

License Help for Beginners

About:

I had massive amounts of license questions when looking for free graphics and audio. It can give one a headache, so I decided to not let others go through what I had to. I will not talk about non-commercial use licenses, but these can be used for noncommercial use. This will be a simplified version because who wants to read through a million pages? Let us begin our GPL and CC Journey! Added a note for MIT License.

CC: - Creative Commons

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creative_Commons_license

CC0 - This is a public domain waiver. It means one can do as they wish with it and mix it with anything. No restrictions.

CC-BY - One must attribute to the artist the way they ask. Name, link, etc.

CC-BY-SA - One must attribute to the artist the way they ask. Name, link, etc. Also, you must share your modifications! (SA = Share-alike) You can credit yourself and must credit the other artists.

The 3.0 and 4.0 version of the ShareAlike licenses includes a compatibility clause, allowing Creative Commons to declare other licenses as compatible and therefore derivatives may use these instead of the license of the original work. That means a CC-BY 3.0 piece can be combined with CC-BY-SA 3.0 and released as CC-BY-SA 3.0

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Share-alike>

source: <https://wiki.creativecommons.org/wiki/4.0/Compatibility>

CC-BY-ND - CC-BY is okay to modify as long as it is not CC-BY-ND ND is for no derivatives or remixes.

GPL: - General Public License

LGPL - Lesser General Public License - Commercial and noncommercial use.

The freedom to use the software for any purpose,
the freedom to change the software to suit your needs,
the freedom to share the software with your friends and neighbors, and
the freedom to share the changes you make.

The LGPL and GPL licenses differ with one major exception; with LGPL the requirement that you open up the source code to your own extensions to the software is removed.

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GPL (Not LGPL) Source Code Release:

The GPL FAQ has this to say about keeping your modifications private:

Source: <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-faq.html#GPLRequireSourcePostedPublic>

Does the GPL require that source code of modified versions be posted to the public?

The GPL does not require you to release your modified version, or any part of it. You are free to make modifications and use them privately, without ever releasing them...

But if you release the modified version to the public in some way, the GPL requires you to make the modified source code available to the program's users, under the GPL.

Thus, the GPL gives permission to release the modified program in certain ways, and not in other ways; but the decision of whether to release it is up to you.

Mixture: (As in putting them on the same png, keep reading for package mixture.)

Creative common mixture can leave your mind a little confused. CC0 obviously can be used with anything, but what about CC-BY and CC-BY-SA? How do I mix these or can it do that?

The answer is yes! You can mix them, but you must credit all the authors and release it under CC-BY-SA.

GPL Mixture can I mix it with GPL art? No! You can not unless it is GPL3 being mixed with CC-BY-SA **4.0** or CC0. It will be released as GPL3 and never can be released as CC-BY-SA 4.0.

Source: <https://creativecommons.org/compatiblelicenses/>

Package mixture:

Can art/audio under CC0, CC-BY, CC-BY-SA, and GPL be put in the same package on separate image/audio files such as png/ogg? Yes!

GPL code mixed with other code is always turned into GPL, but code is functional data. Non-functional data based on beauty are not affected by any GPL functional data. That means all audio and graphics will stay as their own license. Source: <http://opengameart.org/content/faq#q-ccgplcompat>

Non-functional Data

Data that has an aesthetic purpose (Beauty purposes), rather than a functional one, may be included in a free system distribution as long as its license gives you permission to copy and redistribute, **both for commercial and non-commercial purposes**. For example, there are some game engines that have been released under the GNU GPL, and have accompanying game information, a world map, game graphics, and so on released under such a verbatim distribution license. This kind of data can be part of a free system distribution.

Source: <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-system-distribution-guidelines.html>

Loopholes:

Programming code is amazing because it allows loopholes. What do I mean? Layers, overlaying, etc.

You can overlay a GPL tree trunk and a CC Bushy tree top with programming code or Game Engines as long as the art pieces are on separate image files.

Sadly, Solarus has no plans on supporting this tab feature.

<https://github.com/christoph/solarus-quest-editor/issues/182>

EX:

<http://forum.solarus-games.org/index.php/topic,603.0.html>

MIT - Other info:

MIT is another license that is somewhat common with freedom, but trust me there are a bunch of them. MIT is pretty short and easy to understand. You are free to sell, give away, etc.

Mixture: (Putting together, **not package mixture**. Ex: Putting MIT pixels on GPL pixels or putting a Mit audio loop with a GPL loop together. As long as they are on the same image or audio file.)

MIT can be put into GPL, but not the other way around. Do understand that audio and pixel art are almost never MIT license. I found no sources on it or mention of mixture with creative commons. You can, however mix MIT audio and the pixel art (if any exists) with the GPL. You will have to release it as GPL. Most engines or code are under MIT. For instance, Torque 3D game engine.

