



What does copyright protect?

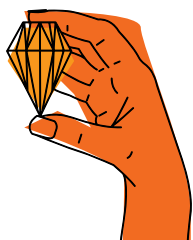
As soon as you have made an original,
created work, in a fixed and tangible form,
it is protected by copyright laws.

Let's look at those words more closely.



“Original”

doesn't mean nobody has ever done it before, it means you didn't copy someone else's work to create yours.



“Fixed”

means it's not changing; it's in a final form.



“Tangible”

means someone else can experience your work in some way, usually through seeing, or listening to it. In other words, you've taken an idea that was in your head, and turned it into something to share with the rest of the world.

Copyright law provides protection for various types of “works,” and in Aotearoa New Zealand, it doesn't matter whether the work is physical (exists in real life) or digital (exists online) – all work is protected. The Copyright Act uses the term “author” to describe everyone who creates a work, not just people who write books.



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CREATIVE WORKS USUALLY FALL INTO ONE OF THESE CATEGORIES:



Literary Works:

This includes letters, emails, journal articles, novels, screenplays, poems, and song lyrics. It also covers tables, data compilations, multimedia works, and computer programs.



Dramatic Works:

Think of choreography, mime, and film scripts.



Musical Works:

The actual written music, like scores, lead sheets and chord charts; (not lyrics or sound recordings.)



Artistic Works:

This includes paintings, drawings, diagrams, maps, engravings, etchings, photographs, sculptures, and buildings; everything in the visual arts category that is static (not moving, like a cartoon.)



Sound Recordings:

The recording of sounds themselves, (not written music or story.)



Films:

The moving images in videos or DVDs, (not the scripts, music and sounds.)



Communication Works:

Radio and TV broadcasts and internet transmissions, like podcasts and livestreams.



Typographical Arrangements:

The layout of a published edition of literary, dramatic, or musical works.

AS YOU CAN ALREADY SEE, SOME WORKS HAVE MULTIPLE PARTS THAT GET COPYRIGHT PROTECTION.

A children's book has literary (for the words,) artistic (for the illustrations) and typographical protection (for the layout of the book).

A film will have protection in dramatic (the script,) musical (the score for the soundtrack,) sound recordings (the audible sounds and actual soundtrack), and film (the moving images) categories.

A book might contain several stories or poems by different authors, and each of those is protected by their own copyright, and the layout of the book is also protected.

A CD or music album could have several songs. Each song has a sound recording, and lyrics, each with its own copyright.





What does copyright not protect?



WHAT IS NOT PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT?

Copyright protects the way ideas are expressed, not the ideas themselves. Let's take an idea for a story about a dog roaming throughout the country, looking for his lost family.

You and I can both write stories using that idea, but the way we express that idea will end up being quite different. My story starts in Taupō; yours starts in Wellington. My dog's name is Bingo, yours is Bella. My dog's family has 4 members, yours has 5. The way the idea is expressed through important features like names, settings and other details is original, and written in my own words, and that's what is protected.

So, two authors can independently create similar works based on the same idea without violating copyright, as long as they don't copy from each other. Two artists could paint or photograph the same landscape, and as long as they did it without copying each other, both works will have copyright protection.

Some things are not protected by copyright, such as names, titles, single words, and headlines, which are usually too short or ordinary to be considered "original". Additionally, certain "public" documents like statutes, court judgments, and official inquiry reports are not protected by copyright.

HOW LONG DOES COPYRIGHT PROTECTION LAST?

At the time of writing, in Aotearoa New Zealand, copyright for literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic works lasts for your entire life plus fifty years after you pass away. This means that even after you're gone, your work remains protected for fifty more years, allowing your family or estate to benefit from your art and decide how it can be used.

After that fifty years runs out, the work is considered to be "out of copyright" which is sometimes known by the American term "public domain," and that means that it is no longer protected by copyright law, and anyone can copy, share or adapt your work in any way they choose.

For other works, like government publications, broadcasts, and films, the length of copyright might be different. These terms can change with international agreements, and copyright lengths can vary in other countries.

As long as you have an independently created artistic work, in physical or digital form, it is automatically protected by copyright, for your entire life plus another fifty years. After that, anyone can use it, allowing your work to spark someone else's creativity.

For the most up to date information on how long copyright lasts, please visit copyright.co.nz.