Copyright basics

Copyright – what is it?

Copyright protects those who create works of art. Art has a broad meaning within this context. Even the design of a chair or graffiti can be protected by copyright (even if the graffiti was created illegally and is considered to be vandalism). In addition, the Copyright Act (CopA) protects the work of performers, music and film producers as well as broadcasting organisations.

Ideas, concepts or instructions (e.g. game rules or recipes) are, however, not protected.

Unlike patent and trade mark protection, copyright protection arises automatically when the work of art is created. There is no copyright register. Copyright protection is of limited duration. Once the period of protection expires, the work falls into the public domain and can then be freely used by everyone. Up until then, however, protection is all-inclusive, which means you need permission to use any copyrighted work.

You need permission to use a copyrighted work – always!

You can get permission through various avenues:

› You can ask the rights owner if you may use his or her work. Under some circumstances, the collective rights management organisations can help you with this. They manage the rights of many artists and therefore usually have the possibility of granting permission for using a work.

› In some cases, the law allows you to use a published work. For example, you, your relatives and your close friends are allowed to use a copyrighted work without having to ask the rights owner for their permission. There are also special rules for using a copyrighted work in a classroom and within companies. However, these special rules don't usually apply to computer programs. For these, you have to get
permission from the copyright owner for each individual use.

DOCUMENTS & LINKS

- Copyright brochure (in German)
- Public Domain Fact Sheet EN.pdf

RELATED TOPICS

- Collective management