



LifeSmarts

Learn it. Live it.

Key Points

ORIGINAL WORKS ARE AUTOMATICALLY PROTECTED

Copyright protection begins the moment an original work is created and fixed in a tangible form.

TRADEMARKS PROTECT BRAND IDENTITY

Logos, slogans, and brand names are protected to avoid consumer confusion and misuse.

NOT EVERYTHING IS FAIR USE

Using someone else's work for education or parody has limits—permission is often still required.

SYMBOLS SHOW LEGAL STATUS

The ©, ™, and ® symbols indicate copyright and trademark protections.

Core Concepts

COPYRIGHT COVERS CREATIVE WORKS

Music, writing, photos, and videos are protected—even if they're shared online.

TRADEMARKS MUST BE DISTINCTIVE

A strong trademark sets your brand apart and is legally enforceable against imitators.

REGISTERING ADDS LEGAL POWER

Copyright and trademark rights exist without registration, but registration strengthens legal protection.

KNOW WHAT YOU CAN LEGALLY USE

Fair use, Creative Commons licenses, and public domain materials help creators reuse content legally—but each has its own rules.

SHARE MEDIA LEGALLY AND ETHICALLY

Support artists by using legal sources and sharing content in ways that respect copyright.

INFRINGEMENT CAN HAVE CONSEQUENCES

Using copyrighted or trademarked material without permission can lead to legal action or account takedowns.

PROTECTING YOUR OWN WORK MATTERS TOO

If you create something original — like a logo, photo, or brand name — you have rights worth defending.

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Copy, Paste... Illegal?

Additional Resources

U.S. Copyright Office – Copyright Basics

Official guide explaining what copyright is, what it protects, and how to register a work

<https://bit.ly/45u2IKn>

United States Patent and Trademark Office – Trademark Basics

Overview of what trademarks are, why they matter, and how to protect them

<https://bit.ly/4lmYzly>

USPTO - Search Trademark Database

Official USPTO database where you can search to see if a trademark is already registered

<https://bit.ly/45e0b2A>

YouTube - Creativity, Copyright, and Fair Use

Copyright, Public Domain, and Fair Use explained

<https://bit.ly/3HtLRtD>

Listen to the Podcast



Explore and Explain

1. How does copyright protect the work of authors, artists, and creators?
2. Why are trademarks important for businesses and product branding?
3. What are the consequences of using copyrighted or trademarked material without permission?
4. How can understanding copyright and trademark laws help you create and share your own work legally?

Knowing how copyrights and trademarks work helps you respect others' creations and protect your own ideas.

Copyrights & Trademarks

Acronyms

CC

Creative Commons

DMCA

Digital Millennium Copyright Act

IP

Intellectual Property

USPTO

United States Patent and Trademark Office

WIPO

World Intellectual Property Organization



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Vocabulary

CEASE AND DESIST

A formal request to stop using someone else's copyrighted or trademarked work

COPYRIGHT

Legal protection for original works (like songs, videos, or art) that gives the creator the exclusive right to use and share them

COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

Using someone else's copyrighted work without permission when permission is required

DERIVATIVE WORK

A new creation that builds on an existing copyrighted work—like a remix or mashup

FAIR USE

A legal exception allowing limited use of copyrighted work for things like commentary, education, or news

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Creations like songs, books, or logos that can be legally protected (includes copyrights and trademarks)

PARODY

A humorous imitation that can sometimes be protected under fair use

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Creative work that's free to use because copyright has expired or been waived

TRADEMARK

A protected symbol, logo, or phrase that identifies a brand or product