

## How to Copyright a Book

Securing Automatic Protection  
Services

Getting Official Registration

Taking Advantage of Registration

When you've created something original, such as a book, you want to ensure that your work—both published and unpublished<sup>[1]</sup>—is protected. It's easy to do, and this article will walk you through the steps needed to successfully copyright your book.

### Method 1 of 3: Securing Automatic Protection



**1 Know the law for your location.** If your country is a signatory to the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works—and that covers most countries in the world—then *your work is protected from the moment you create it* in a format that is "perceptible either directly or with the aid of a machine or device."<sup>[2]</sup>

- That means that you automatically own the copyright to any original work you create—as long as you commit it to readable form.
- For the current list of countries that are signatories to the Berne Convention, visit the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) at <http://www.wipo.int/members/en/>
- WIPO does not offer a registration service for copyright, but it does acknowledge that many countries have national registration systems in place and that for some countries, this serves as prima facie evidence in a court of law as to copyright ownership.<sup>[3]</sup>



**2 Fix the date of your copyright.** This will protect you should there be a legal ownership dispute in the future. There are several informal ways to solidify your claim without pursuing official registration, though there is no provision in copyright law regarding these methods:

- Mail a copy to yourself. This is known as "poor man's copyright," and to do this, simply send a copy of the manuscript to yourself. The postmark will be evidence of the date of copyright. Don't open it once you've sent it, or the process will be meaningless.
- Show it to friends. By showing your work to friends and family—people you anticipate will be in your life for a long time to come—you will have witnesses to call on should you need them to verify the date of your copyright.
- Publish your work. Whether you publish on a blog, a newspaper, a magazine, or in book form, this is another method to establish you as the original author.
- Note that if you are a US citizen, you will need to officially register with the U.S. Copyright Office before you are able to make a claim in a US court (even if you already own a right on your work). Registration may also entitle you to statutory damages in a US legal system.



**3 Use the copyright symbol.** According to applicable law in most countries, you

own the copyright in the work as soon as it is fixed in a readable format. By placing the copyright symbol (©) on your work, you are telling others that you know your rights, and give a legally-relevant date of original publication<sup>[4]</sup>.

- You might also consider adding reference to the legislation that backs up your copyright claim, such as: "© 2013, [your name]. Except as provided by the Copyright Act [date, etc.] no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher."<sup>[5][6]</sup> The appropriate wording is not set in stone and is often defined by your publisher's preference, or by jurisdictional tradition, so ask your publisher or attorney for advice.
- If you are considering publishing in various countries, it is a good idea to ask your publisher's legal team or your own attorney about the value of registering in all countries where your works will be published.

### Method 2 of 3: Getting Official Registration



**1 Know your own country's copyright legislation.** Registering your copyright in your own country is generally a straightforward process, and you can usually be done online. Here are some links to get you started:

- United States of America: Responsibility for the administrative aspects of copyright law rests with the United States Copyright Office, whose website can be found at: <http://www.copyright.gov/>. You can also register your work online by creating an account and logging into the Electronic Copyright Office (eCO) at [https://eco.copyright.gov/eService\\_enu/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eco.copyright.gov](https://eco.copyright.gov/eService_enu/start.swe?SWECmd=Start&SWEHo=eco.copyright.gov).
- Canada: Canadian copyright law can be found in The Copyright Law of Canada<sup>[7]</sup> and relevant court decisions. You can register your copyright at the Canadian Intellectual Property Office, which can be found at: <http://www.cipo.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/wr00051.html>.
- UK: British copyright law can be found in The Copyright Act 1956, The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003, and relevant case law interpretations. Further information about copyright in the UK can be found at the Intellectual Property Office, at: <http://www.ipso.gov.uk/types/copy.htm>. There is no official registration system in place for copyrighting works. It is considered an "automatic right."<sup>[8]</sup>
  - You can send a copy of any published work to the British Library within one month of publication so that they can include it as part of their

records of all published works. Find out more about the British Library and copyright here: <http://www.bl.uk/copyright>

- Australia: Australian copyright law can be found in the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth),<sup>[9]</sup> along with various court decisions that have interpreted copyright over the years. The Australian Copyright Council is a good resource,<sup>[10]</sup> while the relevant government site is at: <http://www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Copyright>.
  - Like the UK, copyright is automatic: there is no system in place for "official" registration. You can, however, send a copy of your book to the National Library of Australia.<sup>[11]</sup> Check State legislation as well, as you may need to make a legal deposit to a relevant State library.
- New Zealand: New Zealand copyright law can be found in the Copyright Act 1994,<sup>[12]</sup> and good copyright information can be found from the Copyright Council of New Zealand.<sup>[13]</sup> According to the Copyright Council, no registration is necessary, or even possible, nor is any other formality required for securing copyright protection.<sup>[14]</sup>
  - You can send a copy of every new published work to the National Library of New Zealand.<sup>[15]</sup> to function as a "legal deposit," should you need formal proof of the date of your copyright.

