

Citing Online Information and Images



a place of mind

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

ENGINEERING

You must cite any sources you use in your Instructions

...unless the information is considered common knowledge.

What is common knowledge?

Information that is widely known and easily verifiable from many sources.

Just because you don't know it off the top of your head, doesn't mean it isn't common knowledge. BUT, just because you *do* know it off the top of your head, doesn't mean it *is* common knowledge either.

When in doubt, cite it. Or email me.

Examples of common knowledge:

- Facebook is a social networking website that was created in 2004.
- Neil Armstrong was the first man to walk on the moon. He did so on July 21, 1969.
- To cook a chicken breast, heat the oven to 400° Fahrenheit and cook for 20 minutes, then check the internal temperature with a thermometer. It is finished when the internal temperature reaches 165° Fahrenheit .

Examples of things that are not common knowledge:

- How many people use Facebook; its dollar value.
- Neil Armstrong's personal history; the history of space exploration; how a rocket works*
- The genealogy of chickens

Facebook example

“Facebook is a social networking website that was created in 2004” **is** common knowledge because:

- Almost everyone knows what Facebook is, and the year it was created can be found uncited in many sources. Indeed, many people, such as myself, actually remember when it was launched.

The *number of Facebook users* and *the site’s dollar value* **are not** common knowledge because:

- Most people do not know the exact number of users or the exact dollar amount of the website, and this information can (and does) change, so you would want to cite where you located the information.

Rocket example

“Neil Armstrong was the first man to walk on the moon. He did so on July 21, 1969” is common knowledge because:

- As with the Facebook example, this information is widely known and can be found uncited in many sources. It is conceivable that the general public would know this information.

Neil Armstrong’s personal history (e.g. where he went to high school) and *the history of space exploration* **are not** common knowledge because:

- This information is not widely known and when you do find it, it is generally cited.

How a rocket works **may or may not** be common knowledge:

- If I (Adrianna) wanted to explain how a rocket works, I could not do so without referring to another’s explanation. In this case, I am not just reminding myself of an important fact that most people know; I am using someone else’s *work*, their translation of complex math and physics concepts into explanation. I would therefore need to cite this information.
- If an engineer at NASA was giving a presentation to other engineers at NASA, however, and the presentation included information on how a rocket works, that engineer would not need to cite sources on how a rocket works because it is common knowledge for that group.
- If an engineer at NASA was teaching a group of high school kids how a rocket works, s/he also likely wouldn’t need to cite sources on how it works because although it isn’t common knowledge for the kids, the engineer is an expert (unlike me), in a field where it is common knowledge and not generally contested (unlike the genealogy of chickens) or subject to change (unlike the number of Facebook users).

Chicken example

The oven temperature, cooking time, and safe internal temperature of chicken **is** common knowledge because:

- Even if I don't personally know what the safe internal temperature of chicken is or remember how many minutes I need to cook it for, I can find this information uncited in many recipes (and could conceivably know the latter from my own lived experience).

