Image not found or type unknown

Creative commons licensing, distribution and attribution

- Understanding how to reuse material
- Understanding how to attribute
- Searching openly licensed resources
- Cheatsheets

Understanding how to reuse material

The availability of works under an open license has increased dramatically since the Creative Commons licenses were launched in 2002. As of today, there are around 2 billion works released under a Creative Commons license[1], and many more with other types of licenses (such as the GFDL)[2].

The reason why the Creative Commons licenses became so widespread it’s because they offer considerable flexibility to creators and users. Creative Commons licenses include six licenses and two public domain tools. Creative Commons are standardized tools. Each of the licenses and tools have three layers of legal language, user language, and machine readable code. This is what makes CC licenses such a powerful tool. They have been translated to many languages, so users can understand in their own language what they can and can’t do with a work that is licensed under a CC license.

However, it is not always easy to understand how to use works under a CC license, or how to license your own work. Additionally, CC licenses only cover the aspects of a work that are related to copyright. Any other right, such as personality or privacy rights, are not covered by the CC licenses. This means you need to examine the work you’re planning to incorporate in your storytelling or narrative to decide if you can use it.

To decide if you incorporate a particular work into your narrative, you need to first understand some important aspects of the licenses and your intended use.

Understanding your use

Before deciding where to look for works that you can use, you need to define what is your intended use of those works.

The two main things that you have to consider are:

- Is your use of the works an adaptation or a combination (also called “collection”)?
- Do you plan to give the work a commercial use?

For deciding whether your use is an adaptation or a combination, you have to ask yourself the following questions: Are you planning to remix it into a larger work, or are you planning to use it “as it is”, to illustrate a point or indicate an element? For example, are you planning to use a set of icons in a larger infographic material about the importance of regulating hate speech on social media, or are you planning to remix public domain works to make a collage poster that depicts an abstract concept of gender equality?

This is an important distinction between **adaptation** and **combination**. Adaptation is when you take a set of existing works to create a new, distinguishable work. When you adapt a work, it’s hard to distinguish when each of the works start and when they end (i.e., a collage).

Combining works (or making a collection of works) is when you take a set of existing works and combine them or arrange them in a way that still produces a new work, but where each work being combined remains its separate, own work (i.e., the icons in an infographic).

Additionally, you need to consider how you plan to use and license your work afterwards. Are you planning to sell the resulting work or use it for a for-profit purpose? How do you want to license your own work?

Creative Commons offers an extensive review of the licensing considerations that you need to consider in their FAQ section “Combining and adapting CC material”.

However, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed with all the different charts and considerations on how you’re supposed to incorporate works with the non-commercial, share-alike or non-derivatives clause. **The easiest way to avoid all this complexity is to limit your search to materials that are made freely available with little to no restrictions.** This means that you will only search for works that are preferably under a CC BY, a CC BY SA or a CC0.

> **Pro Tip:** To avoid complexity, search for materials that you can freely reuse with little to no restrictions. This means searching for materials under the CC BY and CC BY-SA license or the CC0 tool. You can use search filters and specific media repositories that will give you only

these results when searching.

If you want to use any work under the remaining licenses (CC BY-NC, CC BY-SA-NC, CC BY-ND, CC BY-NC-ND) you will have to ask yourself:

- Is the resulting work an adaptation or a combination of works?
- Do I want to make a commercial use of the resulting work?

If you want to use a material that has a CC BY-NC-ND or a CC BY-ND, you need to be aware that you can't make distributions of any adaptations you make to the work. That means that you will only be able to incorporate works under those licenses "as they are", without any modifications.

This graphic of the "spectrum of CC licenses" shows that the licenses placed in the dark green area of the graphic are the "most free" licenses. The works released under the licenses placed in the dark green area are also the ones that are easier to incorporate in any new work.


cc-license-spectrum.jpg
Image not found or type unknown

"Creative Commons License Spectrum" by Shaddim (CC BY 4.0)

In the next sections we will explore how to search for works that are under the licenses placed in the dark green area. But in a nutshell, different search filters and specific media repositories will give you materials licensed in these ways.

Other considerations when using and reusing CC licensed material

The CC licenses don't cover other rights different from copyright. Any image, sound, moving image, or other representation may have other legal or ethical rights. Legal rights are rights that are enforceable while ethical considerations might not be legally enforceable, but you need to consider when respectfully using the material. These rights include:

- **Trademarks:** an openly licensed resource might contain representations of trademarks (for example, a photo that shows the iconic logo of a fast food chain);
- **Publicity rights:** certain living people depicted in openly licensed photos might be covered by publicity rights (i.e., a photo of a singer or performer);
- **Privacy rights:** depictions of living people might also be subject to privacy rights.
- **Ethical considerations:** all the other considerations that emerge but are not coded in law and/or related to copyright law in particular.

These all apply even when the resource might be openly licensed.

Trademarks

As a general principle, it's a good idea to avoid using depictions or representations of trademarks or their logos. However, you might be able to use works that represent or depict a trademark if you are going to critique the trademark or if you want to illustrate a point (for example, a slide that shows the top 10 companies causing environmental harm in your country could be illustrated with their logos).

You might also want to avoid potential connections between a narrative and a trademark. For example, if you are doing storytelling on the obesity epidemic and its impact in the developing world, you want to avoid including a representation of the iconic logo of a soda company. While there might be a connection between sodas and obesity, you want to avoid being that specific. You can use something less specific (for example, a photo of a line of sodas in an aisle in a supermarket).

Publicity rights

Avoid using photos of famous people, unless the story that you are building is about the person or refers to the person somehow. The protection of publicity rights might not be as strong when related to politicians. Publicity rights vary widely: make sure to know your local laws before representing famous people.

