

FREE IMAGES, COPYRIGHT, AND CREATIVE COMMONS

AN OVERVIEW FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

by Kathleen Morris

FREE IMAGES
FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

pixabay
Images, videos, and vectors that don't require attribution.
16+ pixabay.com

Unsplash
Images that don't require attribution.
13+ unsplash.com

Photos for Class photosforclass.com
Filtered Creative Commons images with attribution automatically included as a caption under the image. Can be used by students under 13 with supervision.

PEXELS
Images and videos that don't require attribution.
13+ www.pexels.com

openclipart
Large range of clip art and vectors that can be used freely.
openclipart.org

@kathleen_morris  www.kathleenamorris.com

NEED AN IMAGE?
OPTIONS FOR YOUR BLOG
OR OTHER DIGITAL WORK

1 MAKE YOUR OWN
Create an image using software or an online tool, or take a photo.

2 PURCHASE AN IMAGE
This is rarely an option for students or schools.

3 USE GOOGLE IMAGES
Be careful of copyright! Most images cannot be used.

4 USE CREATIVE COMMONS IMAGES
Great idea. You just need to make sure you attribute correctly.

5 USE CC0/ROYALTY FREE IMAGES
Easiest option! You can use these freely. Attribution is optional.

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FREE IMAGES
FOR STUDENTS UNDER 13

Photos for Class photosforclass.com

1 Go to www.photosforclass.com

2 Type what you're looking for in the search bar (e.g. tiger). Press **Find Photos**.

3 Look at your choices and click on **Download** under the image you like.

4 A pop-up box will ask where you want to save your image (e.g. in Pictures). **Edit the file name** so it's clear and descriptive. Press **Save**.

5 Your image will be saved with the attribution in a caption.

openclipart


1 Go to openclipart.org

2 Type what you're looking for in the search bar (e.g. Earth). Press **Enter**.

3 Find the image you want and click on the **title** or the **picture**. A new page will load.

4 You will see different options to save the file. Click one of these (e.g. medium image).

5 A pop-up box will ask where you want to save your image. **Edit the file name** so it's clear and descriptive. Press **Save**.

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Plus a selection of classroom posters

FREE IMAGES, COPYRIGHT, AND CREATIVE COMMONS



Students' classwork is becoming increasingly digital. Whether creating a slideshow, blog post, presentation, or document, images are always needed.

Teachers also regularly need images for class blog posts, assignments, presentations, course work, videos etc.

But where do we find these images?

For many, Google Images is the first port of call BUT this not a good idea. Most images on Google are protected by copyright.

You can use Google Images' advanced search filter to find images that you are allowed to use but this isn't as simple as it seems. You need to know what the usage rights mean and how to attribute correctly.

I have some easier options to share with you.

What is copyright?

- Copyright is a law that protects things people create (images, text, music, videos, websites etc.)
- Someone's work can only be used with permission. If you use it without permission, you have broken a law and can get into trouble.
- Everything that is published on the web is protected by copyright by default.
- Even if you include the source, you can't use any image you like.

This guide goes through the options for finding free images easily and legally. It includes a selection of handy classroom posters at the end.

FREE IMAGES, COPYRIGHT, AND CREATIVE COMMONS



MAKE YOUR OWN IMAGES

Creating your own images is a great idea! You don't have to worry about copyright and Creative Commons.

There are lots of ways you can make your own images. You can:

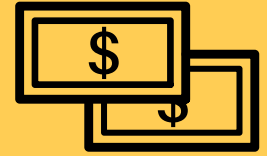
- Draw something and take a photo of it.
- Take a photo of something in your surroundings.
- Use an app on your iPad or tablet (Common Sense Media lists some recommended apps <https://tiny.cc/photoapps>)
- Use free software on your computer like 3D Paint (Windows) or Paint Brush (Mac)
- Use a free online tool to make an image like **Canva** (www.canva.com), **Adobe Spark** (spark.adobe.com), **Google Drawings** (docs.google.com/drawings), **Pablo** (pablo.buffer.com -- good for quotes), **Wordclouds.com** (for word clouds), **Toondoo** or **MakeBeliefsComix** (both good for making comics), **Piktochart.com** (good for making infographics), **Beam** (beam.venngage.com -- good for making charts).

