

Copyright Registration

Do I need to register my work with the Copyright Office?

No. In the United States, copyright protection applies automatically as soon as a work is created and fixed in a tangible form, such as on paper or saved electronically. No notice or registration is required for your copyright to be valid.

Are there any advantages to registering my work with the Copyright Office?

Yes. If there is ever any litigation over your work, there are several important benefits to having a registered copyright:

1. Your work must be registered with the Copyright Office before you can file a lawsuit for infringement.
2. If your registration is timely, you may be eligible for statutory damages of up to \$150,000. If not, you will be entitled to only actual damages and profits.
3. If your registration is timely and your litigation is successful, you may also be awarded attorney's fees.
4. For more information, read the Copyright Office's page on [Stopping Copyright Infringement](#).

When should I register my work?

You can register your copyright anytime; however, there are significant advantages to timely registration, which means your application is filed either (i) within 3 months of publication or (ii) prior to any infringing activity.

If your work is a thesis or dissertation, when you submit your work through [ProQuest](#), you will be given the option of having them file the application with the United States Copyright Office on your behalf. Registration is not required for you to retain ownership of the copyright in your work. If you decide to register your copyright, you may be able to do it through ProQuest (\$75 fee), or you can file the registration yourself with the Copyright Office (\$45). If your work includes the work of anyone else other than quotations (e.g., images, charts, tables, sections based on co-authored articles), the ProQuest option is not available, and you must register directly with the Copyright Office.

How do I register my work?

1. Complete the application form online or in print
2. Pay the filing fee
3. Deposit a copy of the work

Which should I choose, online or paper registration?

The online registration system, [eCO](#) (Electronic Copyright Office), is the preferred way to register copyright claims if your type of work is accepted in eCO. [Copyright.gov](#) has details on what works can be registered using eCO.

The advantages of online filing are:

1. Lower filing fee

- online: \$45 for a [single application](#)
- online: \$65 for a standard application
- paper: \$125 for most applications

2. Faster processing time

- online: up to 8 months
- paper: up to 13 months

3. Online status tracking available

4. Works can be uploaded directly into eCO as electronic files

How do I use the online registration process?

1. Go to [eCO](#), and create an account using the "If you are a new user, click here to register" link in the User Login box.
2. Complete the registration form to create an account.

3. Under "Copyright Registration" on the left side of the screen, choose "Register a New Claim."
4. Complete the information required on each of the screens: Type of Work, Titles, Publication/Completion, Authors, Claimants, Limitation of Claim, Rights & Permissions, Mail Certificate, Special Handling, and Certification. Review your submission and add it to your cart.
5. Pay the fee online with credit/debit card, ACH transfer via Pay.gov, or with a deposit account.
6. Click Continue on the payment confirmation page. If you have an [acceptable file type](#), choose Upload Deposit to submit your work online. If not, choose Create Shipping Slip to submit a hard copy.
7. After you submit your online application, you will get an email acknowledging receipt. It can take up to 8 months for the Copyright Office to mail you your certificate. If you haven't heard back from them after 8 months, fill out the [Status Request](#) form to check on the status of your request.
8. After your copyright has been registered, you will receive a certificate from the Copyright Office.

How can I get more information about eCO?

The [eCO Tutorial](#), [eCO FAQ](#), and [eCO Help Desk](#) have details of the registration process.

For help with technical issues, go to the Troubleshooting link in the [FAQ](#).

If I can't use eCO, how do I file using the paper form?

First, you will need to choose the appropriate paper form for your work - [Form TX](#) is for Literary Works. If you have a non-literary work (visual arts, performing arts, sound recordings), choose the appropriate form from the Copyright Office's [Forms](#) page and follow the instructions on the form. Further information about filing using the paper forms is available from the Copyright Office on the [What Form Should I Use?](#) page.

Paper applications can take up to 13 months to process. If you haven't heard back after 13 months, fill out the [Status Request](#) form.

Need Help from the Copyright Office?

Read their [Frequently Asked Questions about Copyright](#) or call their toll-free number at 1-877-467-0778.



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