Ex: <http://www.garagegames.com/products/torque-3d>

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MIT_License

MIT:

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Formats:

.ogg is an open source format and it should be used in most projects for the games to work perfectly on Linux Operating systems. (This format works in Solarus)

.png is very common due to transparency. It is free to use just like .ogg.

MP3 license has fees, but there are ways to avoid it. Solarus does not support MP3 as far as I know, but read on for more information.

If you let Flash combine everything into a single .swf it therefore avoids separate MP3 files, making the license unnecessary for Flash games. (If you use external MP3s though, you still fall under the license!)

Source: <https://www.scirra.com/blog/65/even-more-about-audio-licenses-on-the-web>

Questions or improvement suggestions:

Please let me know if you have any questions because they may help make this guide better.

Common questions:

1. **Q:** I made unique art that I do not want free. Will the GPL3 force me to make them free?

A: No. Only your game programming code is made free under GPL3. You have full rights to your audio and pixel art. I mention this above. You will still have to release the source code because GPL requires it, so it might be best to have your non-free art in a separate package, but you can encrypt it. No one is saying you "have" to share your unique original art. I honestly can not find anything on it because it is not a free distribution, but if you are including free Creative common or GPL graphics, then you must release those license type graphics for free. If you get complaints about your original encrypted art, then separate your original art that you do not want to be free. You can sell it on a separate disc or it can be bought and downloaded online. Your selling package (GPL data on one disc and original art on the other) or disc is not GPL, so people would have to buy it if it was sold in a store. You have your right to sell it. You must have the source code free somewhere and online is the best way to do that.

2. **Q:** Can I encrypt my code?

A: I would think so, but you must still release that code not encrypted as GPL3 if you distribute your game. I do not see the point in encrypting it.

3. **Q:** Can I encrypt my art and audio?

A: Yes, but you must still release that encryption code under GPL 3 not encrypted if you distribute your game. I do not see the point in encrypting unless it is not free art/audio. You may want to encrypt your own audio and pixel art so the majority of the people do not rapidly distribute your work illegally. Solarus does have a way to [archive your data and rename the extension to data.solarus](#) You might need to keep some .dll if things break. I had to. This is good because you can compress your data with zip (only) and rename the extension. This will be fine for protecting your art and audio from the majority. You will still have to release the source code, so it might be best to have your non-free art in a separate package. See A, B, C, D, & E if you are having a hard time deciding encryption due to GPL3 license.

A. At some point in time someone somehow will decrypt your encryption.

B. People can just record your audio and print screen your pixel art to edit. They do not have to decrypt it.

C. People can use your work under [fair use](#) for criticism, commentary, parody, news reporting, research and scholarship, and classroom instruction. I would think that the attention your work is getting is a good thing. It might increase the sells for your next game.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_use

D. People who buy games will almost always buy games.

E. You will still have to release the source code, so it might be best to have your non-free art in a separate package.

4. **Q:** Does my story writing became GPL? GPL is a **software** license, so text and writing really does not apply. The last I checked stories are not software. There is not really an answer anywhere.

A1: If your story writing and dialogues are written in the lua programming code with Solarus libraries (EX: `sol.surface.create("Menu.png")`) and distributed with or without game, then **no or yes** . Stories are not software.

A2: If your story writing and dialogues are written in the lua programming code **without** Solarus libraries

(EX: `sol.surface.create("Menu.png")`) and **not** distributed with game, then **no**. Lua is MIT and you can do what you want with it, but Stories are not software.

A3: If you use a .dat file, then yes and no. This can be debated either way. It contains text data and basic formats, but it is not really programming code like Lua. The programming code uses the data. Distributing it separately should be okay. This way your story does not become GPL, but again that might be impossible because stories are not software.

How do I license my work?

In anyway you want as long as you are the owner of the work. You can put them under as many difference licenses or you can make up one. You can give people an option to pick different licenses as well. For example, pick from GPL, CC-BY 3.0, and CC-BY-SA 3.0. You do not have to choose those licenses and you can make up a license that will be compatible with any license. You can also give non-commercial restrictions or no remixes/derivatives. Your work! Your rules! A popular license might protect your work more and the same goes if you share it with a large community. [Example for free with commercial GPL free distribution compatibility](#)

Most people want credit like this:

1. They want to know when others use/modify their work.
2. They want their name in the credits.
3. They want a link to their website in the scrolling credits or a text file.

You might want the same!

Deciding to no longer use CC-BY:

Anything once CC-BY is always CC-BY. You can stop distributing it as creative commons and no longer use the CC-BY logo, but it can still be used under that license. Ex: The Solarus logo is GPLv3, but is can still be used under CC-BY 3.0 because it was once that license.

Source: <https://creativecommons.org/faq/#what-if-i-change-my-mind-about-using-a-cc-license>