

Teaching matters

Articles and opinions on primary teaching, with tips and ideas for the classroom

Plagiarism and copyright in a digital age

Citing sources in pupils' work is important in schools

Over the summer some 2,800 teachers participated in online courses run by PDST Technology in Education through TeacherCPD.ie. While the courses focused on areas of ICT and ePortfolios for Assessment, ICT in the primary classroom generally and other related topics, two underlying issues that are relevant here, and cross both online and face-to-face courses, are plagiarism and copyright.

Both very important concepts for children to understand and abide by. While researching, investigating, analysing and reporting are important skills to develop in the classroom, the understanding of copyright and referencing is also very important.

A simple way of explaining plagiarism and copyright to your class might be to ask them how they would feel if someone took their homework, put their own name on it and gave it to the teacher. In a similar way it is important that we use copyright free images and reference the source from where we get our information.



A more formal explanation of plagiarism is:

- Submitting someone else's work as your own.
- Copying someone's ideas, images, music or words without giving them credit.
- Not giving proper accreditation to a person's work or ideas.

In the majority of cases plagiarism can be avoided by referencing all sources used. For those that are unsure about referencing, *World Book Online* (available

This article has been adapted from the 'Sourcing quality information and images for projects' article by Seán Gallagher. Compiled by Emer Ní Chéidigh, Mark Finlay and Patrick Coffey.

via Scoilnet.ie) gives a good example of how to cite articles and material taken from the internet – where citing is provided in a number of formats at the bottom of each article.

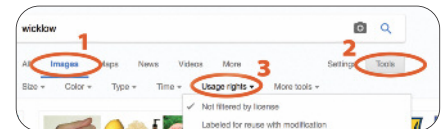
Image search

While the major search engines return images that can be useful in class, the licencing attached to an image is rarely clear. It is safe to assume that the use of images taken from the internet requires permission and the correct licences.

Digital images can be tracked to enable the copyright owners to identify if they have been used with or without the correct permissions (licences). A small number of schools in Ireland have received notification from large commercial image companies regarding copyright infringement and this has resulted in a potentially expensive oversight in some cases.

There are a number of simple ways that this can be overcome:

- You can take and use your own images.
- A search engine can be used. Within Google, for instance, if you select 'images' there is a tools button which allows you to filter results based on



usage rights attached to images. This will allow you to view images that can be used without an associated fee, but they should still be cited.

- Other websites that can be used to source images are pixabay.com, search.creativecommons.org and photosforclass.com. Should you use photosforclass.com, each image is automatically cited once downloaded.

School policies

Copyright and publishing policies should be covered in your school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). The AUP is a document which covers a number of issues that can be faced online from rights, responsibility, privileges and computer use. The document is normally written by teachers with consultation with the board of management, stakeholders and parents. For more information and support in creating an AUP for your school please visit www.webwise.ie/aup-2/

Music copyright

It is not only images to which copyright protection can be applied. Pupils often undertake project work in *Scratch* or create movies or animations and the desire is to add in music or sound effects. A quick search on YouTube will find every chart song popular with pupils that can be easily downloaded and imported into their project. More often than not, this is infringing on an artist's copyright.

There are many resources online where royalty free music and sound files can be downloaded and imported into any project. One such resource is musopen.org where music from a huge range of composers can be downloaded. Another resource where students can search for free music by theme or mood is freeplaymusic.com. The creation of animations and *Scratch* projects is becoming more popular in schools and these often require the use of sound effects. Two useful websites with huge collections of downloadable sounds including vehicles, animals and household sounds are soundbible.com and soundgator.com

