brown, *The Best Book in the World*, 4th ed.  
Copyright © 2000 Atlantic Monthly Press. Reprinted  
by permission of Atlantic Monthly Press.**

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## **What about redistributing copyrighted materials?**

**The APS journals now allow the *author* of a paper to post it on his/her website, providing it is not modified, the original is cited, and a fee is not charged**

**Redistributing copies of other people's papers is a violation of copyright**

**Most other journals do not allow any form of redistribution of their copyrighted articles**

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Whether or not a person *profits* from the distribution of copyrighted material is not the issue; giving away copyrighted material is still an infringement of copyright.

## What about “fair use”?

Section 107 of the US Code lists various purposes for which reproduction of copyrighted work is “fair”

- criticism or comment
- news reporting
- teaching
- scholarship
- research

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The term “fair use” originated in US jurisprudence. While many other countries recognize similar exceptions to copyright protection, only the United States and Israel fully recognize the concept of fair use.

Under US law, copyrighted material *may* be reproduced or distributed without penalty solely for the purpose of educating or informing.

What you think sounds “fair” may in fact not be fair under the legal definition. Reason and logic are often poor predictors of whether or not you’ll get sued.

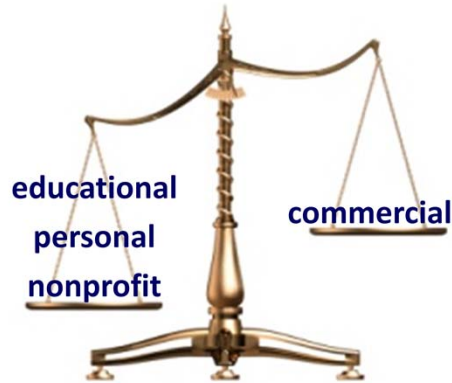
## **Section 107 sets out four factors to be considered to determine “fair use”**

- 1. the purpose and character of the use, including whether it is for commercial or nonprofit educational uses**
- 2. the nature of the copyrighted work**
- 3. the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the whole**
- 4. the effect of the use on the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work**

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A judge is tasked with considering these four factors, in this order, in determining whether a copyright has been infringed.

## #1—What is the character of the use?



core values:

criticism, commentary, news reporting,  
parody or satire, “transformative” use

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“Fair use” limits the exclusive rights granted by copyright law to the author of a creative work. The concept permits *limited* use of copyrighted material without acquiring explicit permission from the rights holder(s).

Uses on the left tip the balance in favor of fair use. Examples of fair use include scholarly activities (commentary, criticism, research, teaching, library archiving) and news reporting.

Uses on the right tip the balance in favor of the copyright owner, i.e., requiring permission for use.

“Core values” (center list) are those most highly protected by the courts and are thus weighted in favor of fair use, even if the copyrighted material is being used for commercial purposes.

A good explanation of the four-factor fair use test may be found at <http://www.utsystem.edu/OGC/intellectualProperty/copypol2.htm>.

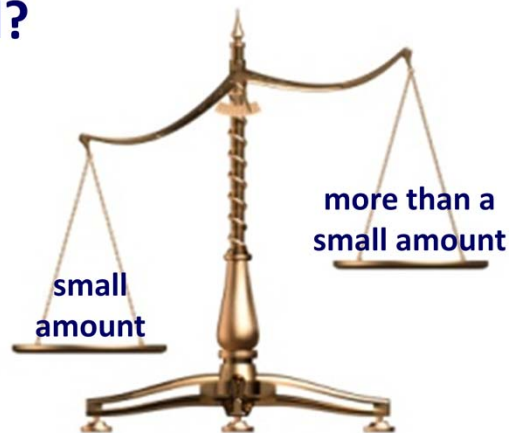
## #2—What is the nature of the work being used?



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Uses on the left tip the balance in favor of fair use.  
Uses on the right tip the balance toward requiring permission.  
Center factors don't have much effect.

### **#3—How much of the work will be used?**



**If Factor #1 tipped the balance more toward fair use,  
more of the work may be used**

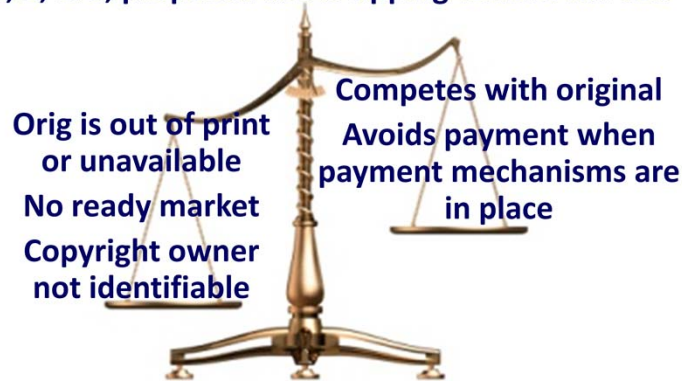
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Unfortunately, “small” is not defined quantitatively, and “more” of a work may be used if the first two factors tip toward fair use.

Another consideration is the ratio of used material to the whole. In general, copying 200 words out of 15,000 is more likely to tip toward fair use than copying 50 words out of 250.

## #4—If this use were widespread, what effect would it have on the market for the original?

After 1, 2, & 3, proposed use is tipping toward fair use



If the use were widespread, *and the use were not fair*, would the  
copyright owner be losing money?

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If the copyright holder can establish that it has been financially harmed, the balance tips away from fair use.

## **Myths about fair use that could get you into trouble**

- 1. Any use that seems fair must be fair.**
- 2. Acknowledging the source means it's not copyright infringement.**
- 3. It's okay to use it if I don't sell it.**
- 4. It's okay to reproduce up to 300 words, as long as I cite the source.**
- 5. The lack of a copyright notice means the work is in the public domain and may be used without permission.**

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1. As in many other things, logic and reason are not 100-percent congruent with the law. The concept of "fair use" has a specific legal meaning in US jurisprudence that may not conform to what you think is "fair."
2. Acknowledgment protects you from being accused of plagiarism, not copyright infringement. To avoid copyright infringement, you must receive specific permission from the copyright holder to use the material.
3. If you allow the public to obtain at no cost copyrighted material that would otherwise be sold, even if you don't personally profit from your generosity, you have still harmed the copyright holder's ability to profit from his ownership and have thus infringed his copyright.
4. The 300-word rule was an informal arrangement among some New York publishing houses, dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has long been obsolete under US copyright law.
5. The mere creation of a work establishes copyright over it. There is no legal requirement to register or declare copyright for copyright to exist in favor of the author or artist. United States law in effect since March 1, 1989, has made copyright the default for newly created works.

## **Some final advice from the US Copyright Office:**

**The distinction between “fair use” and  
infringement may be unclear and not  
easily defined**

**There is no specific number of words, lines,  
or notes that may safely be taken without  
permission**

**Acknowledging the source of the  
copyrighted material does not substitute  
for obtaining permission**

<http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.html>

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## **Some final advice from Celia:**

**Don't use other people's stuff without permission—ever**

**For illustrations, make your own figures, use images that are in the public domain, or buy images that are royalty-free ([www.istockphoto.com](http://www.istockphoto.com))**

**Don't stick things up on the Web indiscriminately—it is considered “publication” or “distribution” and may constitute copyright infringement**

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