The downsides of making your own images

- Creating your own images can take a long time and leave you with less time for your writing or other work.
- Many online tools have age restrictions (often over 13).
- You may need an image of something you can't photograph or is difficult to create.

Assuming you don't want to make your own images all the time, let's move on to some other options...

FREE IMAGES, COPYRIGHT, AND CREATIVE COMMONS



PURCHASE IMAGES

We know purchasing stock photography isn't really an option for students and schools BUT it's still important to talk about.

We pay a hairdresser when we get a haircut, pay a baker for a loaf of bread, so why not pay a photographer for their work? Many businesses pay for stock photos when they need images for their documents, websites, and other work.

There are many worthwhile classroom discussions that could be had such as:

- Should photographers and artists give away their work for free? Why are artists and musicians more likely to be asked to give away work for free than professionals in other industries?
- Why do photographers give away their work for free on sites like Unsplash and Pixabay? What are the benefits for them?
- Who is hurt by copyright infringement?
- Some free sites have the option to either donate to the artist financially, or publicise their work through voluntarily giving credit or sharing to social media. Should we always attribute, even if it's not required?

What about watermarked stock photos?

- Paid images from stock photography sites have watermarks on them (e.g. photos from Adobe Stock have the words 'Adobe Stock' printed over the picture lightly but you can still see the image).
- These watermarks are removed when someone pays for the image.
- Using a watermarked image from a stock photo site is not allowed.

If purchasing images is not an option, let's take a closer look at a favourite choice for teachers and students -- Google Images...



Many students seem to learn how to search and download images from Google early in their schooling. They might pick up this skill themselves or learn it from friends, teachers, or parents. Unfortunately, this is also often the default option teachers fall back on.

While this is a quick way to find the image you desire, it's generally not a good option to rely on Google Images.

Although you can do an advanced search to find Creative Commons images, most images in your standard Google search are protected by copyright.

Even if you cite the source of the image, remember, you are not allowed to use images that are protected by copyright. This is called copyright infringement; it is illegal and unethical.

Does it really matter?

You may be wondering if it really matters if students use images from Google. Will anyone notice? Will they get in trouble?

- You may think the digital work doesn't have an audience, but it could be shared online by families. Anything that's private can become public.
- Ethically and legally, teaching students to avoid using work that's protected by copyright is the right thing to do. This grounding will set them in good stead for the future.

Time to dive into Creative Commons ... a great way to find work you CAN use.

FREE IMAGES, COPYRIGHT, AND CREATIVE COMMONS



ABOUT CREATIVE COMMONS

Everyone's work is protected by copyright unless stated otherwise.

Many people are happy for others to use their work (as long as they give them credit etc.). They give their work a Creative Commons license to tell everyone what they can or cannot do with their work (this applies to images, text, videos, music etc).

- **Copyright** means the person who took the photo (or created the work) does not allow anyone to use it.
- **Creative Commons** means the person who took the photo (or created the work) does allow people to use it IF they follow certain rules called licenses.
- Usually, licenses involve saying who created the work and where it's from.
- Sometimes the license states that you can use the work only if you don't change it or don't use it as part of something you're selling.
- There are a number of Creative Commons licenses creators can choose from (see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses>).
- No matter what license is used, you must always attribute the creator of the image/work (unless it's a Creative Commons Zero license — see page 7).

Where to find Creative Commons images

- Flickr <https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons>
- Wikimedia Commons <https://commons.wikimedia.org>
- Creative Commons Search <https://search.creativecommons.org>

If you're going to use a Creative Commons image, you need to know about attribution. Let's take a look...



Unless the image you're using is royalty free or Creative Commons Zero (which we'll discuss next), you'll need to attribute the image.