### Method 3 of 3: Taking Advantage of Registration Services



**1 Take advantage of professional services.** With all signatories to the Berne Convention, copyright is automatic, being granted to all books and other literary works. Some countries, such as the United States, offer the ability to officially register a work for copyright. Other countries, such as Australia or the UK, have no method in place for official registration of copyright.

- It is possible to use international registration offices to provide copyright protection. International services, which provide registration in their databases, numbered certificates, legal declarations, and secure envelopes for sending copies to yourself.
- Some require a one-time fee, others may require annual payments.
- Speak to an IP attorney for your country before proceeding, both to understand your inherent rights and privileges, and for guidance before submitting your

work to a third party.

### Video



### Tips

- There are a number of societies or organizations that will protect your copyright for a fee (large or small). Search for the relevant organization in your country, and read the fine print to see what is covered, what protections they offer above and beyond what is automatically granted you
- Always have a backup! Make a copy of the forms for safe-keeping, whether you submit them physically, or electronically.
- As codified by the Berne Convention, copyright is effective the moment your book is created. Nothing needs to be filed, though copyright-filing companies would like you to believe otherwise. Registering a copyright will serve only to support your claim should anyone try to steal your work—or to prove that your work is original.
- If you use a pen name or a pseudonym, it is wise to include relevant contact details so that the "real" you can be ascertained.
- Re-check your registration form prior to mailing, to make sure you have signed and dated it, and included any applicable fees.
- Copyright offices do not generally check that your work title is unique. Provided you reached the title independently, it is likely to be fine even if it is the same name as another work, and many works appear with the same title.<sup>[16]</sup>

### Warnings

- Registration deposits are normally non-returnable.

- This article aims to provide a basic understanding of copyright law. If you have serious interests to protect, you are advised to contact an Intellectual Property lawyer who will tell you what to do in your particular situation.
- Titles cannot be copyrighted
- In the USA, send a copy of your work, not the original. In Canada, only send the form.
- Copyright does not protect ideas. It only protects works, so you need to write your ideas into tangible form!<sup>[17]</sup>

### Things You'll Need

Internet access for research and application purposes

Relevant forms, as required for official registration

Legal advice (optional)

### Related wikiHow



How to  
**Determine  
Copyright Fair  
Use**



How to  
**Sue for Copyright  
Infringement**



How to  
**Avoid Copyright  
Infringement**



How to  
**Apply for a  
Copyright**



How to  
**Make a Copyright  
Notice**

### Sources and Citations

- **U.S. Copyright Registration**Online Copyright Registration Process For Books
1. ↑ <http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-general.html#mywork>
  2. ↑ <http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-general.html#mywork>
  3. ↑ [http://www.wipo.int/copyright/en/general/about\\_copyright.html](http://www.wipo.int/copyright/en/general/about_copyright.html)
  4. ↑ <http://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/Documents/ShortGuidetoCopyright-October2012.pdf>
  5. ↑ <http://www.copyright.org.au/find-an-answer/>
  6. ↑ <http://www.copyright.org.nz/viewFaq.php?faq=355>
  7. ↑ <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/>
  8. ↑ <http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/copy/c-about/c-auto.htm>
  9. ↑ [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/ca1968133/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ca1968133/)
  10. ↑ <http://www.nla.gov.au/services/ldeposit.html>
  11. ↑ <http://www.nla.gov.au/services/ldeposit.html>
  12. ↑ <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1994/0143/latest>

/DLM345634.html?search=ts\_act\_copyright+act\_resel&sr=1

13. ↑ <http://www.copyright.org.nz/index.php>
14. ↑ <http://www.copyright.org.nz/basics.php>
15. ↑ <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/services/get-advice/publishing/legal-deposit>
16. ↑ <http://www.cipo.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cipointernet-internetopic.nsf/eng/wr02397.html#registration>
17. ↑ [http://www.wipo.int/copyright/en/general/about\\_copyright.html](http://www.wipo.int/copyright/en/general/about_copyright.html)

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