

# What is copyright?

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Copyright is a form of intellectual property law. It grants exclusive rights to the copyright owner to enable them to determine how their work can be used.

Copyright protects the expression of ideas and information in material form, e.g. written down, recorded as an image or sound. It does not protect ideas and information themselves. In Australia, copyright applies automatically as soon as something is written down or recorded. Material does not have to be registered for copyright protection. It is good practice to include a copyright statement (the copyright symbol ©, the name of the copyright owner and the year of first publication, e.g. © Fred Jones 2010.) to remind people that the work is subject to copyright and who the copyright owner is.

Copyright protects material as either:

- [Literary works](#) - books, journal articles, conference papers, poems etc.
- [Artistic works](#) - digital images, paintings, sculpture, photographs etc.
- [Dramatic works](#) - plays, scripts etc.
- [Musical works](#) - scores and notated music
- [Films and television broadcasts](#)
- [Sound recordings and radio broadcasts](#) - recorded music and non-musical sounds.

Copyright also applies to unpublished material, [websites](#) and [computer programs](#).

[Authors and creators do not always own copyright in their work.](#)

[Copyright lasts for a certain duration.](#)

Copyright also allows the community to make reasonable use of copyright material for socially beneficial purposes, such as education and research. See [using copyright material.](#)

