

Title:

The 4 Can't Miss Keys To Copyright

Word Count:

514

Summary:

Copyright is the writer's security blanket. It just makes you feel better to know your words are protected. I once knew a writer who was so scared his work would be stolen, he never sent it anywhere. Talk about counterproductive! But if you can understand these four simple copyright keys, you can rest easy and submit at will.

1. Create!

That's all you have to do to copyright something: write it. You don't have to publish it and you don't have to register it with the Uni...

Keywords:

Article Body:

Copyright is the writer's security blanket. It just makes you feel better to know your words are protected. I once knew a writer who was so scared his work would be stolen, he never sent it anywhere. Talk about counterproductive! But if you can understand these four simple copyright keys, you can rest easy and submit at will.

1. Create!

That's all you have to do to copyright something: write it. You don't have to publish it and you don't have to register it with the United States Copyright Office, although there are certain advantages to registration (see below). The moment a piece is written down, it automatically gains copyright and that copyright is owned by the author.

2. Give Notice.

That's when you put that little encircled "c" on the work. You can also use the word "Copyright", then your name and the year of first publication. For instance, this newsletter is "Copyright 2005 Sophronia Scott". It tells the

world that the work is protected so someone can't show up in court and claim they didn't know it was. Speaking of court...

3. Register Your Copyright.

Again, registering with the United States Copyright Office is really just a legality. You don't have to do it. But you do get a few benefits for the \$30 fee that are worth considering.

Registration makes your copyright a matter of public record and--get this--if you register and someone later infringes on your copyright and you take them to court, you will be able to sue for "statutory damages and attorney's fees". With an unregistered work you can only get an award of actual damages and profit. To learn more on how to register your literary work go to <http://www.copyright.gov/register/literary.html>.

4. Send Copies to the Library of Congress.

Once your book is published, you're required to send two copies to the Library of Congress. It's called a "mandatory deposit of published works". If your book is produced by a traditional publisher, the people there will do this for you, but if you are self publishing, keep in mind that you have to do this yourself. You have three months after publication. It doesn't hurt your copyright if you don't do it but, according to the Copyright Office, "failure to make the deposit can result in fines and other penalties."

That's it! Pretty simple, really, but all the more reason why it should not become an artificial roadblock to your continuing and submitting your work. One last note: you can't copyright an idea. I have heard writers say they submitted a story or book proposal and someone else came out with a book just like it, so the agent/editor/writer must have stolen their idea. Well, not quite. It is highly likely that someone else just had the same idea. It does happen. And yes, it is possible for someone to steal your idea--just make REALLY sure that they have done so before you make the accusation.