

4.7.26: Using Images Legally

Learning Outcome

- Discuss how to legally source images for your communications

All of the images you see on the internet are someone's property, and if you copy them and paste them into your communication, you're most likely stealing (unless the images are royalty-free or free, as we'll discuss below). Additionally, the [Fair Use](#) Act makes it okay to use an image "for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research..." If your work falls into one of those categories, you're safe. Otherwise, your use of the image is considered a violation of copyright law.

Royalty-Free Images

Luckily, there are royalty-free sources of images, videos, and other visual media out there. (A royalty is a payment made to the copyright owner for each use that doesn't fall under the Fair Use law.) A word of caution: "royalty-free" doesn't necessarily mean "free." On the contrary, sites like [Getty Images](#) or [Shutterstock](#) often charge licensing fees and even instructions by which you give the original artist credit for his or her work. But once that transaction is complete, the visual media is yours to use as you wish. There's no need to pay royalties for copies sold or time of use.

Open Images

There are plenty of free sources out there, though. Some authors and artists have "released" their works under an open license. This means their works are free to use, modify, and share.

Many of them work with a Creative Commons license. Creative Commons is a US not-for-profit organization that's devoted to expanding the range of creative works available to the general public, and it does so by providing copyright licenses to creators allowing them to express which rights they want to reserve and which they waive. These licenses replace individual negotiations between artist and user. In many cases, images covered by the Creative Commons license can be used free of charge if you simply credit the artist. This might mean captioning your photo with "Joe Photographer/Getty Images" or "Credit: Joe Photographer." You can learn more about the different Creative Commons Licenses on their site.

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Figure 1. Example of attributing an author's work

Finding Open Images

- [Pixabay](#): There are over a million free stock photos to choose from on this site, all high quality and high resolution.
- [Unsplash](#): This site has a great selection of business photos to choose from. This website has the option of signing up for an email service to get ten free photos in your inbox every ten days.
- [Flickr](#): There's a section of free use photos here as well, about 415 million of them under the Creative Commons license. You simply need to filter your Flickr search by license (Figure 2).

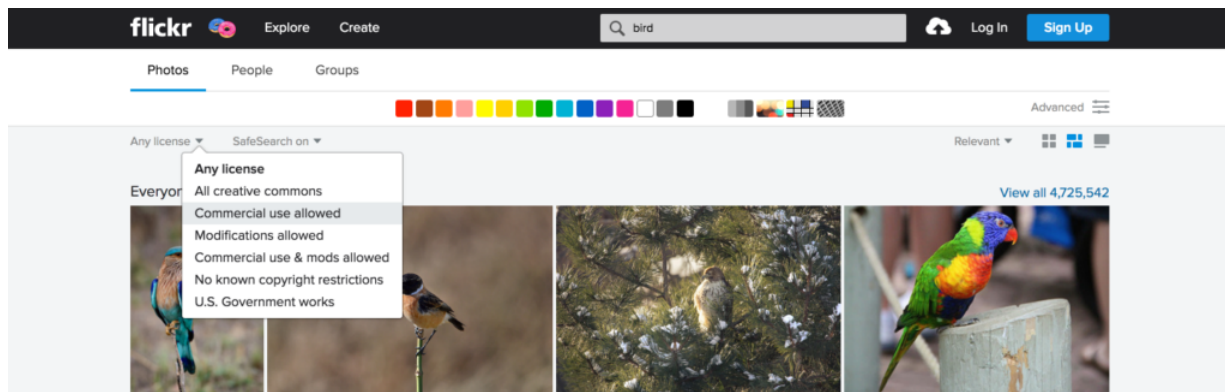


Figure 2. Filtering Flickr for permissions

- [Google Images](#). A simple Google image search now has the function of searching for image based on usage rights. Click on “Tools” and then the “Usage rights” will appear for you to choose the type of license that fits your needs.

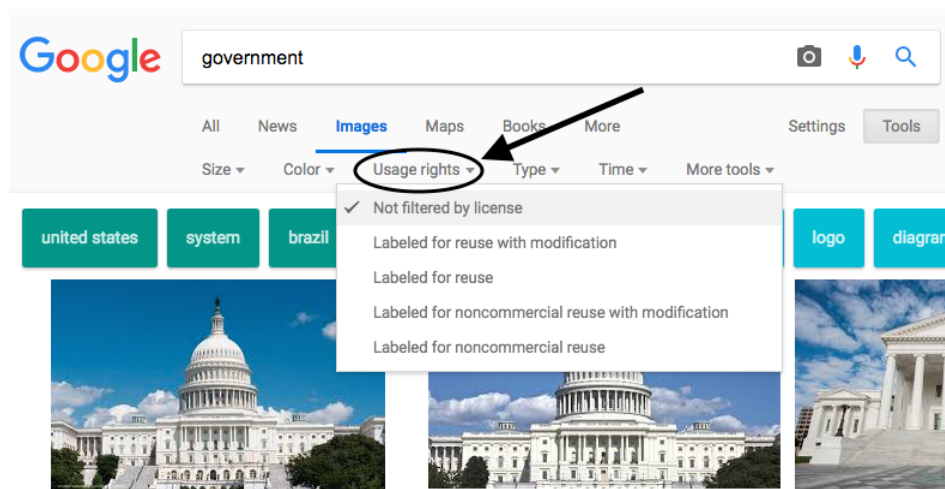


Figure 3. Filtering a Google Image search by license

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