**Copyright and the Law**

**Software Copyright Issues**

Most programs which you purchase are copyrighted and you must not copy them. If you do so you may be breaking the law and if caught, you could find yourself being prosecuted. Many people will buy a copy of a game and make a copy for their friends or other family member. This is also normally unlawful. Even lending your program disks or CD-ROM to other people may be breaking the law in most cases. There are numerous organisations, such as FAST (the Federation Against Software Theft), which are dedicated to preventing the illegal copying of software. In a business situation, if your manager tells you to copy software, ALWAYS first make sure that you have a licence which entitles you to copy the software, because in many countries, you will be personally liable for damages.

Most text which you will find on the Internet is copyrighted. Never copy text without authority to do so and always quote your sources.

There are many sites offering free graphics and clipart. Some are genuine and have the authority to offer you a free download of images. Many sites however may not have this authority. Popular examples are pictures, sound clips, or movie clips from Star Trek. If you visit the official Star Trek site (www.startrek.com) you will see that use of images, and even the name 'Star Trek' is protected and may not be used on 'fan sites'. Even downloading sound clips to replace the bleeps which Microsoft Windows makes is often illegal. Some sites even allow the 'free' download for complete films or music tracks. If you can download a film for free before it is even officially available on video/DVD, it is a pretty good bet that the site is unauthorised. Cover yourself. Get written permission to used downloaded materials and 'if in doubt - don't' is the safe rule. Because CD-ROM writers have become so widely available, it has become possible to copy entire CD-ROMs which can contain software, games or data. Do not do this. Always be careful of software which you may find advertised at very cheap prices, it may be illegally copied.

**What are site licences?**

Many large companies do not go out and buy a certain amount of 'shrink-wrapped' copies of each software product which they need, instead they will buy a site licence. These site licences are different in their small print, but generally mean that the companies purchasing the licence can make a fixed numbers of copies available to their staff, normally via a company network.

**Transferring files across a LAN:**

You need to be careful that you do not accidentally make copies of software via your Local Area Network (unless of course you are authorised to make such copies).

**Downloading files from the Internet:**

You need to be VERY careful when downloading files from the Internet. Just because a site may say you are free to download materials from the site, does not necessary mean that the owners of the Internet site have the authority to allow you to do this. It is possible to download entire software packages from the net, even entire movie films. In many cases however it is not legal to do so.

**Copying diskettes / CD-ROMs / DVD / ZIP disks:**

If you purchase software, you may, in some cases be allowed to make a single, backup copy of disk. You are not allowed to distribute copies to family and friends. You are certainly not allowed to copy and re-sell commercial software.

**Freeware:**

This is software which can be copied or downloaded for free. It is often fully functional. Examples may include software developed by organisations such as Universities, where the aim was not to profit from the software. It is very important not to confuse freeware and shareware.

**Shareware:**

This is where you can use software for a free trial period. Sometimes the shareware versions may be fully functional, but after a time period will either start to display an annoying message, asking you to register (i.e. pay for) your software, or in some cases it may stop working altogether after the trial period. This 'try before you buy' method of getting software is becoming increasing popular with the major software suppliers.

**User Licences:**

If you have more than one PC, then you can either purchase a separate copy of the software you require for each PC, or better: you can purchase a user licence. This user licence allows you to make copies and install them on each computer. The more copies you make the more the user licence will cost, but the cheaper the effective cost per PC.

**How to check a software Product ID**

Normally if you click on the Help drop down menu within an application, there will be a command such as About. Clicking on this option will often display your software product identification number.

**What is freeware?**

Some software is made freely available. Demonstration disks often come under this category. In addition, a lot of software is produced by the educational community and is made freely available. Always read any licences supplied with such software very carefully before use.

**What is shareware?**

Shareware is software which is freely available and is designed to let you use the product for free, for a limited period while you decide if you like it or not. After this period, you must legally either remove it, or pay an amount to the producers of the product.

**What about software which you find on the Internet?**

There are some sites on the Internet run by dubious organisations which might make copies of commercial software freely available. If you download any software from the Internet, make sure that it is legal.

**What is an end-user licence agreement?**

Normally when you install software these days there is a step within the installation routine in which you have to agree to be bound by the end user licence agreement. This agreement can be very large and is drawn up to protect the manufacturers of a product from being prosecuted due to faulty software. It also defines how many copies of the software you are entitled to. I recently printed out a Microsoft end user agreement and it was over 15 pages long.