

10 Essential Copyright Compliance Tips Every Info Pro Must Know

Prepared by Lesley Ellen Harris
Founder and CEO, [Copyrightlaws.com](https://copyrightlaws.com)



Copyrightlaws.com

COPYRIGHT COURSES & EDUCATION IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Copyright compliance is usually the domain of information professionals

Understanding the principles of copyright law is key for lowering your risk of copyright infringement.



Copyright Law is Complicated

- For lawyers and nonlawyers
- Requires interpretation & case-by-case analysis
- “It depends” ...
- Requires information (Copyright Act + court cases) and your own judgment (copyright wisdom through experience and education)



10 Essential Copyright Compliance Tips Every Info Pro Must Know

1. It's all about risk management

Copyright compliance = understanding your organization's risk tolerance and making judgment calls.

TIP: Learn how to apply the law to your situations, be aware of your organization's risk tolerance.

2. U.S. copyright law doesn't protect ideas

Copyright law doesn't protect ideas, facts, historical facts or news. It protects their expression.

TIP: You can summarize articles and share URLs without reproducing them.

3. Copyright protection is automatic

Copyright protection is automatic upon the creation of a work in a fixed form (e.g., written on paper, saved to a memory card or hard drive). The use of © is not required.

TIP: Just because there's no © doesn't mean it's free.

4. Registration with the U.S. Copyright Office is voluntary

Registration is not mandatory but can provide benefits such as:

- Presumption of copyright ownership
 - Certain benefits when pursuing a copyright infringement lawsuit

TIP: Even if the work is not registered in the USCO, you still need to assume it's copyright protected.

5. There is no orphan works provision in the U.S.

The works of unlocatable owners are called “orphan works.”

TIP: You require permission to use a copyright-protected work, even if the owner is unlocatable or won't respond to your permission requests.

6. U.S. government works are not protected by copyright

Maps, brochures, studies are not protected by copyright and are free to use, share and republish.

TIP: The U.S. gov't can own copyright in works prepared by consultants, etc.

7. Public domain = no copyright protection

Some works (U.S. gov't works) are not protected by copyright, and some copyright durations have expired.

TIP: You can use a work in the public domain in any way without obtaining permission.

8. Licenses expire

Licenses for e-resources are often 1-3 years.

TIP: Keep a database of all signed licenses and renew them before they expire.

9. Fair use may apply to corporate libraries

Fair use is a principle in the U.S. Copyright Act. You need to apply the 4 fair use factors and make a judgment call (which may also be a risk management issue). A judge in a court of law is the final arbiter of fair use.

TIP: Both for-profit and nonprofit organizations may apply fair use.

10. Google Images may be protected by copyright

Assume images found through Google searches are protected by copyright.

TIP: Only use a Google Image once you've done your copyright research.

10 Essential Copyright Compliance Tips Every Info Pro Must Know

Need more information?

See Copyrightlaws.com's [Copyright Leadership Certificate](#) to gain an in-depth understanding of copyright law principles plus hands-on application of copyright law.



Copyrightlaws.com

COPYRIGHT COURSES & EDUCATION IN PLAIN ENGLISH