

Get Creative with Creative Commons

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With multimedia projects becoming increasingly popular in art classrooms, teachers and students need to be aware that the use of copyright-protected materials restricts their ability to share their work with others. The fair use provision of U.S. Copyright Law (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_use) allows some freedom to use other people's creative work inside classrooms without obtaining permission from the copyright holders; however, the same clause does not permit distributing or displaying a work online that contains copyrighted material.

Let's say, for example, that a group of your students creates a video for a class project in which they remix audio recordings, video clips, or photographic images downloaded from the Web with their own original content. Showing the video in the classroom wouldn't be a problem. But if any materials used in making the video are copyrighted, the students would risk possible legal action if their video is uploaded to the school's website or a video-sharing site (like TeacherTube.com) for public display.

Fortunately, there is now an alternative to traditional copyright protection. Creative Commons, or CC, is a voluntary online licensing initiative in which content producers allow others to copy, alter, and distribute their work under conditions they specify such as giving proper credit to the original source of the material used (known as a CC

Attribution License). Creative Commons includes a range of licensing possibilities that fall between full copyright protection (i.e., all rights reserved) and public domain (i.e., no rights reserved). In essence, content producers can use CC licenses to retain copyright over their work while inviting creative reuse of the work by others (i.e., with a "some rights reserved" mark).

Since its inception in 2001, Creative Commons has grown into an international movement with millions of content creators choosing to release their work under a CC license. On the popular photo-sharing site Flickr, for instance, there are more than 52 million photographs with CC licenses attached to them (flickr.com/creativecommons). Over 6 million of these images simply require attribution to reuse them, while 7.6 million more can be reused under the Attribution-NonCommercial License as long

as you credit the source and you're not making money off the use. With so many images freely available for reuse—as long as you follow the license terms—it's easy to see why Creative Commons licensing has become so hugely popular.

It's important for teachers and students to learn about Creative Commons, both as content consumers as well as content providers. The best place to start is on the Creative Commons website (creativecommons.org), which includes instructions on licensing your work, explanations of the various CC licenses, and what you need to do if you choose to use a Creative Commons-licensed work. There is also a helpful learning area on the site (creativecommons.org/learnmore) that includes several short videos and two comics that explain Creative

Commons and how CC licenses work, all suitable for classroom viewing.

Once you have a basic understanding of how CC licenses work, you'll probably want to go searching for CC-licensed materials to use in your multimedia presentations and classroom projects. If so, check out the Creative Commons Search engine on Yahoo! (search.yahoo.com/cc) that allows you to search for CC-licensed images, video clips, music, audio recordings, and more. But, before you use this search tool in the classroom, be sure to turn on the "Safe Search" option on the Advanced Search page. ☺

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