The acronym **TASL** can help us remember what to include.

Attributing Creative Commons images

- T** Title of the image
- A** Author or creator of the image
- S** Source of the image. Where is it from?
- L** License of the image

Learn more about best practices for attribution

https://wiki.creativecommons.org/wiki/Best_practices_for_attribution



The attribution for this image would be:

Cutest Koala by Erik Veland **T A**

CC BY-SA 3.0 **L**

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>,

from Wikimedia Commons **S**

If you're finding attribution and Creative Commons licenses complicated, I have an easier option to share on the next page...

FREE IMAGES, COPYRIGHT, AND CREATIVE COMMONS



COPYRIGHT FREE IMAGES

Over the past few years, there has been a rise in the availability of free images that are licensed under public domain or Creative Commons Zero (CC0). This is the easiest way to find free images for your work.

Public domain works can be used freely for any purpose. Their licenses have expired, or they are released with no restriction on their usage.

CC0 is a Creative Commons license that allows copyright owners to release their works with no usage restrictions.

Some of these sites with CC0/public domain images can be very useful in the classroom, however, they're not all created equal.

Some copyright free image sites:

- Include some inappropriate content
- Have age restrictions
- Have confusing advertising for other websites with paid stock images

About attributing CC0 images

The great thing about Creative Commons Zero and royalty free sites is you don't have to worry about attribution. You just download the image and use it however you like. However, many of these sites say that attribution is welcome. This can help the creator gain recognition for their work.

Ready to find your new favourite copyright free site? I've got six options to share. You'll find a comparison chart at the back of this PDF.

FREE IMAGES, COPYRIGHT, AND CREATIVE COMMONS



6 SITES FOR FREE IMAGES

1) UNSPLASH

<https://unsplash.com>



Unsplash has a large range of excellent quality images, regularly donated by photographers worldwide.

Images can be used freely for any purpose without permission or attribution.

The user experience is excellent. The Unsplash website is easy to search and browse. The advertisements are minimal/unobtrusive.

There is the option of signing up to join the Unsplash community where you can organise image collections and even submit photos yourself. However, you don't have to register to download photos.

There is an app available for iOS.

Users are required to be 13 +.





2) PIXABAY

<https://pixabay.com>



This is another excellent site with a LOT of high quality images.

- Sign up is optional although if you're not registered, you need to type in Captcha text before downloading and image.
- Images can be used freely without attribution.
- Pixabay is easy to search and navigate.
- As well as images, the site includes free videos, illustrations, and vector graphics.
- There's a free app for iOS and Android.
- There's also a Microsoft Office plug-in to grab images for Word and PowerPoint without leaving your document.

When you're on the download page, some suggested similar images show up from paid stock photo sites. Students would need to know not to click on these.

Pixabay does have a SafeSearch option which would certainly be a good option if used properly.

Pixabay is designed for users aged 16+.





3) PEXELS

<https://www.pexels.com>



Images on Pexels are either sourced from other photo sharing websites, or uploaded by users.

- Photos can be used freely without attribution.
- There is a free video page, and an app for iOS and Android.
- This site also has the option to sign up but it's not a requirement.
- There is some suggested content from paid stock photo sites.
- This service is for users aged 13+.

4) PHOTOS FOR CLASS

<https://www.photosforclass.com>



Under 13s can use Photos For Class under supervision.

The images are apparently filtered and age-appropriate. They come from Flickr and Pixabay.

These images require attribution, however, this is automatically included as caption below the image when you download it.

There's a search box you can add to you class blog or website.



5) OPEN CLIP ART

<https://openclipart.org>



Openclipart provides hundreds of thousands of images (clipart and vectors) that can be used freely without attribution.

- Not the most modern interface, but it's easy enough to search.
- There is advertising for paid services on this site.
- You can edit clipart without signing in.
- Images can be downloaded, or you can use the HTML embed code.
- There are no age restrictions but it isn't totally filtered.

