# Understanding Copyright, Intellectual Property Rights, and Creative Commons for Teen Artists

Prepared for: Board of Directors

Teen Artists’ Studio

Maroon + Orange Digital

1872 Drillfield Drive

Blacksburg, VA 24060

Prepared by: Jane Doe

Technical & Scientific Communication Major

Department of English

Virginia Tech

Blacksburg, Virginia

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## Executive Summary

This report explains copyright, intellectual property rights, and Creative Commons licenses for the Teen Artists’ Studio. It highlights how these legal tools protect creative work, provide ways to share, and sometimes create challenges.

### Key Findings

* Copyright protection is automatic once a work is created, but enforcement can be costly and confusing.
* Intellectual property rights include economic benefits (selling, licensing) and moral protections (attribution, integrity).
* Public domain and fair use support free creativity, but fair use remains uncertain and context-specific.
* Creative Commons licenses allow flexible sharing, yet choices can unintentionally restrict how art circulates.
* Teen artists often feel torn between wanting recognition and wanting to remix freely.

By understanding both opportunities and challenges, the Board can provide clearer policies, workshops, and resources for its young artists.

## Introduction

### Topic Overview

Teen artists today share music, writing, photography, and digital art online, where their work can be copied, remixed, or even sold by others. Copyright law protects them automatically, but the rules are often unfamiliar. Creative Commons licenses expand choices but also introduce complexity.

### Purpose of the Report

The purpose is to give the Board of Directors a plain-language overview of copyright, IP rights, and Creative Commons, so they can make informed decisions about how best to support the Studio’s artists-in-residence.

### Audience

The Board includes community leaders and arts administrators who may not have formal legal training. This report avoids jargon, explains with examples, and uses visuals to make concepts accessible.

### Scope

The report covers:

* Definitions and scope of copyright.
* Intellectual property rights.
* Public domain and fair use.
* Creative Commons licenses.
* Perspectives of youth artists.
* Positive and negative implications of each.

## Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights

### What Copyright Is

Copyright is a form of protection for “original works of authorship” fixed in a tangible form, such as a 3-D sculpture, painting, poem, song, or digital illustration.

Imagine a teen photographer uploads a self-portrait to Instagram. The next week, she sees the same photo printed on flyers for a local event without her permission. Because copyright protection was automatic when she clicked “upload,” she owns the rights to control how that photo is used. She can ask the organizers to stop using her photo or pursue legal remedies.

### Rights Granted

Copyright gives creators exclusive rights to reproduce, distribute, adapt, perform, and display their works. These rights also have moral dimensions: an artist can demand proper attribution and prevent misrepresentation of their work.

### Positive Aspects

* Automatically protects creators without registration.
* Ensures artists retain control and recognition.

### Negative Aspects

* Enforcement is costly and often inaccessible for youth.
* The complexity of copyright terms makes it hard to navigate.

## Public Domain and Fair Use

### Public Domain

The public domain consists of works that are free for everyone to use—often because copyright has expired or because the works were never eligible.

Narrative Example: A teen filmmaker adapts Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland into a short film. Because the novel is in the public domain, she does not need permission. However, if she used Disney’s Alice in Wonderland designs, those would still be copyrighted.

### Fair Use

Fair use allows limited use of copyrighted material without permission, for teaching, parody, commentary, or news reporting.

Narrative Example: A student creates a parody video remixing short clips from Marvel movies. Because the purpose is parody, and only brief clips are used, this may qualify as fair use.

### Positive Aspects

* Expands access to cultural resources.
* Enables new art forms like parody and remix.

### Negative Aspects

* Boundaries are vague and judged case by case.
* Teens may incorrectly assume “anything for school or online” counts as fair use.

Figure 1: Timeline infographic of major copyright law changes (placeholder visual).

## Creative Commons Licenses

Creative Commons (CC) licenses let artists share work on their own terms. All CC licenses require attribution, but creators can decide whether to allow commercial use, derivatives, or remixing.

Narrative Example: A teen musician uploads an original track with a CC BY-NC-SA license. This allows classmates to remix the song for non-commercial projects, but prevents companies from selling it.

### The Six Main Licenses

* CC BY – Anyone can use, adapt, and share, with credit.
* CC BY-SA – Must share adaptations under the same license.
* CC BY-ND – No derivative works allowed.
* CC BY-NC – Only non-commercial uses allowed.
* CC BY-NC-SA – Non-commercial + share-alike.
* CC BY-NC-ND – Most restrictive.

### Positive Aspects

* Provides flexibility for creators to share with conditions.
* Encourages collaboration and creative reuse.

### Negative Aspects

* Licenses are irrevocable—permissions cannot be withdrawn once granted.
* Restrictive licenses may unintentionally limit exposure or collaboration.

Figure 2: Bar chart of Creative Commons license use (placeholder visual).

Figure 3: Flowchart for “Which CC License Should I Use?” (placeholder visual).

## Youth Perspectives on Copyright

Research shows teens often feel conflicted. They want recognition and control but also value remix culture and free sharing.

Narrative Example: A teen poet publishes a zine under CC BY. Her peers remix one of her poems into a digital animation. She appreciates the exposure but later regrets not limiting commercial use when she sees the video reposted on TikTok with ads.

### Positive Aspects

* Teens gain visibility and creative community support.
* Licensing empowers young artists to make their own choices.

### Negative Aspects

* Without training, youth may misuse others’ work or overshare their own.
* Ambiguity about rights can discourage participation.

Figure 4: Pie chart of teen understanding of copyright basics (placeholder visual).

## Conclusion

This report has outlined copyright, intellectual property rights, public domain, fair use, and Creative Commons licensing for non-expert readers, focusing on relevance to teen artists.

### Key Takeaways

* Copyright protection is automatic but difficult to enforce without resources.
* Public domain and fair use expand creative opportunities but are legally complex.
* Creative Commons licenses empower flexible sharing but carry trade-offs.
* Teen artists often embrace collaboration yet remain uncertain about their rights.

### Opportunities for the Teen Artists’ Studio

* Host workshops on copyright basics.
* Provide templates for choosing and applying CC licenses.
* Develop policies to safeguard teen artists’ works while supporting creative collaboration.

## References

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