Privacy rights

Privacy rights can be complicated legally and should be treated alongside ethical considerations. Some jurisdictions have different considerations for privacy rights. However, in many jurisdictions around the world: if a person is in a public space, then their expectations of privacy should be lower. What does that mean? In short, it means that if, for example, you decide to participate in a manifestation of some type (a public performance, protest, etc), then you should anticipate that others could be taking pictures of you without your consent. Your participation in the public space is, in a way, a form of consent.

This is highly controversial and problematic. As an example, let's take a look at the story of the Pulitzer prize winning photos of 2015 of the Ferguson protests in the United States, taken by the white photographer Robert Cohen. The photo depicts a black man, Edward Crawford, grabbing a gas canister and throwing it back at the police with an American flag in flames. The black man was later harrased by the police (arguably because of the photos that placed him at the place of the protest) and died under circumstances that still remain unclear. This brings very interesting questions about how protests should be respectfully depicted, including but not limited to how this might put in danger other people's lives.

You need to be extremely careful in which contexts you might reuse depictions of living people. As a general principle, reusing any depiction of living people could be a misuse, in the sense that you are taking a depiction of a person and using it in a context and for a purpose that was not the context or purpose that the person being depicted anticipated. However, there are uses that are more acceptable than others. For these ethical considerations, context is everything.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations might or might not be rooted in legal systems. "Ethical considerations" refer mainly to respectfully using representations of people and cultures. Some of these considerations are very heavily related to context, so always bear in mind what your audience might be for your storytelling.

> **Pro Tip:** If you are not sure whether your use or reuse is legal, ethical or respectful, then search for another resource that makes you feel more confident.

As a general principle, use the following criteria to decide whether the your intended use is appropriate:

- **Did the person give consent to be depicted in the way in which she or he is being depicted?** If you suspect that the media, photo or representation was taken without the consent of the person, then avoid using it in your work.
- **Is the representation respectful of the situation in which the person might be situated in?** For example, if you want to depict "poverty in Latin America", avoid using images or representations that might bring stigma over the people or situation being depicted. Avoid also using tokenizing representations.

Does the representation of the person or situation put the person's life at risk in any way?

Avoid using photos that *might* put someone's life or safety at risk, even if the license allows for free reuse. Consider questions like: does the photo show someone doing something illegal? Does the photo show someone easily identifiable while protesting power? If the photos you find are in a community with ethical norms look for a way to report it: for example, on Wikimedia Commons consider also asking for deletion .

Does the use that you intend to do of the work show the person or situation being depicted in a positive, affirmative action?

There are manifestations that take place as part of affirmative actions. For example, Pride Parades in contexts where LGBTIQ+ rights are fully granted[3] are a good example of such affirmative actions. This is an example of a photo taken at a Pride Parade in Berlin in 2015, which was later re-used in a set of postcards to ask for the implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty for people with print disabilities. These are examples of affirmative actions.

Does the person that took the photo belong to the cultural or geographical context?

An important aspect to consider here is also who might have produced the media you intend to use. While sometimes it's impossible to know this for sure, there are different levels of confidence. Writer Sasha Alyson in his blog "Karma colonialism" points out how different aid agencies normally don't hire local talent for their photo-shoots, converting these depictions into another form of colonialism and othering. There are other resources that are openly licensed that have been produced by local people, for example, the contests organized by Wiki Loves Africa.

Does your intended use include any identifiable traits of the person?

Depending on what story you are telling, you might want to avoid using works that show identifiable traits of the person. For example, if you are writing a report about working environments in Indonesia, you can use openly licensed photos, but you might want to avoid showing people whose face or traits are recognizable and that were taken in a different context from the project. Readers of your story might interpret those people as “the people impacted by the program” rather than as anonymous people. Instead, you might want to consider showing more abstract photos of working environments, or only select certain portions of the body (for example, hands on a computer).

Does the person belong to a minority group?

There are certain groups that have been historically depicted without their consent and with a colonialist perspective. That’s frequently the case of indigenous people, artifacts and customs. Some of these representations are part of archival materials stewarded by cultural heritage institutions that make them available because copyright expired. That doesn’t mean that these representations are less problematic. For example, many libraries and archives in North America have published 19th century photos of Native American traditions not meant to be shared. Reusing these images extends this injury. Ask yourself whether the representation is appropriate.

Understand how your reuse fits into your narrative

Once you have finished putting together your storytelling or narrative, you need to make sure that the overall story does not accidentally misrepresent the people or topic in a poor way. For example, you might have selected certain types of representations that build bias into your story.

When unsure, search for other resources

If you are confident your use is ethical, then search for another resource that makes you feel more confident. You might spend a bit more time on the search, but it’s better to feel safe about your reuse.

As a final consideration, also avoid works that depict scripts or languages that you don’t

understand. If you don’t know the language, you might be using offensive or out of context terms without realizing. An exception to this rule is when these scripts are being displayed in public and properly contextualized, for example, the “Monument to the Reader” in Yerevan, Armenia.

What happens if I use a material offered under a CC license and the author decides to remove or change the CC license?

CC licenses are irrevocable. This means that if someone decides to change their mind about the license they are using, you can still use it under the terms that it was offered to you. However, sometimes this could potentially make someone wary of using a work under a CC license, because how might you prove that the material was offered to you under a CC license?

A good idea is that whenever you are using and reusing material offered to you under a CC license, you do one (or both) of the following:

- **Upload the photo to Wikimedia Commons:** using the Upload Wizard, you can add the source where you find the material, alongside with the tutorial. The Upload Wizard offers a step by step guide.

Save the link on the Wayback Machine: the Wayback Machine is an archiving service of website pages offered by Internet Archive. You can go to the Wayback Machine website and use the “Save page Now” function:

01_waybackmachine.png
Image not found or type unknown

If you paste the URL in that box, it will create a “snapshot” of the page, with a unique URL. You could potentially also use that URL as an alternative source when using the “TASL approach” (more on that in the next section).

