

Copyright Protection Not Available for Names, Titles, or Short Phrases

Copyright law does not protect names, titles, or short phrases or expressions. Even if a name, title, or short phrase is novel or distinctive or lends itself to a play on words, it cannot be protected by copyright. The Copyright Office cannot register claims to exclusive rights in brief combinations of words such as:

- Names of products or services
- Names of businesses, organizations, or groups (including the names of performing groups)
- Pseudonyms of individuals (including pen or stage names)
- Titles of works
- Catchwords, catchphrases, mottoes, slogans, or short advertising expressions
- Listings of ingredients, as in recipes, labels, or formulas. When a recipe or formula is accompanied by an explanation or directions, the text directions may be copyrightable, but the recipe or formula itself remains uncopyrightable.

Subject Matter of Copyright

Under section 102 of the Copyright Act (title 17 of the *U.S. Code*), copyright protection extends only to “original works of authorship.” The statute states clearly that ideas and concepts cannot be protected by copyright. To be protected by copyright, a work must contain a certain minimum amount of authorship in the form of original literary, musical, pictorial, or graphic expression. Names, titles, and other short phrases do not meet these requirements.

Copyright Office Records

The titles of registered works appear alphabetically in the indexes and catalogs of the Copyright Office. But the presence of a title in the Office’s registration records does not mean that the title itself is copyrighted or subject to copyright protection. Entirely different works can have the same or similar titles.

To search Copyright Office registration records and recordation information on monographs, serials, and documents from 1978 forward, visit the Office’s website at www.copyright.gov.

Trademark and Unfair Competition Laws

Some brand names, trade names, slogans, and phrases may be entitled to protection under laws relating to unfair competition, or they may be entitled to protection and registration under the provisions of state or federal trademark laws. The federal trademark statute covers trademarks and service marks—words, phrases, symbols, or designs that distinguish the goods or services of one party from those of another. The Copyright Office has no role in these matters.

For information about trademarks, contact

Commissioner for Trademarks
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office
P.O. Box 1451
Alexandria, VA 22313-1451
(800) 786-9199
TrademarkAssistanceCenter@uspto.gov
www.uspto.gov

For Further Information

By Internet

Circulars, announcements, regulations, application forms, and other related materials are available from the Copyright Office website at www.copyright.gov. Claims to copyright can also be registered online at this address.

By Telephone

For general information about copyright, call the Copyright Public Information Office at (202) 707-3000 or 1-877-476-0778 (toll free). Staff members are on duty from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, eastern time, except federal holidays. Recorded information is available 24 hours a day. To request paper application forms or circulars, call (202) 707-9100 or 1-877-476-0778 and leave a recorded message.

By Regular Mail

Write to:

Library of Congress
Copyright Office—COPUBS
101 Independence Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20559