

Common Sense on Respecting Creative Work

What's the Issue?

It's Not a Free-For-All

Our kids are used to having all types of creative work available at their fingertips. People's writing, artwork, videos, and images can be inspiring, but they are also easy to take without thinking twice. We often forget about copyright law, which protects people's creative work. Even though kids may feel they have the right to take and use anything they find online, the Internet is not a free-for-all. Kids have responsibilities for following copyright law and respecting creative work online. But there are exceptions such as fair use, which allows kids to use a small amount of copyrighted material without permission in certain situations, such as for schoolwork, criticizing or commenting on something, and parody. There is also material in the public domain, which includes work that is no longer copyrighted that kids can use however they want.

Some kids may not think about the hard work that goes into creating something like a movie, song, novel, video game, or website. They may not realize that copying and pasting material they find online and into schoolwork is plagiarism. They may not understand that illegal downloading and sharing of music and movies is piracy, which is stealing. Kids need to be educated about using copyrighted work online, make sure they get permission before using copyrighted work, and properly cite the work they use. They should also think about how they would want to protect their own creative work.

common sense says

Help your kid make a habit of using the following process to be a responsible and respectful user and creator.

1. **ASK.** How does the author say I can use the work? Do I have to get the creator's permission first?
2. **ACKNOWLEDGE.** Did I give credit to the work I used?
3. **ADD VALUE.** Did I rework the material to make new meaning and add something original?

Tips for Families with Middle-School Kids

We all know what pirates do. Remind your kids that illegal downloading of things such as movies, music, and software is piracy, and piracy is stealing. It also shows disrespect for the creators who made these works.

Emphasize the importance of originality. At this age, kids appreciate giving credit where credit is due. Encourage them to come up with their own ideas. In writing for their schoolwork, posting to a blog, or making a remix, are they saying things in their own words? Or are they relying too heavily on the work and ideas of others?

Encourage constructive commenting. At this age, kids may start to say mean things to each other – especially online – about people's creative works. Encourage your kids to be thoughtful and polite when commenting on the work of others, both online and offline.

Tips for Families with High-School Kids

Encourage legal downloading and sharing. Discourage teens from using peer-to-peer (PTP) sharing sites. Illegal downloading and PTP sharing sites not only pose legal risks, they also show a lack of respect to the creators of the content they pirate. Encourage teens to use legitimate online retailers, for their music and movie downloads.

Challenge teens to take ownership of their work. Teens can get involved with copyright firsthand by licensing their work. Have they thought about how they'd like others online to be able to use their photos, writing, or videos? Encourage them to use licensing systems such as Creative Commons.

Is it fair use? Your teen might be making video remixes, mash-ups, fanfiction, blogs, or artwork. Fair use allows creators to use a small amount of copyrighted material without permission, but only in specific situations. See if your teen can defend whether or not their reworked creations fall under fair use.