Lastly, an important point is that you might wish to respect the desires of the author that decides to change the license to their content, avoiding reusing that content in the future, even when you might have the snapshot of the website.

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1 Creative Commons annual report (2019), available here: https://creativecommons.org/2020/11/05/creative-commons-2019-annual-report/

2 This tutorial will only work with CC-licensed material to avoid introducing more complexity.

3 Avoid using photos of LGBTIQ+ parades or manifestations in contexts where their rights are at risk or their lives might be in danger.

Understanding how to attribute

Using the TASL approach

Attribution is not only a legal requirement, it's also good practice. For both copyrighted and openly licensed materials, you should always try to follow good practices on attribution. Even if the work is openly licensed, there are numerous benefits to attribution: for example, good attribution helps other users find the work, and use it themselves.

All the six CC licenses require attribution. The way in which you attribute might vary, but the rule is that your attribution has to make clear that the use that you are making of the material does not constitute an endorsement of your use or reuse by the original author.

The way in which you provide attribution is connected to your planned end work and the possibilities that the medium of that work allow. A good practice for attribution is to always include the "TASL" information, an acronym that stands for "Title, Author, Source, License":

- Title: the title of the work[1]
- Author: the people that created the work
- Source: a link to the source where you obtained the material
- License: the license which the work is being distributed under.

Creative Commons has developed an extensive FAQ on all the facts that you need to know on "how to properly provide attribution". They also have a simple resource page on "How to give attribution " and a more extensive wiki page on "Good practices for attribution". When in doubt, make sure to check those resources.

> **Pro Tip:** Make a copy of the website that is offering you the CC licensed content using the Wayback Machine "Save page" function or by uploading the content to Wikimedia Commons.

Additionally, platforms that have built-in support for CC licenses (such as Flickr or Wikimedia Commons) tend to make the process of attribution slightly easier, by allowing you to copy the relevant information that you need to build the TASL information.

The person releasing a work can't require the attribution to be located in a specific place. This is very important when doing storytelling, because you might combine a very large number of resources into a single new work, and providing all the attribution for those sources might be challenging. For example, if you are doing an infographic using different icons and images, you can create a page called "Credits for resources for my beautiful infographic", create all the proper attribution statements following the TASL approach, and then provide a link to that page in the infographic.

Some websites tend to add extra information on how you are supposed to attribute or how you are supposed to use the work. For example, such is the case of The Noun Project, that adds the two following suggestions when you download a SVG or PNG icon licensed as CC BY from their collection.

02_attribution_text_noun.png
Image not found or type unknown

The text in the picture reads:

"You must add attribution:

- Use the embedded attribution if the icon is larger than 100px".
- Copy the attribution text below and include it in a bibliography or image caption, or on a physical item or its tag".

In situations using CC license, these are suggestions rather than requirements. In its FAQ CC clearly outlines that an author can't require the exact placement of the attribution credit, but also clarifies that any additional restriction added to a CC license makes it no longer a CC license.

In a nutshell, always follow the TASL approach and make sure that the credit lines are clear wherever you place them. If for whatever reason you forget to attribute a work, under version 4.0 of the licenses (and note that only version 4.0 allows for this) you have a 30 day window period to fix the mistake after being discovered (see relevant FAQ here).

Attributing works in the public domain

Works might be in the public domain typically for any of the following reasons:[1]

- because copyright has expired;
- because it was never entitled to copyright to begin with;
- because the rights over the work have been waived.[2]

Copyright only lasts for a certain amount of years (typically, 70 years after the death of the author, although some countries only require 50 years post mortem and some other countries require more). When a work is in the public domain, typically that means that it's free to use. However, some jurisdictions have a different approach, particularly those that strongly protect moral rights, requiring that the user of such a work still attributes the original author.

Since depending on the jurisdiction in which you are based the situation might vary, you might need to attribute the work even when the work is in the public domain. Additionally, a good idea is to follow what is suggested in the Public Domain Usage Guidelines prepared by Europeana, the aggregator of cultural heritage in Europe.

In certain cases, authors might choose to waive all their rights, and make it optional to attribute them or not. That's the case of the authors that choose the CC0 tool ("Creative Commons Zero"), a public domain dedication that puts the work in the public domain once the author has decided to apply the tool. In this case, you can decide whether you attribute the work or not.

A note about license versions

If you are more or less familiar with the CC licenses, you have probably seen already that sometimes a number appears right after the terms of the license, for example, “CC BY-SA 4.0”. That number is the *version* of the license that the person is using.

When the CC Licenses were launched, there was a significant amount of work put into making them “portable”. This meant that the licenses were not only translated into a different language, but also they were made to work within each national jurisdiction that the license was being “ported” to. One of the significant changes (among others) brought by version 4.0 was that licenses are no longer “ported”. This is because the licenses are now internationalized, and they don’t require anymore to be ported. They are only translated.

However, an important thing to note is that sometimes the different license versions have different requirements when it comes to attribution, and is normally a good idea to try to use the latest versions (particularly version 3.0 and 4.0). Unfortunately, there are some bad actors as described in this article: “Automated image recognition: How using 'free' photos on the internet can lead to lawsuits and fines” that have abused the attribution requirements using the different versions. If you are curious to understand more about what changed from version to version, you can always check this chart made by Creative Commons.

In short, use the latest versions whenever possible, and never forget to follow the TASTASLL approach when attributing a work.

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1 Note that with version 4.0 of the CC licenses title is no longer a requirement, but is always good practice to still include it.

2 Additionally in the US works might be in the public domain due to failure of registration prior to the granting of automatic protection, but that situation is very specific and won’t be explored here.

