

Where to Find Media for Classroom Projects



Copyright-Friendly Pictures, Videos, & Sounds

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Introduction:

The Internet makes it easy to find and quickly download pictures, videos, and audio files. Even those files that have some kind of DRM (digital rights management) applied to them can be downloaded with any number of free and suspicious tools on the web, just ask any middle schooler to confirm that statement. Just because you can download it doesn't mean that you can use it. Even if it is for a classroom project, you still can't just ignore copyright. While the rules for academic use are a little looser than commercial use, saying "it's for a school project" doesn't get you out of playing by the copyright rules. Every year I have teachers turn to me for advice after receiving copyright violation notices from copyright holders.

Self-created media:

The best way to avoid any kind of copyright infringement concerns is to use media that you have created yourself. For many topics that it isn't possible for students to take and use their own picture (my students in Maine are going to be hard pressed to take a picture of an iguana in its natural habitat) so look for media that is in the public domain. If you can't find a suitable image, video, or audio recording in the public domain then it's time to look for media that has a Creative Commons license. Only after failing to find

media that is either self-made, in the public domain, or Creative Commons licensed should you turn to making a Fair Use claim to use a copyrighted work.

Using pictures that you took, videos you recorded, or spoken words that you recorded is an almost foolproof way to avoid any copyright concerns. There are a few exceptions to this to consider. For example, in the early days of TED-Ed I made a screencast video in which I taught viewers how to use TED-Ed lessons. In that video I showed how to find and play a TED-Ed video. TED-Ed hit me with a copyright violation claim because I had made a video that included their video. Even though my intent wasn't to copy TED-Ed and, it could be argued that I was helping more people discover TED-Ed, I had still unintentionally committed a copyright violation.

Public Domain Explained

Public Domain media consists of pictures, videos, and audio that was either never covered by copyright, had the copyright expire, or was otherwise released into the public domain by the creator. Media created by an employee of a U.S. government agency as a part of that person's job is an example of media that is immediately in the public domain. Detailed examples of how works get into the public domain can be found in [Stanford University Libraries' Copyright & Fair Use guide](#).

Creative Commons Explained

Creative Commons is voluntary licensing that artists, musicians, photographers, videographers, and writers can apply to their works. There are four conditions that can be applied to Creative Commons licenses so read the attribution requirements carefully before using a Creative Commons-licensed work. Read about the conditions of Creative Commons [here on the Creative Commons website](#).

Fair Use - A Murky Area

Fair Use is a murky area when it comes to media use. Contrary to popular belief there are not hard and fast rules about how much of a work you can use without violating copyright. Even for academic use there are certain standards that must be met in order to make a legitimate Fair Use claim. Stanford University Libraries' Copyright & Fair Use guide provides an excellent [overview of the conditions that must be met for Fair Use](#).

Places to Find Images for Classroom Projects

[Photos for Class](#) is a free site that helps students find Creative Commons licensed and public domain images. The images that they download from [Photos for Class](#) come with attribution information embedded into the footer of the image.

[Unsplash](#) offers a huge library of images that are in the public domain. Unsplash makes it very clear that you don't have to give attribution when you use the images, but they do encourage you to do so. Downloading images from Unsplash doesn't require registration. If you or your students are using Google Slides, the Unsplash add-on for Google Slides makes it easy to quickly take images from Unsplash and add them to your slides.

For years [Pixabay](#) has been my go-to source of public domain images. You can search on Pixabay by using keywords or you can simply browse through the library of images. When you find an image you can download it in the size that suits your needs. Registered users do not have to enter a captcha code to download images. Users who do not register can download images, but they do have to enter a captcha code before downloading each picture. There is a safe search mode in Pixabay that you should use in classroom settings. Pixabay offers directions on how to enable safe search settings:

<https://pixabay.com/blog/posts/block-adult-content-on-pixabay-at-your-school-or-w-140/>

The [Library of Congress](#) can be a good place to find images to use in classroom projects, if you know where to look on the site. I recommend looking in the [Free to Use and Reuse collections](#). Those are collections of images that are thematically arranged. Here's a brief overview of how to find images on the LOC's website

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUF-ZvuNejs>

[Pexels](#) is much like the aforementioned Pixabay and Unsplash. On Pexels you can search for pictures according to keywords then download any of the pictures with just one click. Registration is not required in order to download images of any size.

[PikWizard](#) is a free site that offers thousands of high quality images that you can download and re-use for free. PikWizard provides clear guidance on how you can use each picture that you find on the site. You will find that guidance posted to the right of any picture that you select from search results. PikWizard also provides clear directions on how to give credit to the photographers whose pictures you use.

[Stockio](#) is a website that offers free images to download and re-use in your own projects. According to the notices that accompany each file on Stockio, attribution is not required but is appreciated. To download an image, an icon, or a font set from [Stockio](#) you do not have to register on the site. Simply browse or search then hit the download button when you find something that you like.

