

REGISTERING COPYRIGHT - Fact sheet P-04

This fact sheet explains the process of copyright registration, and the benefits of registering your work.

Why you should register

Although copyright is an automatic right of the author, if an unscrupulous third party decides to infringe a copyright, **proving it** can be a difficult matter. In the past, a popular but misguided solution has been to post a copy of the work to yourself. It is a relatively easy task to open and replace the contents, and this method does not present a solid case in event of a dispute. Without more substantial evidence, copyright disputes can boil down to a case of ‘their word against yours’, and if the other party has greater financial resources, reputation and lawyers, it may be very difficult to get a ruling in your favour. On top of that, you run the risk of being branded a con artist. This is why we feel the best solution is to have the work registered, so that in the event of a dispute you have independent evidence that you are the copyright owner.

About the UK Copyright Service

One of the key considerations in setting up the UK Copyright Service was to achieve a better level of copyright protection at a price that everyone can afford. UK Copyright Service is essentially an independent witnessing service and an archive of original works, which offers impartial supporting evidence as to copyright ownership. Nothing can ever provide a 100% guarantee, but if you register your copyright and follow our guidelines we feel you will have done as much as is affordably possible to protect your work. **(Note that this is a commercial business, not a government service).**

What types of work can be copyright registered? Just about anything which is an original work, such as music, lyrics and sound recordings

How to register your work: To register your work with the UK Copyright Service, all you need do is: Fill out [registration application form F-01](#), and send it along with a copy of the work, a completed application and the registration fee.

Ensure that you only include a copy of the work and not the original or master. You should not register if ownership of the work is already in dispute.

What happens when your work is registered? You will be allocated a personal account number, and information about the work is stored in our database. Where feasible we create an encrypted electronic copy in place of the submitted version which may then be discarded. This satisfies storage requirements and enables a back up of the work to be stored in a secure, off-site location. This extra precaution increases protection against data corruption, fire, and other risks.

You will be sent a certificate as confirmation of registration. The archive is maintained by UKCS personnel who take every reasonable care to ensure that the copy of your work is kept safe and secure for the period of registration. You will also

be notified when the registration is nearing its end and offered the option to extend the registration period if required.

What if an infringement is made on your copyright?

In the event of a dispute over copyright, the UK Copyright Service can act as an impartial independent witness, providing evidence to authenticate your claim: UKCS can verify when the work was first registered by means of a certificate of registry (further copies can be made at your request), and at your instruction we can produce copies of the work as proof of the content of your work at the registration date. These can be sent to any address you specify; this may be your solicitor, or the judge/tribunal dealing with your case.

Extending the registration period - About three months before the registration period ends, you will be automatically sent a reminder with the option to 'top up' the registration for a further 5 or 10 year period if required. This can be repeated as often as required up to the legal copyright duration (author's life plus 70 years).

Checklist - For maximum protection, ensure that your work contains a copyright notice, e.g. 'Copyright © 2000 Joe Smith'; you include a disclaimer stating your wishes, e.g. 'All rights reserved'; in the case of jointly authored works, you should have an agreement, so that if a member of your collective leaves you are all clear what will happen to the copyright of your work.

What types of work should be registered? Any original literary, design, musical or artistic works *can* be registered. This includes: Web-sites, advertisements, computer programs, manuscripts & synopsis, photography, logos, musical works & sound recordings, commercial documents, periodicals and games. Any work which may be used for financial gain *should* be registered.

What happens when a work is registered? Everyone who registers work is given a personal account number. Each work is given a unique code identifying it as the author's work, and information about the work is stored in the account. The author then receives a certificate as proof of registration. An entry in the archive is evidence of copyright ownership, and can assist in the event of a dispute.

Do I need to register in other countries as well? No, under the terms of the Berne Convention, your work is protected internationally in accordance with the laws of your home country. You only need to register in the country where you are a national.

Can I send amendments to add to my registered work? No. Once a work is registered, it is proof of the content and design of the work at the time it was registered. We cannot allow any amendments or alterations to a registered copy, as to do so would invalidate the registration and render it useless as evidence of originality in the event of a dispute. Normally this is not a problem, because as the work evolves it will typically still closely resemble the registered copy. If however the new version of a work is *substantially* different, you may wish to register the new version as a *separate* registration. (The original registration will continue to run).

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