3 This is the case not only for authors using CC0 but also for certain types of work, such as works made by US officials in the context of their employment. However, that rule only applies under US jurisdiction, so make your own risk assessment to whether use or not any of those resources.

Searching openly licensed resources

The following guide uses the following keywords to refer to websites, repositories and content platforms:
- Multimedia: this means that you can find any type of media (images, sounds, video, documents and many more);
- Vector graphics: high quality graphics that don’t diminish their quality in comparison with raster images, mainly composed by icons and drawings;
- Images: websites that only offer images;
- Sounds: websites that only offer sounds and are better suited for searching this type of content.

General tips for your search

Search for the CC license or tool

There are many, many, many repositories out there that have openly licensed images. Some of them don’t use standard CC licenses, but rather use their Terms of Service (ToS). These terms and conditions are similar to what CC licenses offer. However, they are not compatible with the CC licenses, so you need to evaluate carefully whether to incorporate them in your work or not.

Unsplash or Pixabay have such custom Terms of Service or licenses. The license of Unsplash is similar to a CC0 waiver, but it has specific conditions that make it substantially different from a CC0. These differences can cause confusion. For example of a confusing effect, see Unsplash’s answer to: “Can you help me take down a photo on a third-party site?”. Using sites that offer CC licensed content is easier. When in doubt if the website is offering the material under a CC license or their own custom terms, check their Terms of Use or Conditions.

Additionally, you might also want to use resources that are licensed under the latest version of the CC licenses (version 4.0).

Use search filters

To get the most out of all the resources that are available under open licenses, you need to make use of the extensive search filters that repositories of content (images, videos, sound) offer. In some websites it's easier than in others, but in general most of these repositories offer some type of search filter. In some repositories, like Wikimedia Commons, all the content you find will allow for re-use, so you will never find Non Commercial or Non Derivatives licensed content. But if you're searching on a website like Flickr, using the search filter is crucial to only search for content you can reuse.

> **Pro Tip:** Build your personal list of websites for finding openly licensed content. Different open-licensed content sites have different strengths and weaknesses. Focus on the ones best for your content needs.

Check the quality of the resources

Depending on which repository you are searching for content, the quality of the resources might be fit for some purposes but not for others (for example, they might be adequate for posting on the web but not for printing). Normally, most repositories will allow you to filter also for quality.

Searching in languages other than English

Some multimedia platforms and repositories support multilinguality, while others don't. Of course, you will find out soon enough the moment you try to do a search on a language other than English and don't get any results. That's when no multilinguality is supported. However, in some cases what can happen is that multilinguality is supported only to a certain extent. For example, look how different the results are on Flickr if you search for "mujer", "wanita" and "woman" (the search doesn't have any filters by license). The same happens in most repositories, so if you don't find

what you’re searching for, try using keywords in another language, if you happen to speak more than one language.

Multimedia

Wikimedia Commons

Wikimedia Commons is the **multimedia** repository of the Wikimedia Foundation. It’s also the central place that stores most of the multimedia used in Wikipedia articles.

Although many people turn to Wikimedia Commons to search for pictures and other images or graphics, there is also a vast set of other important resources, such as sound, documents and video available on Wikimedia Commons.

Wikimedia Commons can be a hard repository to navigate if you use the default search box. But there are many other ways in which you can actually get the most out of Wikimedia Commons. In this whole section, the explanations will be used to find photos, but most of what is being explained can be applied to search for other multimedia content. These are general search step-by-step guides to get the most out of Wikimedia Commons.

Also, bear in mind that different search functionalities in Wikimedia Commons offer different results.

03_wikimediacommons_search.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: The “Search box” is the box that appears on top of the main page.

Search with Special:MediaSearch

Special:MediaSearch is an experimental search tool with improved algorithms for finding content, that is currently being tested with the Commons community. Even as a Beta service, it produces very high quality results when searching Commons:

1. Go to http://commons.wikimedia.org
2. On the search box on Wikimedia Commons, type: “**Special:MediaSearch**”.

3. Special:MediaSearch will retrieve better results than a regular search in the search box.
4. Special:MediaSearch is singular/plural sensitive. If you type “readers” instead of “reader”, you might receive slightly different results.
5. In Special:MediaSearch you can browse through different type of media content (images, audio, video, categories, and also other file formats, such as PDF or DJVU).
6. In Special:MediaSearch you can select the size for images (small, medium, large).
7. In Special:MediaSearch, for all media, you can search for specific file formats that correspond to that media (for example, in images, you can search for JPG, XFC, etc), and also sort by relevance, by choosing from the dropdown menu.

01_seaweed_search.gif
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: this GIF illustrates the different options available on Special:MediaSearch.

04_commons_seaweed.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: this illustrates how the dropdown works.

By sorting and filtering, you make sure that you are getting something that gets you closer to what you want. For example, you avoid getting back search results that give you small images that then you can’t reuse outside a website.

Discover through categories

Categories by type of media

Another good way to discover content in Wikimedia Commons is through the “Categories”. Categories are the way in which originally most of the information in Wikimedia platforms (including Wikipedia and Commons, but not limited to them) was hierarchically organized. Categories have then a main category and then subcategories.

When you enter to the main page, you will see the following resources being listed:

05_commons_categories1.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: In the main page, you will see listed “Images”, “Sounds”, “Video”.

These are categories. In the Category:Images you will find subcategories organized around different criteria: technical aspects, certain types of depictions, among others. You can browse

those subcategories according to your needs, but highly recommended are the subcategories Category:Featured pictures, Category:Quality images, Category:Valued images. These are images that have been featured at any given point on Wikimedia Commons due to their technical quality and their relevance to illustrate a topic.

A similar category exists for Category:Sounds and Category:Videos. The Category:Videos also has its subcategory Category:Featured media.