Wikipedia and the Wikimedia Commons can be good places to find images that are in the public domain as well as images that have Creative Common licenses. I haven't found a great way to search for images on Wikipedia and Wikimedia so I just enter a search for a topic, person, or place and then scroll through the page to look for an image. It's not the most efficient process, but it works for me. Just make sure that you check the licensing statement on the image before you re-use it.

Places to Find Videos for Classroom Projects

The [National Screening Room](#) currently offers about 300 videos. The videos are digital copies of films made in the 19th and 20th centuries. You can browse the collection by date, location of the filming, and subject. You can also search for videos that are parts of other LOC collections. All of the videos in the National Screening Room can be viewed online and or downloaded as MP4 files.

[Flickr](#) is known for hosting millions of images, but it also hosts lots of videos. The advanced search tools within Flickr make it possible to find videos that have Creative Commons licenses or have a public domain designation. With just one click those videos can be downloaded to your computer.

[Coverr](#) is a website that offers free B-roll video clips that you can download and reuse in your own projects. Most of the videos are silent and are short clips of less than a minute. Downloading them takes just one click. Registration is not required in order to download from Coverr and, according to Coverr's terms of service, attribution is not required although it is appreciated. You can search for videos on [Coverr](#) by entering simple keywords like "dog" and "cat." The other option for discovering videos on Coverr is to simply browse through the thematic collections of stock video clips.

[Pixabay](#) is one of my go-to sites for public domain images. Pixabay also offers public domain video clips that you can download for free. To find video clips on Pixabay simply choose "video" from the drop-down menu that appears in the right edge of Pixabay's search box.

[Stockio](#), like Pixabay, offers a mix of public domain pictures and videos to download for free. To download a video from Stockio simply click the "download" button that appears to the right of all videos. Registration is not required in order to download videos from Stockio.

[Pexels Videos](#) offers hundreds of short videos that you can download for free and re-use in your own video productions. You can browse the collection or search according to keywords. The videos are stock footage and very few have any spoken words in them. To download a video from Pexels you just have to click the green download button next to the video you want to use. You don't have to register on the site in order to download Pexels Videos. Attribution is not required for most videos, but double-check before using a video that you've downloaded from [Pexels Videos](#).

The [Internet Archive](#) hosts The Moving Image Archive which contains more than 1.7 million video clips. Most of what you will find in the Moving Image Archive can be downloaded in a variety of file formats. You can search the archive by keyword or browse through the many categories and thematic collections in the archive. One important thing to note about the Internet Archive is that you probably don't want students to search it without supervision. In fact, I'd probably just create a folder of footage from an archive that I share with my students.

Places to Find Audio for Classroom Projects

[Dig CC Mixer](#) offers thousands of songs that are Creative Commons licensed. The site is divided into three main categories. Those categories are Instrumental Music for Film & Video, Free Music for Commercial Projects, and Music for Video Games. Within each category you can search according to genre, instrument, and style. When you click the download icon on a file you will be prompted to copy the attribution information that is required to include in your project.

[Pixabay's audio collection](#) features instrumental recordings across a wide range of genres. You can listen to the tracks in their entirety before downloading them. Like all other media on Pixabay, you can download and reuse the sound tracks for free. And as they state in the terms of use, you don't have to cite them but it is appreciated.

[Freeplay Music](#) hosts thousands of music files that your students can download to use in their multimedia projects. The Freeplay Music education license allows students and teachers to use the music for free within the confines of the school. Publishing those

projects on YouTube requires a slightly different though still free license. You can [find the details of the licenses here](#).

[Musopen's collection](#) of free recordings contains performances of the works of hundreds of composers. The collection can be searched by composer, by performer, by instrument, or by form. You can stream the music from Musopen for free. You can also download five recordings per day for free from Musopen.

[Sound Bible](#) is a resource for finding and downloading free sound clips, sound effects, and sound bites. All of the sounds on [Sound Bible](#) are either public domain or labeled with a Creative Commons license. You can find sounds for use in podcasts, videos, slideshows, or other multimedia creations.

The next time you need common sounds like doorbells ringing, dogs barking, or car horns honking to use in a multimedia project you could try to record those sounds yourself or you could turn to [SoundGator](#) to find free recordings that you can download. SoundGator offers free sound recording downloads. There are twenty-three recording categories that you can browse through to find the perfect sound for your project. You do have to register on [SoundGator](#) in order to download recordings. After registering you can download recordings directly to your computer to re-use in your projects.

[Bensound](#) offers a few hundred music tracks that you can download for free. Those tracks are arranged in eight categories. Those categories are acoustic/folk, cinematic, corporate/pop, electronica, urban/groove, jazz, rock, and world. You can listen to the tracks before you download them. When you click the download button you will see the clear rules about using the music. You can download and use the music in your video projects for free provided that you credit Bensound for the music. Alternatively, you can purchase a license to use the music wherever you want without crediting Bensound.

The [Internet Archive](#) hosts millions of audio files that can be downloaded for free. You can search the archive by keyword or browse through the many categories and thematic collections in the archive. An important thing to note about the Internet Archive is that you probably don't want students to search it without supervision. In fact, I'd probably just create a folder of footage from an archive that I share with my students.