

COPYRIGHT, PUBLIC DOMAIN, AND CREATIVE COMMONS IN THE US



Most creative works are subject to copyright from the moment of inception. Copyright holders own exclusive rights to distribution and use. This limits your ability to incorporate the work of others. *Fair use* is a legal doctrine that allows specific, limited reuse of copyrighted works.

Creative works enter the **public domain** one of only three ways:

- Created by the US Government
- Declaration by rights holder
- Time (typically 70 years after author's death but varies by medium)

Works in the public domain can be reused with minimal limitations, but public domain material should still include attribution (see below).



Rights holders can apply a Creative Commons license to their work, allowing others to remix and reuse without prior consent and without the limitations of *fair use*. Many search services allow you to search for CC-licensed media.

RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN AND CC CONTENT

There are many different ways to find public domain and creative commons-licensed audio and video content. Here are a few suggestions.

Creative Commons Content

Creative Commons: search.creativecommons.org

The Creative Commons Foundation's tool for searching YouTube, Flickr, Soundcloud and more.

Public Domain Content

Pond5's Public Domain Project: <http://www.pond5.com/free>

This stock footage marketplace has developed an extensive collection of Public Domain video, audio, and image files available for download.

Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/>

The Internet Archive collects films, audio, software, and images. Note that not all content on the Internet Archive is public domain.

Public Domain Review: <http://publicdomainreview.org/collections/?medium=film>

The PDR curates public domain content from a variety of sources.

ATTRIBUTION

Always include clear attribution of reused media either in a caption or in credits. Include the following information when available: **Author, Title, (Date), Source**. Formal titles are italicized. Files without formal titles can be described by format in brackets. Adding dates of publication in parentheses helps distinguish similarly titled works and provides context.

Alternatively, you could format traditional MLA or CMS citations for media sources. For more on academic citation, please visit our guide to citing sources: <https://libguides.cca.edu/citations>

Examples

Notes and Volts, *Ambient Guitar*, soundcloud.com.

Professor Welton's Boxing Cats (1894), Library of Congress.

Mark Simpson, *Principles of Graphic Design* (2014), YouTube.