Categories by topics

Navigating through categories can be slightly hard, but can also offer portals for discovery that are not always obvious. It's also very practical if you're looking for some inspiration. For example, suppose you need to illustrate a story and build a narrative about the rise of female scientists in STEAM disciplines, and you are still researching the topic. You could go to the article Scientist on Wikipedia to see how they are illustrating the topic.

06_scientist_wikipedia.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: front page of the article "Scientist".

If you click on the photo, it will take you to the Media Viewer of Wikimedia Commons. But if you look into the right bottom corner, you will find a button that allows you to click on more details:

07_scientist_mediaviewer.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: if you click on the right bottom corner, you can find more details of the file.

That will take you directly to the file stored in Wikimedia Commons. And, in there, if you go all towards the bottom of the page, you will find the Categories that the photo belongs to:

08_commons_categories2.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: categories that the photo belongs to.

In this case, the photo belongs to Category:Men with microscopes. But you're interested in *women* scientists. Fortunately, you can search through categories using the search box at the top of the page.

03_wikimediacommons_search.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: The "Search box" is the box that appears on top of the main page.

There, you can actually type and search for specific categories. So in this case, you would modify your category to be Category:Women with microscopes (and you will be redirected to "Females with microscopes"!). In short, whenever you like a photo on Wikipedia but you are not sure how to find similar or related photos, searching through categories is a good option.

Contests and campaign drives

The Wikimedia communities also organize photo contests and campaign drives to incorporate content to Wikimedia Commons. These campaigns and contest drives tend to be focused on incorporating specific types of high-quality content into the platform, for example, to highlight the diversity of a continent, of a range of cultural practices, or even of buildings. They are also normally called "Wiki Loves..." and you can find all the contests that have been happening in the page "Wiki Loves Contests".

These contests and campaign drives have their own set of categories. Some of these very popular contests that have been running for a while are the following:

- Wiki Loves Monuments: a contest to highlight historical buildings and museums.
- Wiki Loves Africa: a contest that highlights the diversity and wealth of the African continent.
- Wiki Loves Folklore: a contest to celebrate cultures across the world.
- VisibleWikiWomen: a campaign drive to incorporate photos of women to illustrate their Wikipedia article.

You have to scroll down to the bottom of the page to find the partner category to which they belong and navigate through all the different subcategories.

How to attribute authors using the "Media Viewer" in Wikimedia Commons

Building the TASL attribution with Wikimedia files actually takes some work. Remember you have to include:

- Title
- Author

- Source
- License

Preferably, in the title you would also include the link to the source. But there is also a simpler way to do this. However, be careful because this step doesn't always work as expected, so you want to make sure that it is providing all the information you need to build the TASL attribution.

Suppose you entered into the file page through a search. In that page, you will find basic information and description of the file that will allow you to build your TASL attribution from scratch. But if you click in the button that says "Open in Media Viewer", it will take you again to the Media Viewer.

09_scientist_mediaviewer2.png
Image not found or type unknown

Once in the Media Viewer, you can use the arrow right on top of the button "More details". That will display different download options, but it will also display a message that "You can attribute the author" (or alternatively, "You need to attribute the author", if the work is not in the public domain).

07_scientist_mediaviewer.png
Image not found or type unknown

If you click on "Show me how", it will give you these options: "Plain" and "HTML". And then you just on the copy button.

11_show_me_how.png
Image not found or type unknown

media_viewer_attribution.gif
Image not found or type unknown

Cultural heritage institutions

Another source of great quality content are cultural heritage institutions. There are many benefits to using content made available by cultural heritage institutions.

- **Quality:** the content that cultural heritage institutions provide tends to be of very high quality, particularly when it comes to reproductions of artworks and archival material.

- **Reliability:** cultural heritage institutions have workflows and processes in place for doing proper copyright clearance. This means that, when possible, they only make available content that they know for sure is free of all copyrights, or they indicate otherwise if the content is not freely available.
- **Cultural relevance:** many cultural heritage institutions provide content that is relevant for the region, jurisdiction or country where they are based at. While this doesn't mean that their content is not biased in some way, they tend to provide more culturally relevant content.

Cultural heritage institutions take different approaches to how they provide content. Some offer their content through their website, through an aggregator [1], and on third-party platforms like Wikimedia Commons. But others only choose to offer their content on their website; others will only use aggregators; and others will only use third-party platforms like Wikimedia Commons or Flickr Commons. Approaches will vary, as well as in some cases their licensing practices.

> **Caveat:** The reader might find this section biased towards North American, European or otherwise Western cultural heritage institutions. Collecting practices of cultural heritage institutions are heavily tinted by colonialist practices. Some of these institutions have "world class collections" by virtue of colonization and other similar practices. Their wealth of resources and knowledge has allowed them to enter speedily into the digital era, while the rest of the world is still unable to participate in a foot of equity. When possible, cultural heritage institutions from other parts of the world are signaled, but the copyright status of the resources being offered by these institutions is way less clear and reliable than the ones being highlighted.

Cultural heritage institutions worldwide

Knowing which institutions have decided to release their digital reproductions of work around the world can be very challenging. Luckily, the Collections Manager of Europeana, Douglas McCarthy, and Dr. Andrea Wallace, Lecturer in Law at University of Exeter, have been maintaining a spreadsheet on "Survey of GLAM Open Access Policy and Practice" (GLAM means "Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums''). While the goal of the survey is to track policies, it also provides useful links that allow to discover the media repositories of these institutions.

12_OGsurvey.png Image not found or type unknown

Caption: this is a screenshot of the survey.

At the time of this writing (November 2020), “Column R” offers the data “OPEN DATA SOURCE 1”. That’s the link where most of those media files can be accessed. Using the sorting functionalities of the Google spreadsheet, anyone can search, for example, all the cultural heritage institutions from COUNTRY (column A) that have as OPEN DATA SOURCE 1 (column R) “flickr.com”.