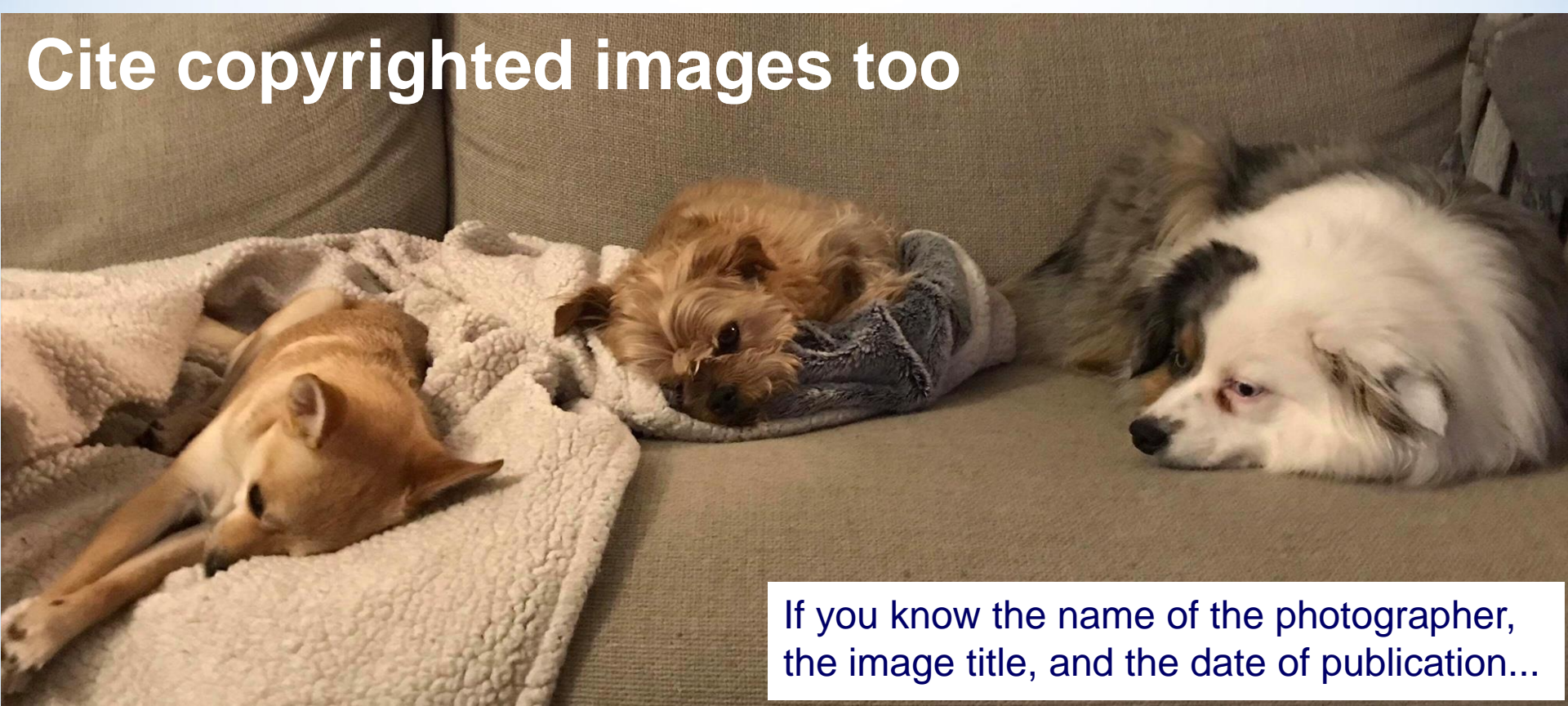
The genealogy of chickens **is not** common knowledge because:

- This information is not widely known, even among historians, anthropologists and chicken breeders. It is also debatable: every expert who knows how a rocket works agrees on how it works, because it is based on the application of math and physics principles, but the evidence related to chicken genealogy is subject to different interpretations by different researchers.

If you're thinking... "I found a bunch of information on Wikipedia. Are you telling me I need to now research everything again through credible, non-wiki sources?"

If you found information (e.g. background info for your introduction) for your Instructions on Wikipedia, and you think it probably doesn't count as common knowledge, look at the source(s) Wikipedia cited for that specific information. Double check to make sure the information you used is actually there, and cite that source instead.

Cite copyrighted images too



If you know the name of the photographer, the image title, and the date of publication...

Figure 1: Your description/explanation of image (Lastname, year)

References


Lastname, F. (Photographer). (Year, Month Date of Publication).
Title of photograph [digital image]. Retrieved from URL



Figure 1: Adrianna's many dogs (Eyking, 2018)

References

Eyking, A. (Photographer). (2018, March 8). Lazy pooches [digital image]. Retrieved from http://adriannas_adorable_pets.com

A close-up photograph of a Siamese cat lying on a beige, textured carpet. The cat has light cream-colored fur on its body and face, with dark brown or black 'points' on its ears, face, and paws. It has striking blue eyes and is looking directly at the camera. Its front paws are visible, showing dark brown fur. The background is the same carpet, slightly out of focus.

If you do not know the name of the photographer, the image title, or the publication date.

Figure 2: Your description/explanation of image (“Description,” n.d.)

References

Description of image [digital image]. (n.d.). Retrieved from URL



Figure 2: The cutest kitten in the world (“Siamese kitten,” n.d.)

