
Copyright and 4-H Exhibits

In 4-H, youth have the opportunity to express their creativity and originality by exploring numerous 4-H projects. Where do we get ideas for 4-H projects? Many times ideas come from a magazine, book, or even the Internet. This is a good starting point but care needs to be taken in how we use these ideas. The goal of this piece is to assist 4-H'ers in determining how copyright and trademark regulations affect 4-H exhibits and communication events for county and state fairs.

First of all, what does copyright mean? A copyright or a trademark is a legal method used by artists, photographers, writers and others to protect their original and creative works. The copyright, ©, and trademark, ™, symbols indicate that an individual owns a particular item. However, these symbols are not legally required in order to copyright something, so assume that anything published (in print or on the Internet) is copyrighted.

Copyright means that material cannot be reproduced without permission. There is no simple 1-2-3 explanation. However, anyone who copies another person's materials, by hand or by machine, is breaking copyright law. So, when can you use something that is copyrighted? The safest course of action is **do not copy anything unless you have permission.**

Basic Guidelines for Copyright Issues

The following guidelines provide a systematic process in determining if an exhibit is a copyright violation.

- A. Was the design, symbol, image, etc., replicated from another source? (i.e. magazine, book, art gallery, packaging, etc.)
If yes, go to questions B and C.
If no, this is not a copyright violation.
- B. Was permission to use the design, symbol, image, etc., granted and received in writing?
If yes, this is not a copyright violation.
If no, this is a copyright violation to put the exhibit on public display.
- C. Was the design, symbol, image, etc., *altered in at least three significant ways**?
If yes, this is not a copyright violation.
If no, it is a copyright violation and cannot be put on display.

*Here's a way to test your creation. Hold the original source next to your creation. Close your eyes and open them quickly. Do they look similar! If so changes are not major enough!

Copyright Questions and Answers

The following includes some copyright examples for consideration. These are not encompassing of every possible situation, but may help you think through your own. Please contact the extension office for additional copyright resources or assistance. Remember, **it is the responsibility of the individual 4-Her to be aware of copyright/trademark regulations when developing exhibits for fairs.** So please plan ahead with any questions and allow time to get written permission for work that may infringe on copyright/trademark material.

Q. Can cartoon characters be reproduced on posters, drawings, paintings, etc?

A. The answer is simple "No," unless you have permission. Popular cartoon character images are copyrighted designs.

Q. Can 4-H'ers use fabrics, decals, stickers, etc. they have purchased with copyrighted designs for 4-H exhibits?

A. Yes. The supplier has received permission (and often paid for the right) to use the design in the specific item as sold. The purchaser can use the item for the intended purpose. However, you cannot copy the design.

Q. Why can a 4-H'er cut a picture out of a magazine and use it in a display but they are not able to copy it as art work?

A. The 4-H'er bought the right to use the magazine but did not buy the right to copy it. Remember that you can stick a picture of Garfield on a poster, but you cannot draw Garfield on a poster. Don't forget to give credit to the source, even when used in a display.

Q. When is it OK to use a picture from a magazine?

A. If you have purchased the magazine, you may use the picture in a display, on a poster, or in a write-up. You need to give credit to the source of the picture. You are not trying to duplicate someone else's design, item, etc., you are displaying it as it was originally published and have given credit to the source.

Q. Can a 4-H'er bring an art project that they did in school, which they were given ½ of a picture, and they drew the mirror image of it? Is this copyright infringement?

A. This is a teaching tool that is used in school. Students are not infringing on copyright law at school because they are learning a technique in an educational setting. However, without permission from the author, this art project cannot be entered as a fair exhibit, as it will go on public display and compete for a premium. This would be a copyright infringement.

Q. What are the copyright issues concerning recipes?

A. A recipe must be included with food product exhibits. It is encouraged that 4-H'ers give credit to where the recipe was found. In a presentation, the 4-H'er should not duplicate and distribute a recipe that came from a cookbook without the publisher's approval. As an alternative, the 4-H'er may copy the recipe on a poster and give credit to the source of the recipe.

Q. A 4-H'er has taken a photograph of a group of individuals. Some of the individuals in the picture were wearing clothing with a company logo. Can this exhibit be display?

A. Yes. When taking a photograph, you are taking the exact image and not replicating it by drawing it. If the 4-H'er was entering the exhibit in a photo enhancement class and would alter the logo, the 4-H'er would have to receive permission from the owner of the logo before the exhibit could be displayed.

Q. Can a 4-H'er use the words of a product (Example – Beanie Babies) in the title of a presentation?

A. Yes the 4-H'er can include the name of a product that they are doing a presentation about.

Q. Can 4-H'ers use or copy the 4-H clover in exhibits.

A. Yes. As a member of the organization, youth are encouraged to use the 4-H emblem. The emblem means a four leaf clover with an "H" on each leaf. Without the H's it is simply a clover and not the 4-H emblem and can be used in any way. One may use the 4-H emblem following the Protected 18 U.S.C. 707 guideline: No printing or design can cover or be super-imposed over the emblem. Traditional color for the clover is green with the H's in white or gold. However, any colors can be used. The stem curves to the right. (ISU Staff Handbook Sec. 6)

Q. A 4-H member is restoring an old tractor. Can they paint the logo on the tractor or must they buy the decal?

A. If a 4-H'er intent is to restore a tractor to it's originality, the logo should be replaced in the same manner it was originally applied to the tractor. If the original logo was a decal, it should be replaced by a decal. If the original logo was painted, the logo should be repainted. The John Deere dealership stated that John Deere would not have a problem with replacing the logo as long as it was originally a John Deere tractor. However, the 4-H'er should research with the appropriate tractor manufacturer. There have been some variations of logos over the years and the 4-H'er would want to be sure they had the correct logo and placement for the era of the tractor they are restoring.

Q. During an educational presentation or working exhibit, can a 4-H'er hand out instructions on how to complete the project?

A. If the directions are the 4-H'ers, pass them out. If you took the directions from a magazine, you have the right to use it because they bought the magazine. These instructions should be put on a poster and the source of the directions should be listed to allow others to look up the information. You cannot hand out the directions from a magazine because you would be infringing upon the rights of the magazine to sell additional copies of the magazine. Examples of when you can hand out instructions include handing out instructions provided by the company, getting permission from the company to handout the instructions, or modifying the instructions to make them unique or original.

Q. A 4-H'er is doing a working exhibit on making paper boxes. Similar directions can be found in numerous places. Can the 4-H'er hand out the directions in their working exhibit?

A. Someone cannot copyright an idea. If the 4-H'er got directions from a previous presentation, they need to be sure to credit that presentation. They might also credit books where directions could be found.

Q. Can commercial products be used for illustrative purposes in 4-H exhibits and communication presentations?

A. This is acceptable for educational and illustrative purposes, if the product is being used for example only, but not used to imply endorsement or refusal of the product by 4-H, Iowa State University Extension, or Iowa State University.

Q. Can print material be used in public presentation?

A. If using a quote or citing a specific segment of printed information, it is important to credit the source just as you would in writing themes, etc. If using portions or all of a book, poem, etc, for a public presentation, permission must be requested for all the intended use of the material.

Q. In Share-the-Fun, does each 4-H group need to get permission to use background music or to recite a poem or a skit?

A. You bought the tape or CD and can use it as background music. You are not re-recording and making a profit. You can also read a story or poem but you cannot make copies of the poem for everyone in the club to rehearse.