Importantly enough, this survey **only** tracks institutions that make their digital reproductions available under CC BY, CC BY-SA, Public Domain Mark, CC0 or No Known Copyright (a label by the RightsStatements consortium). Currently “Column K” offers the data “LICENCE/RIGHTS STATEMENT FOR DIGITAL SURROGATES OF PUBLIC DOMAIN OBJECTS”. In case of doubts on the scope of the policies being captured in the survey, you can read Douglas McCarthy summary of the survey in “Uncovering the global picture of Open GLAM”.

This survey is *not* a repository. Is only pointing to the repositories of institutions (currently in Column R). However, it tends to be a very good discovery tool if you want to understand where you can find the resources being made available by some of these cultural heritage institutions.

Aggregator: Europeana

Europeana is the aggregator of all the cultural heritage institutions from Europe. Europeana collects material with a “Publishing framework” that ranks institutions that openly license their content better than the ones that don’t, so whenever you are making a search, you are likely to get first the multimedia content that you can freely reuse.

However, this means that **not all content you find in Europeana can be re-used**. For that reason, Europeana has put together a set of search filters that allow you to search only for material that you can reuse. They explain more on their policies in this FAQ about Reusability. This is a very short FAQ that you can keep handy whenever you have doubts about reuse conditions.

Using search filters on Europeana

Europeana also holds different types of media, from images to drawings to videos and sounds, and much more. For that, they offer different search filters.

1. Go to http://europeana.eu

2. On the top right corner, you will find the magnifying glass that symbolizes the search function.
3. Type your keywords.
4. That will give you the first search results. Then you can apply the different search filters using the dropdown menus:
    1. Collection
    2. Type of media
    3. Can I use this?
    4. Providing country
    5. More filters

cats_Europeana.gif
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: this GIF shows how to apply search filters on Europeana.

image2.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: Using the search filters on Europeana.

How to attribute easily using Europeana

Once you have selected a resource that you like, you will find lots of relevant information in the resource.

Take a look at this picture from the Wellcome Collection of a “Mouse health check”, taken by Caroline Gunn.

image11.png
Image not found or type unknown

After the picture, you will find:

- the information about the license;
- download & share buttons;
- a tab that says “Good to know” with the very basic information and then “All metadata”, that provides you more details about the photo you are looking at.

With the information that the “All metadata” tab provides, you could already put together your TASL attribution. “Mouse health check by Caroline Gunn is under a CC BY 4.0”.

However, there is even an easier way to do that. In the line of “Providing institution”, you can see that it says “Wellcome collection” and then has an arrow to indicate that if you click there, it will take you to an external site, different from Europeana. This is the source of that image. If you click there, it will take you to the page where Wellcome Collection is providing the original file. And if you expand the “Can I use this?” button, at the end it will automatically provide you the credit line:

15_mousehealth2.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: Wellcome (original source) provides the credit line.

The only thing that you will need to add is the link to the original file in the Wellcome Collection website. Additionally, it is also good practice that you credit the cultural heritage institution that is providing the resource.

Bear in mind that not all the providing institutions will have this readily available, but most of them will. If you can’t find this credit line easily in the source file, you can still put together your TASL information by checking on the “All the metadata” tab.

Navigating through Europeana’s digital exhibitions

At the bottom of the main page of Europeana, you will find that there is some featured content.

16_europeanafeatured.png
Image not found or type unknown

In there, featured content is organized in Features, Exhibitions, Blog and Galleries. This is curated content selected by staff members at Europeana. You can’t filter your search in this featured content, so you need to go to any individual file that you might like in order to check that the content is licensed in a way that you can reuse.

Aggregator: DPLA

The Digital Public Library of America is an aggregator of US cultural heritage organizations. It has over 40 million items to browse, although not all of them are re-usable. DPLA currently does not have a search filter option that allows you to filter by type of license, which means that you need to

click manually on each digital object to find out whether you can re-use it or not.

On the bright side, it does have some features that allow you to browse by topic, by partner institution, or discover content through their exhibitions curated collections. Their advanced search options do offer some interesting search filters to narrow down the search. You only need to click on the “plus” sign to expand the options that the search tool offers you:

17_refined_search_dpla.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: These are the options that the advanced search filter offers visitors to narrow down results.

Again, be very careful because not all the digital objects at DPLA are reusable. Search for the right status of the objects in their individual entry to find out if you can reuse them or not.

Other aggregators & featured cultural heritage institutions

Europeana and DPLA were probably the first aggregators to see the light, but there are many others, since aggregators offer a wide range of benefits to both users and cultural heritage institutions.

It would take a significant amount of time to review all the search functionalities that every aggregator offers. However, we do want to point out to some other aggregators that you might want to dig into:

- Trove brings together a range of digital content coming from libraries, archives and museums of Australia.
- Digital New Zealand offers over 30 million items from more than 300 hundred institutions of New Zealand, offering not only content from cultural heritage institutions but also content coming from government departments, the media, community groups, and others.
- Mexicana is the aggregator of cultural heritage institutions from Mexico, offering a variety of digital collections and historical documents from the country.
- National Digital Library of India allows search through over 50 million resources coming from different knowledge communities in India.

- Tainacan is actually a software platform by the IBRAM (Brazilian Institute of Museums), but several institutions listed under the use cases page are offering their content online.

> **Caveat:** some of these aggregators offer *some* openly licensed content, so you need to make sure that you are following the copyright information in the description of the item or abiding by the terms of use of the website. In case of doubt about the copyright status of the objects, avoid using them.

Additionally, there are some cultural heritage institutions that need to be highlighted. These already appear in the "Survey of Open Access Policy and Practice" by Douglas McCarthy and Dr. Andrea Wallace mentioned above, but they deserve a special mention as places to search for multimedia content since they offer very high-quality and reusable multimedia content.

