

2011-02-25

How to Select and Apply a Creative Commons License

Grossmeier, Greg

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027.42/83502>

Downloaded from Deep Blue, University of Michigan's institutional repository

How to Select and Apply a Creative Commons License

(Do you want to learn how to use other people's Creative Commons licensed material? See the "Using Creative Commons Licensed Material" guide.)

What is Creative Commons?

Creative Commons is a non-profit organization that created a set of simple, easy-to-understand copyright licenses. These are legally enforceable licenses that allow creators to mark a work with permission to make a variety of uses, with the aim of expanding the range of things available for others to share, quote, adapt, and build upon. Why use a Creative Commons license? Creative Commons licenses help creators share their work easily and they help everyone find work that can be used without permission. As long as people follow the terms of the license attached to the work, they can use Creative Commons licensed material without fear of accidentally infringing copyright. We encourage the use of Creative Commons licenses because they effectively help communicate information about copyright holders intentions and thus help everyone know with clarity what may be used without permission and how – and what requires permission. These licenses help authors and creators manage their copyrights and share their creative work without losing control of their rights. Creative Commons licenses facilitate creators' rights by communicating clearly a contact for permission when appropriate. Its easy to find Creative Commons licensed material especially through search engines like CCSearch and CCMixer. In the academic community, Creative Commons licenses can make it easier for people to find your work, legitimately build on your ideas, and increase citation to your work. (This is similar to the citation benefit of publishing a scholarly article in an open access journal. See "[The effect of open access and downloads \('hits'\) on citation impact: a bibliography of studies](#)".)

Creative Commons licenses are efficient and effective both for creators and users who want to respect copyright. For more information, visit the [Creative Commons website](http://creativecommons.org/) at <http://creativecommons.org/>.

What do the Creative Commons licenses mean?

When you apply a Creative Commons license to your work, you are telling the world as the copyright holder what uses you are willing to permit – and which you aren't. The six main licenses vary in the amount of freedom they provide to users of the work. The licenses can be applied to any work that is covered by copyright law including books, scholarly articles, movies, musical arrangements, and artwork.

Some explanation: copyright exists today from the moment of creation ('fixation'), and the owner of a copyright is typically the creator (though it may be an employer). So, the starting assumption - or 'the default status' - for a work protected by copyright is "All Rights Reserved." You may hear copyright referred to as a 'bundle of rights' because copyright includes a whole range of rights including the right to authorize (or not) copying, performance, display, distribution of copies, or making derivatives; effectively anything other than just viewing the original copy. There are some exceptions like [fair use](#), but these are applicable only in certain circumstances. Unless you as the copyright holder indicate otherwise, you are assumed to control all of the rights in that 'bundle'. This means that anyone who wants to make any use of a work needs to get permission from you. You can license some, all, or none of those rights depending on your goals - that's where Creative Commons licenses can help both copyright holders and people who want to use copyrighted materials.

Getting started: make sure you own the copyright

For works created by a member of the University of Michigan community, the copyright holder is defined by the University Copyright Policy in SPG 601.X. The Library Copyright Office has an [overview of that policy](#). It is important to be sure you know who holds the copyright to a work before considering any licensing option. If you signed a contract or a license regarding your work, you need to know what the terms were in order to ensure you are making your work available under a Creative Commons license in a manner consistent with any earlier commitments you may have. If you authored or created something with others jointly, each of you equally shares the resulting copyright in the absence of an agreement otherwise. Each of you can essentially do as you like with the work provided you share any earnings equally. That said, it is prudent legally and collegially to agree on how your work will be used including whether to use a Creative Commons license.

The licenses

There are six main licenses to choose from; these vary in the amount of freedom users have with respect to a work. The

licenses can be applied to any work that is covered by copyright law including books, scholarly articles, movies, musical arrangements, and artwork. However, please note that Creative Commons licenses are [not to be used with computer software](#). For more on software licenses please see the Software Licensing Guide.

The six core Creative Commons licenses vary in openness/restrictiveness. They are (in order of increasing restrictiveness):

[Attribution](#) CC BY



This license lets others distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon a work, even commercially, as long as they credit the original author for the original creation. This is the most accommodating of licenses offered, in terms of what others can do with a work licensed under Attribution.

[Attribution ShareAlike](#) CC BY-SA



This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon a work even for commercial reasons, as long as they credit the original author and license their new creations under the identical terms. This license is often compared to open source software licenses. All new works based on a work licensed this way will carry the same license, so any derivatives will also allow commercial use.

[Attribution-NonCommercial](#) CC BY-NC



This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon a work non-commercially, and although their new works must also acknowledge the original author and be non-commercial, they don't have to license their derivative works on the same terms.

[Attribution NonCommercial ShareAlike](#) CC BY-NC-SA



This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon a work non-commercially, as long as they credit the original author and license their new creations under the identical terms. Others can download and redistribute this work just like the by-nc-nd license, but they can also translate, make remixes, and produce new stories based on the work. All new work based on the original will carry the same license, so any derivatives will also be non-commercial in nature.

[Attribution NoDerivatives](#) **CC BY-ND**



This license allows for redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, as long as it is passed along unchanged and in whole, with credit to the original author.

[Attribution NonCommercial NoDerivatives](#) **CC BY-NC-ND**



This license is the most restrictive of the six main licenses, allowing redistribution. This license is often called the “free advertising” license because it allows others to download works and share them with others as long as they mention the original author and link back to them, but they can’t change them in any way or use them commercially.

[Applying a License to Your Work](#)

After you have chosen the specific Creative Commons license you wish to use, it is simple to apply the license to your work. The license options are the same for all media, but the way to express the license will vary by media and format. Here are some ways to handle different media.

Text Document

On the title page, copyright information page, or some other reasonable location (eg: a footer) place the following text (substituting for your case):

© YEAR, NAME. Licensed under the Creative Commons <SPECIFIC LICENSE>, <URL OF LICENSE>

Example:

© 2010, Greg Grossmeier. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>

Also, showing the license badges available from Creative Commons provides quick visual recognition. They can be found on the [Creative Commons Downloads page](#).

Webpage/Website

If you use the [license chooser from Creative Commons](#) it provides you with HTML code to put into your webpage (usually within a template or other central location). In this case, the license will apply to the writings on the webpage such as blog entries.

Video

It is recommended to put a roughly 2 second bumper at the beginning or end of the video with the license information (the same as recommended for the Text Document, above) easily readable. The added benefit of using the Creative Commons badges is that they help provide users with quick visual recognition that transcend language differences.

If you are posting this video online it is also recommended to put the license information around the video as well. For example, in the video description field on YouTube.

Audio

If the audio file is something that would aesthetically allow a 3 second statement of the license at the end (such as a podcast) then simply reading aloud the suggested information from the Text Document example is suggested.

If the audio file would be harmed from such an addition (such as a normal-length song) then making sure to include the license information in any description of when you post the file online is recommended. Many audio sharing websites allow the user to select the specific Creative Commons license that the file is licensed under. If the website does not provide such a service, then adding that information in the description field is recommended.

More Information

If you have any questions regarding your choice of which Creative Commons license to use, or any other questions about the licenses, feel free to contact the Library Copyright Office at copyright@umich.edu.

NOTE:

Creative Commons license descriptions are slightly modified versions of what is found on the [Creative Commons About Licenses page](#).

[Do we need this? Relevant or even true? - If a member of the University of Michigan community does wish to register a work with the US Copyright Office they are recommended to contact the [Technology Transfer Office](#). The Library Copyright Office can only provide general comments about the process but cannot provide step-by-step instruction.]