

Guide to using public domain tools



What Is Creative Commons?

Creative Commons is a global nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting an open and accessible Internet that is enriched with free knowledge and creative resources for people around the world to use, share, and cultivate.

Our easy-to-use licenses provide a simple, standardized way to give the public permission to share and use your creative work — on conditions of your choice. CC licenses let you change your copyright terms from the default of “all rights reserved” to “some rights reserved.”

Millions of people use CC licenses on some of the world’s most popular platforms for user-generated content. When you use a CC license to share your photos, videos, or blog, your creation joins a globally accessible pool of resources that includes the work of artists, educators, scientists, and governments.



Creative Commons has waived all copyright and related or neighboring rights to this guide using the CC0 Public Domain Dedication.



Public domain works are valuable because anyone can freely build upon, enhance, and reuse them for any purposes without restriction under copyright or database law.

That’s why it’s important for creators to have a clear and legally robust way to place their works in the public domain as completely as possible, and it’s also important for publishers and archives to have a standardized way to identify works that are already in the public domain.

Creative Commons supports two distinct public domain tools, the **CC0 Public Domain Dedication** and the **Public Domain Mark**. Creative Commons copyright licenses help authors manage their copyright on terms they choose. Conversely, CC0 enables authors and copyright owners who want to dedicate their works to the worldwide public domain to do so, and PDM facilitates the labeling and discovery of works that are already free of known copyright restrictions.

Where public domain tools fit in the copyright spectrum



The CC0 Public Domain Dedication

Use this universal tool if you are a holder of copyright or database rights, and wish to waive all your rights to the work worldwide.



By using CC0, you waive all copyright and related rights together with all associated claims and causes of action with respect to this work to the extent possible under the law.

Applying CC0 to your work is easy. Simply visit the CC0 chooser (<http://creativecommons.org/choose/zero>) which will lead you through the process. When completed, you will be provided with HTML code that you can copy and paste into your website.

You let others copy, modify, distribute, and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, all without asking permission.

What is the difference between CC0 and the Public Domain Mark?



CC0 (“CC Zero”) is intended for use only by authors or holders of copyright and related rights (including database rights), in connection with works that are still subject to those rights in one or more countries.

When CC0 is applied to a work, copyright and related rights are relinquished worldwide, making the work free from those restrictions to the greatest extent possible.



The Public Domain Mark (PDM) is used to label works that are already free of known copyright restrictions. Unlike CC0, PDM doesn’t change the copyright status of a work.

PDM can be used by anyone, and is intended for use with works that are already free of known copyright restrictions throughout the world.

Public Domain Mark

Use this tool if you have identified a work that is free of known copyright restrictions.



Works marked with the Public Domain Mark have been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighboring rights. Anyone can copy, modify, distribute, and perform such works, even for commercial purposes, all without asking permission.

Applying the PDM to a work is easy. Simply visit the PDM chooser (<http://creativecommons.org/choose/mark>) which will lead you through the process. When completed, you will be provided with the HTML code that you can copy and paste into your website.

Creative Commons does not recommend this tool for works that are restricted by copyright laws in one or more jurisdictions. Consult with your legal advisor if you are unsure whether you should use the PDM for a certain work.