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[Web Tips 101] by Vivian Tran



Vivian Tran is the Communications Manager of Web Services.

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Copyright Dos and Don'ts for the Web

The Internet makes it really easy for online users to copy, modify and share information, whether the content is text, images, audio or video. This raises a lot of important questions about copyright issues.

Below you'll find five basic guidelines that may help clarify what you can and cannot do as an online user or publisher.

- Only use copyrighted material from other websites if you have **explicit permission** from the site author to do so. Even if you give credit to the author of an article or image, it is still considered a copyright violation without the author's explicit permission. Keep in mind that since 1978, every published work on paper or digital media automatically gets copyright protection, whether you see a copyright notice or not.
- Copyright law allows you to use short quotations or excerpts for the purpose of criticism, commentary or news reporting under the terms of "fair use," as long as you don't replicate the "heart" of the material. The law also protects the expression of facts and ideas, so you are free to use facts and ideas reported on articles or websites.
- Using unauthorized materials whether for commercial or noncommercial use is a copyright infringement. If a copyright holder or site author cannot be identified or contacted for explicit permission, the material should not be used.
- Copying images and text without explicit permission from the authors and then removal of the copyrighted material will not remove the copyright violation.
- You can use any work or material that is considered under public domain. This includes federal government documents, materials produced before 1923 and materials produced before 1977 without a copyright notice.

This list is not intended to be a comprehensive list of Copyright Law and does not constitute legal advice. Please consult an attorney for legal advice on Copyright Law.

Other resources on copyright issues:

- Digital Millennium Copyright Act
<http://www.copyright.gov/legislation/dmca.pdf>
- Read Metro's Copyright Information on metro.net
http://www.metro.net/about_us/copyright.htm
- Electronic Frontier Foundation
www.eff.org

"Web Tips 101" is a weekly column to provide basic and useful information that will help improve your interactive Web experience.

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