References

Siamese kitten [digital image]. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://adriannas_adorable_pets.com



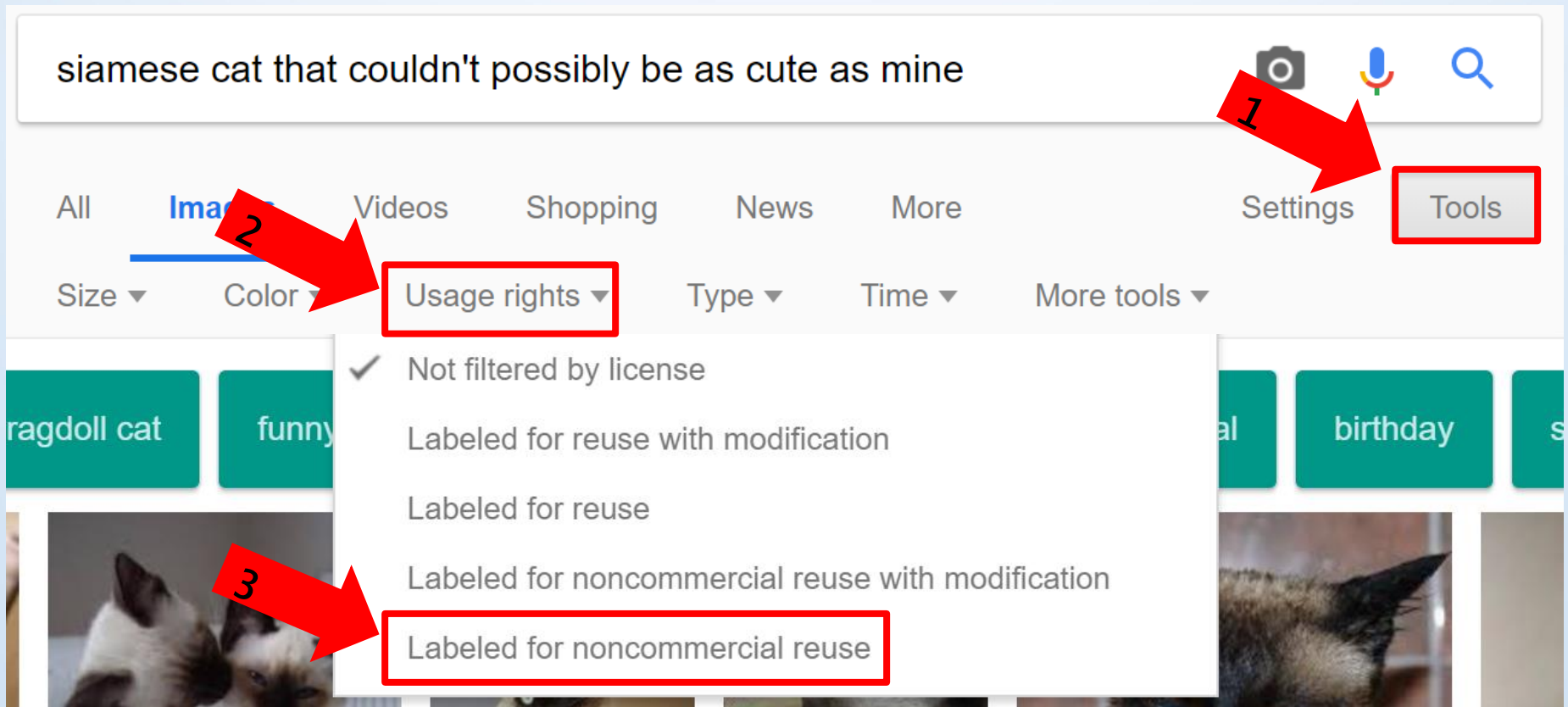
Don't panic!

Email if you're not sure.

Use images that don't need citations (your own photos, images in the public domain, royalty-free clip art)

How can you find non-copyrighted images (i.e. images that don't require citations)?

Google Images > Tools > Usage Rights > Labeled for noncommercial reuse



Forget where you found that uncited image?

Google Images > [Camera Icon] > Upload and image > Choose file > [Select image file] > Open



Search by image

Search Google with an image instead of text or by dragging an image here.

Provide image URL

Upload an image ?

Choose File No file chosen