

copyright 101 and when to use the little c

podcast episode 29 tip sheet

You may not know it, but copyright principles apply to EVERYTHING you do as an online entrepreneur or small business owner, including social media, blog posts, e-books, books, program materials, course handouts, emails, website content, sales pages...you name it!

You may be unsure what Copyright even is or when to use the little Copyright symbol. In this episode, you'll learn Copyright 101 – the basics – and when you can use Copyright symbol.

Did you know that when you create something that is an ORIGINAL WORK, you get the Copyright rights to it just by virtue of creating it? Copyright covers:

- Images
- Photos
- Designs
- Words
- Graphics
- Music
- Videos
- Audios
- Books
- E-books

And more!

What are Copyright rights?

As I shared back in Episode 16 on “How to Legally Use Images on Social Media”, Copyright rights are intellectual property rights granted by a country to the author of an original creative work.

Copyright covers literary works (like books and magazines), dramatic works (like plays), musical works (like songs and audio recordings), and artistic works (like photographs) and then it even covers things like computer software and choreography!

Copyright protects the unique EXPRESSION of ideas – not the ideas themselves. Just like Elizabeth Gilbert writes about in her book Big Magic (one of my faves!), concepts and ideas belong to ALL of us. But, we are allowed to protect and own our unique creative expression of those ideas which means that you are allowed to claim, own and get paid for your work.

When do your Copyright rights begin?

Copyright rights begin when the author creates an “original work” in a “fixed” way in a “tangible medium of expression”. It means that the second that the work is expressed, Copyright rights start forming. Let's flesh this out...

First, the work has to be ORIGINAL. It has to be a unique collection or expression created by you, not copied or stolen from someone else.

Second, it has to be FIXED. This means that it's gone from your head to paper. When it's no longer a mere thought, it's considered FIXED when it's expressed.

Third, it has to be a TANGIBLE medium of expression. It has to be grasped and communicated in a way that others can see or feel or hear or observe or experience.

When you create your website, or your book, e-book, audio recording, blog post, You Tube video, social media image – and more – and you're creating something original, you can claim your right as the author of that work once you've created it and put it out into the world.

When can you use the “Little C”?

You can use the “Little C” with the circle around it – which I just call the “Little C” for short. When you use the Little C, you are saying, “This is my work that I wrote and own. Please do not take it. Please do not copy it. Please do not steal it. Please respect my rights to my creative work.” You are taking an action to honor your own work by displaying the Little C.

Practically AND energetically, you are CLAIMING your work. You are standing behind it and putting people on notice that it's your creation. Your baby. Your expression of your ideas.

On a spiritual level, you may not realize that when you use the Little C, you also support your 5th chakra – your **throat chakra**. I associate Copyrights with your throat chakra because the throat chakra governs communications and speaking your truth – things that we do through our written words, audio recordings, visual images, and original works of art.



The Little C puts an energetic boundary around your words to hold and protect your work. By displaying this symbol to show respect for your own words, you raise your business vibe and you attract others who respect your work too. Having Copyright rights gives you power.

However, when it comes ENFORCING your Copyright rights and stopping other people from infringing on your rights, well, that's a different story.

What do you do if someone has infringed on your Copyright rights?

If you think that someone has swiped your stuff, copied your website or stolen your work and they have posted your content on their website, you can first take a step which is called issuing a DMCA Takedown Notice.

What's a DMCA Takedown Notice?

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act allows people to assert that their Copyright rights have been trampled on and you can take steps to issue the DMCA Takedown Notice. This is notice to the infringer that is written with certain language that is outlined in the DMCA that basically tells the person that you are the lawful owner of the content and they need to stop using it because they are infringing on your Copyright rights.

However, to STOP someone else from using your work by suing them in federal court for copyright infringement, you have to REGISTER your Copyright through the US Copyright Office.

The benefits to filing a Copyright with the US Copyright Office:

1. You have on public record that you're the rightful owner of the original creative work and the date that the record was established.
2. It enables you to bring a lawsuit in federal court for Copyright infringement in violation of the US Copyright statute.
3. It allows you to record the copyright registration with the US Customs Office so you can prevent infringing copies or bootlegs from coming into the US.

What should you register with the US Copyright Office?

It generally only makes sense to copyright creative works that are going to be UNCHANGED in the future – like a book, video, song, poem, movie. I often get asked if an entrepreneur should copyright their website or blog and I usually don't encourage it (except in special cases) because if there's one thing I know about coaches and online entrepreneurs is that they like to change things all the time.

You CAN file a Copyright for a blog or a podcast where you're continually adding new content, but unless you're going to stay on top of it, it makes more sense to put your Copyright bucks on the works you create that are more permanent – say, if you publish a book like a printed book.

How do you write the Copyright symbol correctly?

You put The Little C copyright symbol first followed by your name. If you have an LLC or a corporation, then you generally use the LLC/corporation name instead of your own personal name. You can put the year, but it's not required. Usually the year is only listed when you've registered your Copyright with the US Copyright Office to show the year your filing was granted.

Not only that, but when you set forth clear expectations and boundaries around how you work with your clients, you are strengthening your own energetic boundaries and drawing lines that allow you to stand as a leader in your business.

Have questions about making guarantees or suggestions for future podcast topics? Feel free to reach out to us at clientlove@lisafraley.com. We'd love to hear from you!

With Legal Love,



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Lisa Fraley, JD, CHHC, AADP, is an acclaimed attorney, Legal Coach®, speaker and #1 Best Selling Author of "Easy Legal Steps...That are Also Good for Your Soul." With her unique blend of coaching, legal expertise, and spirituality, Lisa has supported thousands of heart-centered entrepreneurs and small business owners to protect themselves, their businesses and their brands through DIY legal templates, online legal courses and one-on-one services.

From sharing international stages with thought leaders like Kris Carr and Gabrielle Bernstein to being featured on hundreds of podcasts, webinars, radio shows and bonus calls, Lisa has made it her mission to help every single small business owner understand that the law can be accessible, empowering, loving, and even spiritual. When she's not saving the world (with Legal Love) one contract at a time, she's posting free legal tips and connecting with her tribe at lisafraley.com.