



The earlier children learn the basic principles of copyright the better.

Primary school teachers are in a unique position to make this happen.

The three main messages we need to get across to children are:

- What you write is yours.
- If you use someone else's words without permission you are stealing.
- Stealing words is against the law.

We all need to understand our rights and respect other people's.

If you scan, photocopy or otherwise reproduce someone else's writing without permission you are breaking the law.

Copyright is the right to copy and it belongs to the writer or whoever holds the copyright. Disregard for copyright is a form of theft.

When you buy a book (or magazine or newspaper) you own the paper and the ink.

You have also bought the right to read it and to show others as long as you don't make copies of it.

You could, for example, read it aloud in class without breaking the law.

When you consult a copyright-protected webpage then, legally, you may read it and print it for your own use. You may be invited to email a link to someone else.

But in none of these cases is the content yours to take and sell, project onto a screen in class or pass off as your own.

The content belongs to the copyright holder – usually the author in the case of a book. Articles in newspapers, magazines and journals are sometimes copyrighted to the publisher.

Copyright theft is dreadful for professional authors.

If a copy of a writer's book is sold he or she receives a 'royalty': a percentage of the selling price. A small payment also goes to the author if a book is borrowed from a library. That is how an author earns his or her living.

But on the other hand, imagine a situation in which just one copy of a book is bought by a school which really needed a whole set for a class.

Someone then scans large sections of it onto a computer for class use. In this case the writer gets nothing for the multiple use of his or her book.

The school has stolen part of the author's rightful income.

Unless you have permission it is theft to take and use someone else's property – and that includes words.

Copyright law is there to protect everybody. So look after your own work and respect other people's – just as you would their cars, homes or other possessions.

As teachers we can role model that respect for our students. It is part of good citizenship.

We teach children that it is wrong to take money from someone else's purse.

We should also teach them that they must not steal other people's words.

If copyright is not respected authors have no incentive to write.

Where would primary teachers be without stories such as Roald Dahl's *The Giraffe, the Pelly and Me* or the *Horrid Henry* books by Francesca Simon?

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How can I find out more about copyright law?

UK copyright law is set out in the European Commission (EC) Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. Bits and pieces have been added to it over the years as technology has changed.

You can download it from:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/48/contents

2. Can I get permission to make copies of something I want to use in a lesson?

Yes. Your school needs to buy a licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA). See www.cla.co.uk. This then has to be renewed each year. Most schools already have this licence but it's worth checking yours has.

There are different levels of licence depending on what sort of material you need to copy, how much and how often.

BUT – and it's a big 'but' – remember that NO CLA licence gives you the right to copy everything in sight. There are ALWAYS restrictions.

The system works quite fairly because a proportion of the licence fee is paid to authors through the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS).

3. How long does copyright on books last?

70 years from the author's death. This how it works:

The *Lion the Witch and Wardrobe* was first published in 1950. Its author, C S Lewis, died in 1963 so the book remains in copyright until 2033.

This means you may make copies of as much Shakespeare, E Nesbit or Kipling as you like (because they have all been dead more than 70 years) without infringing their copyright (other copyright works such as art and publishing rights can still apply to Public Domain literary works).

But you need permission to reproduce the works of living authors such as Jacqueline Wilson or Phillip Pullman, or relatively recently dead ones such as Roald Dahl (died 1990).

4. Is the writer of a book always the copyright holder?

No. Copyright is like any other sort of property. It is bequeathed to, or inherited by, someone else after the author's death.

Sometimes a writer sells or gives a copyright to someone else. It can be handed over to a publisher or donated to a charity, for example.

And, if you write your school's prospectus, in law the copyright will belong to the school because you have written it as an employee for your employer. You can, however, agree with your head and governors that you keep the copyright.

The important point to remember is that copyright is ALWAYS someone's property during the writer's life and for 70 years after his or her death.

5. If I write, or one of my class writes, something we want to protect do we have to put a copyright sign © on it?

It doesn't affect your rights either way.

The copyright in the writing belongs to you with or without a copyright sign (unless you have made an agreement to the contrary).

The sign is there simply to remind the reader or user that the work is someone's property.

6. Surely all this doesn't apply to primary schools? We don't have much money and we only copy stuff to help the children learn.

There is no exemption for schools or pupils. Like all other organisations they must buy an appropriate licence from CLA to stay within the law.

7. Can I teach the children about copyright in citizenship lessons?

Yes, although there is no specific mention of it in the National Curriculum. Copyright education fits well into citizenship on work about rights, wrongs and respect. Many people and organisations, including ALCS, would like to see copyright education specified in the citizenship curriculum.

You can also cover it in IT lessons when you are teaching the children how to use the internet and how to cut and paste. A lot of Internet material is copyright protected and may not, legally, be 'lifted' for children's projects without permission.