- The Open Access Initiative at the Smithsonian Institution offers +2.8 million items freely accessible and in most cases reusable. Make sure you check the rights field to understand whether you can reuse the digital reproductions or not.
- The Collections online search interface by the Auckland War Memorial Museum from New Zealand has an impressive amount of digital items in high quality content. In this case, be aware that some of the content might also not be reusable in respect of traditional cultural expressions by the Indigenous people from the Pacific area.
- Te Papa is also an institution from New Zealand that offers an amazing set of content.
- Qatar Digital Library covers modern history and culture of the Gulf and wider Arab region.
- The Rijksmuseum is a cultural heritage organization from the Netherlands and one of the first ones to adopt open licenses. They have a lot of content, from artworks to other types of works and content.
- The National Library of Spain changed their licensing policy this year, offering a lot of high quality content, including manuscripts, as public domain.
- The Nationalmuseum of Sweden has lots of interesting content and friendly search interfaces.

Other good cultural heritage institutions you could look for content are The Metropolitan Museum of Art & the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Internet Archive

Internet Archive is a project that offers multiple services. To begin with, as it has been mentioned here already, Internet Archive is responsible for the Wayback Machine, which functions as an archive for the web. It has also partnered with several heritage institutions around the world to digitize their public domain books and other content, offering over 20 million books and texts. It also has video, audio, TV, software, and much more. If you click in each individual icon at their front page, you can enter into each category directly.

image5.png
Image not found or type unknown

Internet Archive has content from very different sources, from cultural heritage organizations to community people that are interested in sharing their multimedia content with the world. Internet Archive also allows for material with any type of license, even including some content that might have an “all rights reserved” statement.

Internet Archive is massive. Make use of their search filters as much as you can, because they will retrieve more useful results than if you just make a very general search. Particularly important is to browse the collections in each category. For example, if you are searching for video, and you want some interesting beginning of the 20th century videos, then you will need to check the collection of the Prelinger archives. Internet Archive has content that no one else has, but sometimes you need to be patient and be willing to browse through their content.

Finding “rights” information in Internet Archive

The search interface doesn’t have any options to filter by license, so it’s up to the user to figure out where the license is located.

In this example file, “The Road to Apollo”, the description of the file has a field “Rights” that states that the file is public domain.

19_IA_rights.png
Image not found or type unknown

In other cases, such as in this example of The Voynich Manuscript, the information appears on top of the file description:

20_IA_rights2.png
Image not found or type unknown

Sometimes, like in this photo, example from The Met Museum, the field “Rights” will take you to an external URL to read the Terms & Conditions of the website where the photo is taken from.

And in some other cases you might not find any “Rights” field being displayed at all! In those cases, avoid using the files unless you are able to perform your own risk assessment.

Flickr

Flickr is a very popular website to upload all types of images and videos. Flickr was also an early adopter of CC licenses, which means that there is a wealth of content on Flickr that is openly licensed. Flickr offers the full range of CC licenses and tools (the six licenses and the two public domain tools). By using the search filters, you can pick from content that you can freely reuse. If you click on the three dotted lines on “Advanced”, Flickr will also offer you other options, like orientation, minimum size, date, and type of content. This is for example a search for “cucumber videos of medium size that allow for commercial use and modifications”. This narrowed down the results, retrieving this time-lapse video of cucumber seedlings that could be uploaded to Wikimedia Commons and used in the cucumber article, for example.

21_flickr_search.png
Image not found or type unknown

To build the attribution information, you can click on the “all sizes” button (for example in this image):

22_flickr_2.png
Image not found or type unknown

That will take you to the following page, where you can extract some of the information to build the attribution statement with the TASL approach:

23_flickr_TASL.png
Image not found or type unknown

Then you will need to add the title and provide the source.

Flickr Commons

Flickr Commons is the service that Flickr provides to cultural heritage institutions to upload their multimedia content. Often, content that has been uploaded to Flickr Commons is openly licensed or has a Public Domain Mark.

Other government or public institutions

More databases governments are starting to realize the benefits of openly licensing their content. They apply open licenses to databases, government websites, and even to press releases that normally include high quality photos and other types of multimedia content.

Often, Wikimedia volunteers upload these photos to Wikimedia Commons, meaning that they will likely be found there. However, since governments and state institutions are quite complex, it is hard to tell whether all the material that you might be able to find is on platforms such as Commons. A good idea is to check whether your national or local government does such releases. It is also a good idea to save the page that you are obtaining the content from with the Wayback Machine. Go back to "What happens if I use a material offered under a CC license and the author decides to remove or change the CC license?" if you have doubts on how to do that.

Vector graphics: The Noun Project

The Noun Project is a very popular tool among graphic designers, both professionals and amateurs. Their service offers over 3 million vector graphics that are under either a CC BY 3.0 license (attribution required) or a CC0 public domain waiver (optional attribution). This website is now also offering photos. They are offering them under very different CC licenses, some of them including the Non Commercial and Non Derivative elements. Make sure to check which license the photos are under.

Their search interface is also quite simple, allowing search through very random keywords. The only downside of their search interface is that it is very monolingual, so it really only allows keywords in English. Another interesting feature is that the service has different "collections" of icons that might be related to a topic. For example, if you search for the keyword "work" you will

find that the search results page offers several icons. But also in the top page, it will offer ***icons***, ***collections*** and now ***photos***.

24_nouncollections.png
Image not found or type unknown

“Collections” put together a set of icons that are related with a topic. In this case, the “work” collections offer related icons to the “work” concept. This is useful if you know that you need more than one icon to a topic that has several different concepts related to it, and you want to keep the same style of icons.

