



the national archives

# Copyright guidelines

Guidelines about copyright  
affecting information supplied  
by The National Archives

**Neither these guidelines nor any guidance offered by any of our staff constitute legal advice. Anyone reproducing material held by us, whether from transcripts or from photographic or reprographic copies lawfully supplied by us, is responsible for any infringement of copyright that might result.**

## **What is copyright?**

Copyright is a legal right over 'intellectual property' that is the result of human skill, judgment or labour. Copyright restricts how anyone can reproduce, issue to the public, lend, rent or adapt in whole or in substantial part, any original literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work, or any sound recording or film, without permission from the copyright owner. It applies for a limited (though quite long) period, set by law.

## **How can I use the information I have received?**

The information that we have supplied may be protected by copyright, which could be owned by the Crown, a private individual, a company or an overseas government, or the copyright might have expired. The type of copyright will affect what you are able to do with the information you have received.

## **Crown copyright material and material that is not in copyright among the records**

Since 1999, Crown copyright has been waived (set aside) in the contents of most unpublished public records that we hold. You can index, transcribe (put into writing), publish and broadcast the contents of crown copyright material and material that is not in copyright without needing formal permission, having to pay a copyright fee or acknowledging copyright (on the material itself). You can use the material in an exhibition or lecture. You should acknowledge the fact that we hold the original document, and give the archive reference. We will treat Crown copyright material among our non-public records in the same way. You can get advice on identifying Crown copyright material from our copyright officer.

## Private copyright material

We do not authorise the publication or use of copyright works that are not in Crown copyright. The copyright owner has the exclusive right to authorise copying, issuing to the public, performance, broadcast, adaptation, rental or lending of his or her work until the copyright expires. Once copyright has expired, you don't need permission from the copyright owner for any of these activities.

If we have supplied a copy of information that is held in a private copyright work among the records, we cannot give you permission to publish or use substantial extracts from it or to make further copies. Such use or re-copying may break copyright terms and conditions, unless you have permission from the copyright owner.

You can use copyright material for private study or research for a non-commercial purpose, criticism or review. Research for a non-commercial purpose includes academic research, but not publishing the results. You must acknowledge the author and source unless it is impossible to do so. You should not issue copies of the work to the public, or make the work available to the public on the internet unless the copyright owner has given permission. Reproducing a work in an exhibition catalogue also usually counts as publication.

You do not need permission from the copyright owner to publish or broadcast a literary, dramatic or musical work if:

- the work is open to public inspection in a library, museum, archive or similar institution;
- the work was created more than 100 years ago;
- the author has been dead for at least 50 years; and
- the publisher or broadcaster does not know who the current copyright owner is.

Please note that all unpublished literary works will be protected by copyright until the end of 2039 at the earliest. For the most part, artistic works are in copyright until 70 years after the death of the author or artist.

## How can I get permission to re-use private copyright material?

We cannot grant permission for you to reproduce works in non-Crown copyright, nor do we normally know who the copyright owners are. You are responsible for getting any necessary permission, and for any breach of copyright terms or conditions.

## Reproducing images of documents

If you want to publish (in print, on-line or by broadcasting) an image of any document in The National Archives, you must get a reproduction licence from our Image Library as well as any necessary licence from the copyright owner. You can contact:  
The Image Library, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU.

E-mail: [image-library@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:image-library@nationalarchives.gov.uk)  
Phone: 020 8392 5225  
Fax: 020 8487 1974

## Copyright enquiries

If you have any questions about copyright in any of our material, or about copyright in archival material generally, you can contact:  
The Copyright Officer, The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU.

Phone: 020 8392 5381 E-mail: [copyright@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:copyright@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