6) PICS4LEARNING

<http://www.pics4learning.com>



This is not my favourite site as the images are a little restrictive and amateurish, however, it's an easy (and safe) option for under 13s.

Pics4Learning actually contains “copyright-friendly” images meaning the creator maintains the rights to the image but allows teachers and students to use them.

The images can only be used for educational purposes and not commercially.



FINAL THOUGHTS

SAFETY CONCERNS

All of the sites I've reviewed, apart from Photos for Class and Pics4Learning, are not designed for children.

Not surprisingly, some inappropriate content can be found on these sites when you search for it (especially Pixabay and Pexels it seems, although Pixabay does have a SafeSearch option).

While I don't think this is a reason to ban these sites for older students, it's certainly something to be aware of. Using these resources would provide an avenue for discussing appropriate online behaviours in an authentic way.

DIGITAL FLUENCY

Most students and teachers regularly need images to enhance their digital work. I believe a clear and simple workflow is required for this process.

The skill of legally and efficiently obtaining images is something students need to be fluent at, otherwise, time and focus can be taken away from learning goals.

If students or teachers see the process as too arduous, they often default back to using a picture from Google Images. Not a good idea. A little time invested in getting used to sourcing free images can really pay off!

Time to revise the key points about copyright and Creative Commons...



FINAL THOUGHTS

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

If you find the topic of Creative Commons and copyright overwhelming, don't worry.

Teachers don't need to be experts but they do need to help their students understand some key points:

- Images are an important part of communication and can really enhance your work and help to explain your ideas.
- We can't just use any image we like that we find online. This is unethical and illegal.
- There are lots of Creative Commons images you can use but you need to remember to attribute the image.
- The easiest option is to find an image on a copyright free website.

Of course, this was just a summary of the topic of Creative Commons and copyright and is not legal advice. Sites also change their features and terms from time to time. If you spot any inaccuracies, please let me know!

Thank you!

I hope this resource has been useful to you. If you have any additional information or comments, please let me know! Reply to my email, leave a comment on the blog post, or tweet me (@kathleen_morris).












Let's finish with some printables for your classroom...

FREE IMAGES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

OVERVIEW



SITE	AGE	PHOTOS	CLIPART/ VECTORS	VIDEOS	SIGN UP	ADS	ATTRIBUTION REQUIRED	OTHER
 pixabay.com 	16+	✓	✓	✓	optional (Captcha when not logged in)	✓ (Stock photos)	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apps • Safe search
 unsplash.com 	13+	✓	✗	✗	optional	✓ (minimal)	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • App (iOS)
PEXELS www.pexels.com 	13+	✓	✗	✓	optional	✓ (Stock photos)	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apps • Chrome Ext • MS Office Add-In
Photos for Class photosforclass.com 	Under 13 can use with supervision	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓ (included in image as a caption)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filtered • Search box for blog
 openclipart.org 	no restriction	✗	✓	✗	optional	✓	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can edit images
Pics4Learning www.pics4learning.com 	no restriction	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filtered • For teachers/ students only

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FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS



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16+

pixabay.com



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FREE IMAGES

FOR STUDENTS UNDER 13



Photos for Class



- 1) Go to www.photosforclass.com
- 2) Type what you're looking for in the search bar (e.g. tiger). Press **Find Photos**.
- 3) Look at your choices and click on **Download** under the image you like.



[Download](#) [View on Flickr](#) [Report Photo](#)

- 4) A pop-up box will ask where you want to save your image (e.g. in Pictures). **Edit the file name** so it's clear and descriptive. Press **Save**.
- 5) Your image will be saved with the attribution in a caption.

openclipart



- 1) Go to openclipart.org
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- 3) Find the image you want and **click on the title or the picture**. A new page will load.



- 4) You will see different options to save the file. Click one of these (e.g. medium image).

BIG IMAGE (PNG)

MEDIUM IMAGE (PNG)

SMALL IMAGE (PNG)

- 5) A pop-up box will ask where you want to save your image. **Edit the file name** so it's clear and descriptive. Press **Save**.

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