Additionally, the Noun Project is more and more committed to diversity and being a more global community, so they are now putting out more icons that bring new representations of diverse people. Check out their very interesting collection “Redefining women”

noun_project.gif
Image not found or type unknown

A last note to make on the use of icons from the Noun Project. If you try to download any given icon, the Noun Project will give you the “Pro Download” option (a paid one) and the “Basic download”, as it appears in this image:

25_noun_twooptions.png
Image not found or type unknown

The “Pro Download” says that it gives you a vector that you can “Fully customize icon color, rotation and background”. But if you click on the “Basic Download”, it will offer you two file formats: PNG and SVG. The terms of the CC BY license (or if it’s in the Public Domain) allow you to modify the vector. This means that if you want an icon in red or blue, you can still download the SVG, open it in your favourite vector software (for example, Inkscape or the SVG editor free webservice provided by Public Domain Vectors) and modify the icon as you see fit there. Don’t forget to attribute the author, as seen in the TASL approach section.

Vector graphics: Public Domain Vectors

Public Domain Vectors is another website that offers over 60,000 vector graphics of different types of drawings. This website offers all their materials under a CC0 waiver, meaning that attribution is welcome but optional. This means that unlike other websites, you don’t need to use any search filters for licensing. The website does offer useful search filters.

You can filter by file format, by downloads or date, and by number of vectors that you want to have retrieved in each search:

26_pd_vectors.png
Image not found or type unknown

Caption: between the search bar and the navigation bar, you have options to filter your search according to your needs.

Additionally, you can do a search on any given topic, for example, “fist” and select one image you like, like “Vector illustration of freedom movement hand with pencil”. The image will give you several details on the right, including the category to which it belongs (allowing you to navigate through similar, related categories), and other details such as the source; in the “Specs” you will find the file size, the date in which it was uploaded, and the number of downloads. At the bottom of the page you also have “Tags” and “Related searches” that could lead you to something in a similar line, if this doesn’t do the job you need.

27_pd_vectors_search.png
Image not found or type unknown

Images: Other websites

There are lots of websites that offer images either freely licensed or in the public domain. Every now and then you will find blog posts that highlight “public domain resources”, such as this one: “31 Free Public Domain Image Websites”. As that same article mentions, use these websites at your own risk, and always make sure that you understand the licenses and terms of conditions of the content that you are intending to use.

Sounds

Bandcamp

Bandcamp is an online music store and also a platform for independent music and artists. Most of the content in Bandcamp is marked as “All Rights Reserved”, meaning that if you want to use that material you need to seek permission from the author or artist.

Bandcamp has some special tags for music that you can freely reuse. Check the Creative Commons , the CreativeCommons (without spaces) and the Royalty-free music tag. However, this means that you might be spending a lot of time searching for something that matches the type of work that you are looking for. Luckily, there is a tool called Camp Explorer that allows you to search with different tags. In order to use the tool, you need to enter each tag that you want to search for and press the button that says “add”. For example, to replicate the search shown below you need to write “creative commons”, press the button “add”, write the style of music you want to search for (i.e. “funk”), press the button “add”, and it will retrieve you albums that match that criteria.


28_camp_explorer.png
Image not found or type unknown

From there, suppose you go into the album “A kind of Alchemy”. If you scroll down, you will find the license information, next to where the tags are. Remember to attribute using the TASL approach!


29_bandcamp_license.png
Image not found or type unknown

Soundcloud

SoundCloud is a platform where different people can share their audio recordings. These recordings can be music, podcasts, interviews, and much more. It also allows for uploading Creative Commons materials. Like Bandcamp, their search interface is sometimes hard to navigate. You can search for “Creative Commons music” and then filter by tag. Or you can also search with the “Creative Commons” tag.


30_soundcloud.png
Image not found or type unknown

However, you have to be extremely careful when reusing this content. Most of it says that is Creative Commons but the people uploading this content are actually not licensing it with a Creative Commons license. Always go to the track and search for the “show more” button to find the attribution information. See for example in this track “Phlex - Light Me Up (feat. Caitlin Gare) [Argofox]”


31_license_soundcloud.png
Image not found or type unknown

If that credit line doesn’t appear, then search for another resource that has it.

ccMixter

ccMixter is a platform where musicians can upload their music. ccMixter uses three different licenses, two of them are CC licenses (CC BY and CC BY-NC) and the other one is a special license designed by them that provides royalty free music for certain types of uses. To search for content, you need to go to their service Dig ccMixter. You can search by filters or just type a manual search.

32_digccmixter.png
Image not found or type unknown

Since the website offers only two licenses, it is more likely that you will find a CC BY content easier, particularly if you use the search filters wisely. The CC symbols are clearly displayed at the right corner of every track.

33_cclicensemixter.png
Image not found or type unknown

Free Music Archive

Free Music Archive is another platform for musicians and creators. It has great search features. Their search functionality also allows you to filter by license, track duration, and genre.

34_fmaccclicense.png
Image not found or type unknown

FMA also displays the CC licenses in very clear ways, and provides for a very complete TASL attribution that you can copy. See the example.

35_fmalicense.png
Image not found or type unknown

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1 Aggregators are websites that harvest or receive content from affiliated providing institutions, making it easier to search in one place for all the information.

Cheatsheets

Ethical and other considerations

	YES/NO	If you answer ...

Do you plan to modify the work that you are searching for?	YES	YES: Do not use any work licensed under the CC BY-ND or CC BY-NC-ND license.

Does the work depict a person in an event or situation that might put her security or life at risk	YES	YES: Search for another resource.

Do you plan to make a commercial use of the work afterwards?	YES	YES: Avoid using work sliced under the CCBY-NC or CCBY-NC-SA license.

Does the person or situation being depicted might contribute to signage	YES	YES: Search for another photo that represents the topic in a more abstract way or in a wa

Searching for content

Reusing content