



Common Sense on Respecting Creative Work

For Elementary Students

Some Facts

- By age 5, children understand that others have ideas, and they dislike it when someone copies someone else's idea (Olson and Shaw, *Developmental Science*, 2010)
- The percentage of children ages 8 to 18 who reported downloading software, music, movies, or games without paying decreased from 60 percent in 2004 to 36 percent in 2007 (Business Software Alliance and Harris Interactive, 2007)
- 25 percent of middle school students reported that they sometimes go online to copy and paste articles and submit them as their own for schoolwork (Ma et al., *American Secondary Education*, 2007)

What's the Issue?

Our kids are used to having all types of creative work available at their fingertips. People's writing, artwork, videos, and images can be inspiring. But we often forget about copyright law, which protects people's creative work. Even though kids may feel they have the right to use anything they find online, the Internet is not a free-for-all. Kids are responsible for following copyright law and respecting creative work online. There are exceptions such as fair use, which allows kids to use a small amount of copyrighted material without permission in certain situations, such as for schoolwork.

Why It Matters

Younger children may not realize that copying and pasting material they find online is plagiarism. They may not understand that the illegal downloading and sharing of music and movies is piracy, which is like stealing. Kids need to be educated about how they can use work they find online, and how to properly cite the work they use. It's important to teach kids about the hard work that goes into creating something like a book, movie, song, video game, or website. They should also think about how they would want to protect their own creative work.

common sense says

Help your kid make a habit of using the following process to be a responsible and respectful user and creator.

- 1. ASK.** *Who is the author? How does the author say I can use the work? Do I have to get the creator's permission first?*

Identifying the author or artist of a work will help kids remember that behind every work is a person who made it. Help your child look more closely to see how the author says their work can be shared.

- 2. ACKNOWLEDGE.** *Did I give credit to the work I used?*

Teach kids early that they can show respect by giving credit. Just as they would want to receive credit for things they make – like artwork, pieces of writing, or photographs – they should give credit to people's work they draw from. See if your child's teacher has a policy about giving credit or citations, and encourage your child to use it.

- 3. ADD VALUE.** *Did I rework the material to make new meaning and add something original?*

Help kids share their independent voice by encouraging them not to just copy and paste information from others, but to use it in a way that helps them say what they want to say – in their own words.