

TEACH Act Guidelines for Students

The TEACH Act is a relatively new part of copyright law that allows students and instructors to use copyright-protected materials for instructional purposes without obtaining prior permission from the work's author. The TEACH Act does not allow students to use copyrighted works in many instances, however. In addition, the legislation outlines strict guidelines for students in terms of how they should handle copyright-protected materials posted to a course website by an instructor. The following list outlines some of those rules and guidelines.

1. Instructors may post copyright-protected articles, images, photographs, and other digital content online for you to access as part of a given instructional activity. The TEACH Act states that while such content may be uploaded by the instructor, students may not legally download, print, copy, or further disseminate any of that material, even if that content is being used for instructional purposes. In other words, a good rule of thumb is that you should view online content online. If you are not sure whether or not something online is available for you to print or download, ask your instructor.
2. In most cases, copyright-protected materials posted to an online course or website under the TEACH Act are only posted legally if access to those materials is limited to students who are formally enrolled in the course. For that reason, avoid sharing your course login information with students and friends who are not enrolled in the class itself.
3. When it comes to using copyrighted works yourself under the protection of TEACH, keep in mind that the TEACH Act is designed to apply to nonprofit educational contexts. That means that if your intention is to use a work for something other than a specific course-related assignment or activity facilitated under the supervision of an instructor, then such use is not going to be protected by TEACH.
4. It is always okay for you to use discrete ideas and quotations from copyright-protected works in a classroom-related assignment or activity without prior permission from the author (and without worrying about TEACH), as long as you attribute those ideas and quotations properly. For example, if you want to quote an excerpt from a [Newsweek](#) article in a research paper of yours, you may do so without asking permission from the author as long as you cite your source within the paper.
5. Other uses of copyright-protected materials for classroom-related activities may be a bit more tricky. Consult this [TEACH Act Worksheet](#) to determine whether or not it is okay for you to use larger pieces of in a work (i.e., a whole article) or certain types of works (e.g., images and audio files) in a classroom-related assignment or activity without obtaining prior permission. In places where the document says "in your teaching," substitute the phrase, "in your course-related assignment."
6. If it appears as though your use of a particular work is not covered under the TEACH Act, then check to see whether or not that work may be used under Fair Use. Fair Use is an additional piece of copyright law that permits students to use copyright-protected works for educational purposes without obtaining prior approval.

7. Don't be afraid to ask permission. If neither Fair Use nor TEACH affords you the legal right to use a particular work, then write to the author of the work and try to obtain permission on your own. Most authors of content are more than happy to share their works with others, as long as those works aren't used for commercial purposes.
8. If you do obtain permission from an author to use a particular work, make sure you get it in writing (an email is fine), and keep a copy of the written permission.
9. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to abide by current copyright law and to refrain from using works and materials in ways that are not legally permissible. If you are unsure whether or not something is legal, ask. A good person to approach about copyright issues is your university's reference librarian.