

Unsplash

Unsplash is a website dedicated to sharing stock photography under the Unsplash license. Since 2021, it has been owned by Getty Images. The website claims over 207,000 contributing photographers and generates more than 17 billion photo impressions per month on their growing library of over 2 million photos.^[1] Unsplash has been cited as one of the world's leading photography websites by Forbes, Entrepreneur Magazine, CNET, Medium and The Next Web.^{[2][3][4][5][6]}

Unsplash allows photographers to upload photos to its website, which are then curated by a team of photo editors. The permissive copyright terms on its photos have led to Unsplash becoming one of the largest photography suppliers on the internet,^[7] with its members' photos frequently appearing on articles. Nevertheless, their decision to stop using a creative commons "zero" licence in 2017 attracted criticism, as it took around 200,000 images out of the commons. The Unsplash licence is incompatible with creative commons licences, preventing use on sites like Wikipedia.

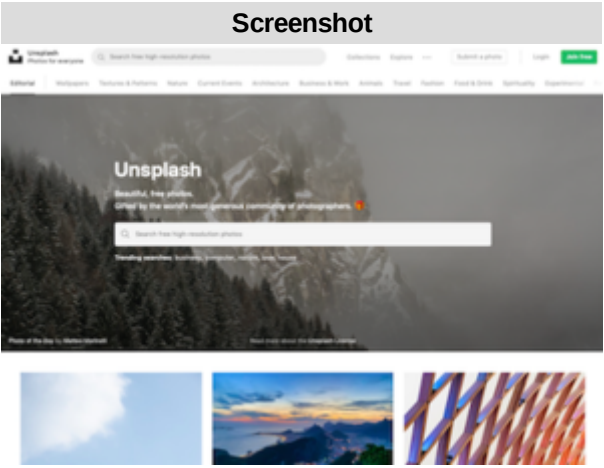
In February 2018, Unsplash changed their license terms to restrict the sale of photos without first updating, modifying, or otherwise incorporating new creative elements into the photos, prohibiting selling unaltered copies, including selling the photos as prints or printed on physical goods.^[8]

In December 2019, Unsplash for Brands was launched, where advertisers can share branded images on Unsplash.^[9]

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Unsplash

Screenshot



Type of business	Subsidiary
Type of site	<u>Stock photography</u>
Headquarters	<u>Montreal, Quebec</u>
Owner	<u>Getty Images</u>
Founder(s)	Mikael Cho Luke Chesser Stephanie Liverani Angus Woodman
URL	<u>unsplash.com</u> (<u>https://unsplash.com</u>)
Registration	Optional
Content license	Unsplash license (see <u>Licensing</u>); images published prior to June 2017 are undeclared but legally available as <u>Creative Commons Zero</u>

History

Initially a pioneer of the [copyright-free photography](#) model,^[10] Unsplash was created in 2013 by Montreal-based entrepreneur Mikael Cho. While creating a new homepage for his company [Crew](#), Cho was unable to find a suitable stock photo and hired a photographer instead.^[11] Afterwards, Cho posted the outtakes from his company photoshoot on [Tumblr](#), inviting people to use them as they saw fit.^[12] Unsplash received more than 50,000 visits on its first day.^[11]

While Cho supplied the first batch of Unsplash photos, the site is now sustained by community contributions from amateur and professional photographers. Due to the volume of photo submissions, the site employs an editorial team and "curators" picked from the Unsplash community, including [Guy Kawasaki](#), [Nas](#), [Khoi Vinh](#), [Amanda Hesser](#) and [Om Malik](#).^[13]

Before June 2017, photos uploaded to Unsplash were made available under the [Creative Commons zero](#) license, which is a public domain equivalent license and a [waiver](#), which allowed individuals to freely reuse, repurpose and [remix](#) photos for their own projects. This was changed in June 2017,^[14] and photos are now made available under the Unsplash copyright license, which imposes some additional restrictions.^[15]

On 18 February 2018, Unsplash changed its license terms to restrict the sale of photos without first updating, modifying, or otherwise incorporating new creative elements into the photos, prohibiting selling unaltered copies, including selling the photos as prints or printed on physical goods.

In March 2021, Unsplash was acquired by [Getty Images](#) for an undisclosed sum. Unsplash will continue to operate as a standalone brand and division of Getty Images with Cho in charge.^[16]

Licensing

Unsplash photos are covered by the Unsplash license. The Unsplash license prevents users from using photos from Unsplash in a similar or competing service.^[17] While it gives downloaders the right to "copy, modify, distribute and use the photos for free, including commercial purposes, without asking permission from or providing attribution to the photographer or Unsplash"^[15] the Unsplash terms of service prohibit selling unaltered copies, including selling the photos as prints or printed on physical goods.^[18]

Before June 2017, Unsplash photos were covered by the [Creative Commons zero](#) license.^{[19][20][21]}

Around 200,000 images were lost to the public domain. It was not possible to segregate or find which images had been available as CC0 prior to the licence change due to restrictions on the use of Unsplash's API. At the time of the licence change, [Creative Commons](#) Director [Ryan Merkley](#) asked that "[i]n order to ensure that the commons is maintained, we hope that Unsplash will either a) properly mark all the works shared using CC0 and/or b) make available a full archive of the CC0 works so they can be shared on a platform that supports open licensing".^[22] To date, Unsplash have declined to make these works reavailable or easily identifiable by machines.

The Unsplash licence is incompatible with Creative Commons licences, meaning that content from Unsplash cannot be published under a Creative Commons licence without additional permissions from the original authors.^[22] Unsplash actively prevents authors from offering their content under Creative Commons licences,



An example of a CC0 image added before the licence change. 200,000 other images can only be identified by hand.

for instance by deleting references to such licenses from comments.

The lack of attribution for Unsplash photos have been the subject of controversy among photography circles,^[23] due to some companies using free Unsplash photography for profit without compensating the photographers. Unsplash itself has stated that it does not support the practice.^[15]

Using the Internet Archive, one can still find images published before June 2017 as indicated.^{[24][25]}

Book

In 2016, while still a CC0 business, Unsplash released the Unsplash Book, the world's "first ever fully crowd-sourced" book.^[26] The book's photos, essays, and funding were all contributed by Unsplash's community.^[27] The book raised \$106,000 on Kickstarter and included contributions from Harvard law professor and CC0 inventor Lawrence Lessig, and designer Tobias van Schneider.^[28]



This is also a CC0 Picture uploaded in 2016 using the Internet Archive (archive.org)

Unsplash API

In addition to its website, Unsplash provides a public application programming interface (API) that answers more than 3.8 billion photo requests per month.^[29] Some of the products using the Unsplash API include Medium, Trello, Squarespace, CodePen, Square as well as Unsplash own series of products such as Unsplash for iOS (<https://unsplash.com/apps/ios>), Unsplash Instant (<https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/unsplash-instant/pejkokffkapolfffcgbmdmhdelanoih>), an extension for Google Chrome that loads Unsplash photos in new tabs and Unsplash for Apple TV.^[29]

Unsplash Local

Beyond its website and API, Unsplash has hosted photo walks in cities around the world including Tokyo, Montreal, Toronto and Boston.^{[30][31]} The photo walks are hosted by guides from the Unsplash community who show participants the best places to take photos in their city, how to use their cameras, and how to compose better photos.^[32]

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External links

- [Official website \(https://unsplash.com\)](https://unsplash.com)
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