

General copyright guidelines

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Faculty are generally used to creating course content relying on the face-to-face teaching exception and the fair use doctrine of copyright law. These are much more restrictive in the context of offering online education to the general public. To avoid copyright concerns, we ask that instructors follow these requirements with regard to use of third-party content in materials. Third party content means any content that is not self-created, such as graphs, charts, artwork, photos, screenshots, clip art, trademarks and videos.

When considering the use of copyright materials in your MOOC, it may be helpful to think about the process of securing permissions as if you were the author of a textbook, obtaining rights for materials you would like to include in your book. While this is not to rule out fair use as an option, it is to be used with care, and in parallel with consultation with your university's attorneys or legal personnel.

Options available for obtaining copyright materials

We have prioritized the following options for the use of images and videos in presentations:

- **Option A:** Make the content yourself. Rather than relying on an existing graph or chart, make an image yourself. (Note: Do not copy someone else's chart, as that is simply making a derivative work and the copyright stays with the original author.) Alternatively, it is sometimes possible to get the content from a friend, or an individual who owns the rights to the content. Make sure your contact understands the scope of use you will be making of the image and make sure that your friend owns copyright (has not given it away to a journal or conference) and has the authority to give you the permission you need).
- **Option B:** Get the content from a public domain website that allows use of images for any purpose, including for-profit purposes. Note that the license must be broad enough to permit for for-profit use. An example of an acceptable license is CC-BY, the Creative Commons Attribution License (in which you must provide attribution to the author). Below, we have included a list of public domain resources. Many instructors intend to have their class offer Signature Track, or another monetization strategies in the future if not the first run of their class. With that in mind, any of the non-commercial licenses (such as CC BY-NC, CC BY-NC-SA, or CC BY-NC-ND) will not be suitable for your class. Please see the Creative Commons [list of licenses](#) for more information.
- **Option C:** Link to it! Pointing your students to the source of content on the web is lawful. The only limitation here is that you should ensure that you are pointing to a legitimate source for the content. That is, the original website or poster of the content (in the case of YouTube, for example) must have or reasonably be expected to have the authority to host or post the content. Provide a soft link, so that the students view the content from the original source; do not deep embed the content.
- **Option D:** Seek clearance from the publisher for use. If you want to request permission to use an image or other media from a publisher, you can usually find an email address to send reprint requests to on publishers' web sites. See below for a sample of what a request looks like. A note: in your initial interaction with the publisher, try to enquire if they will provide the content free of charge, as many publishers are willing to consider that option.

- **Option E:** Conduct a fair use analysis. In the context of a for-profit venture, fair use is fairly limited. Faculty may rely on fair use in two circumstances. 1) The image shown is being directly criticized. For example, in a photography course, a photo is being shown to illustrate the problems with over-exposing film. 2) The image is being used in a transformative way; that is, the purpose for use in the course is completely different than its original purpose. For example, in a course about web design it is acceptable to show web screen shots to demonstrate good and bad web design techniques. (As a footnote on screenshots, if the purpose of showing the screen shot is different than the purpose of the author of the website, e.g., your purpose is to demonstrate how a particular website works, while the purpose of the author of the website is to communicate the information on the screen, then generally the use will be transformative and the use a fair use.)

Typical timeframe for obtaining copyright

Faculty typically budget one or several months to obtain all of their copyright materials, so it is very helpful to start sourcing for images and other content a month or so in advance of your class. If your class needs images that can be found mainly on public domain sites, this reduces the time needed to source for images, as faculty and teaching staff have found that it typically takes about 5- 10 minutes to locate each public domain image.

If your course requires images that require permission, please plan to budget a longer period of time to obtain the images. It may take up to a week to receive an initial response from most journals and textbook publishers. The first response from a publisher may not necessarily be an immediate answer on whether permission is granted, as they typically need to conduct a few checks. The actual permission might take about a month to be fully cleared.

Public domain resources

Here is a list of compiled resources that faculty have found useful.

Creative Commons

The [search page](#) on the Creative Commons website is an aggregated search of several sites which contain public domain works, such as Flickr and Fotopedia. way for content owners to grant advance permission for public use of their copyrighted works. There are some restrictions within CC works, however, with some CC licenses requiring only attribution, while others may be limited to noncommercial uses.

Wikimedia Commons

[Wikimedia Commons](#) is large database of freely usable images and media files to which anyone can contribute.

Pixabay

[Pixabay](#) is a public domain images which can be used without limitation.

Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian [Wiki for Public Domain and Image Sales References](#) is the public wiki for the Smithsonian's Web and New Media strategy process with links to information regarding public domain images and image licensing from museums.

Connexions

[Connexions](#) is an ecosystem for authoring, customizing, and distributing open-access educational content. Its content covers many disciplines, from math and science to history

and English to psychology and sociology. Connexions is currently supporting several Coursera courses, including Introduction to Sustainability (Illinois) and Fundamentals of Electrical Engineering (Rice). Coursera instructors can use Connexions to provide free learning materials for their students. For a list of their open-access textbooks, please click [here](#).

Prohibited Material

The following material does not fall under the public domain. Anecdotally, past attempts by instructors to request permission to use any material from the following categories have not been successful.

- Political cartoons
- Getty Images
- Popular movies, television shows
- Popular songs
- Trademarks
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Sample Reprint Request

Here is an example of a copyright permissions request.

"Dear _____,
On behalf of Professor _____ of Duke University, we would like to request your permission to use approximately 100 figures from [book title] as part of an online course that Professor _____ will be teaching in [start date of course], [course name]. I have attached an Excel spreadsheet with the figures they would like to use.
Professor _____'s lectures, offered through the online course environment Coursera, will be password protected and available only to registered students. Access to the material will be limited to the twelve weeks of the course. This course is free for any student, any student can sign up for the course without restriction.
The professor's use of the figures will be entirely educational, and full citations will be provided with each figure. They have recommended [book title] to their students and included a link on the course site through which students can purchase it. Faculty members at other participating institutions have found that providing links to recommended texts on Coursera has resulted in significant increases in sales. For example, Daphne Koller and Nir Friedman's Probabilistic Graphical Models: Principles and Techniques experienced a spike in sales when Professor Koller course was first announced in November 2011 and again when the course started in March 2012, and had to go into another printing. During a course offered on a similar platform, MITx, Elsevier sold every copy of Anant Agarwal and Jeffrey Lang's Foundations of Analog and Digital Electronic Circuits.
We would be very grateful if you are able to grant permission for Professor _____ to use these figures. We firmly believe their use would benefit McGraw-Hill as well as the Coursera students. Since this is strictly for educational use, we hope you can waive any licensing fees."

Credit: Duke University, Introductory Human Physiology