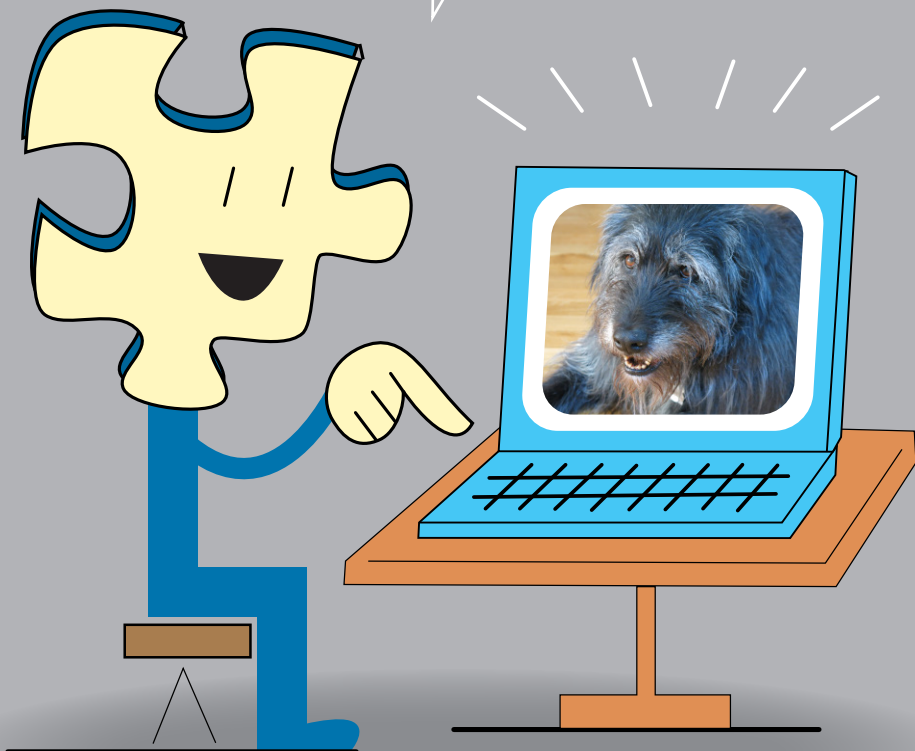# Illustrating Wikipedia

A guide to contributing content to Wikimedia Commons
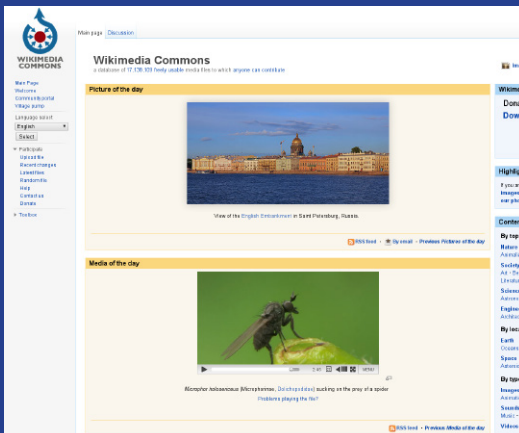
commons.wikimedia.org

I took this great photo I can use to illustrate Wikipedia! That means I'll need to upload it to Wikimedia Commons.

With more than 16 million files, Wikimedia Commons is one of the largest online repositories of media files. Commons hosts educational images, videos and audio files that are used by Wikipedia and the other projects of the nonprofit Wikimedia Foundation.

All of the works on Commons are under a "free license." That means they can be used and shared by anyone, for free, just by following the license rules—usually by giving credit to the author and preserving the license so that others can re-share the work as well.

Commons is built from the works shared by thousands of volunteers. By contributing your own photos and other files, you're helping to improve Wikipedia and build a common resource that is used by by educational websites, news media, bloggers, artists, filmmakers, students, teachers, and many others.


commons.wikimedia.org

Confused about whether something is allowed on Commons? Type Commons:Help Desk *into the search bar on Commons. The wiki community helps to curate the files on Commons, removes files that aren't allowed, and can answer questions like whether a particular file is public domain.*

Contributing to Commons

When you share your work on Wikimedia Commons with a free license, you grant anyone permission to use, copy, modify, and sell it without notifying you.
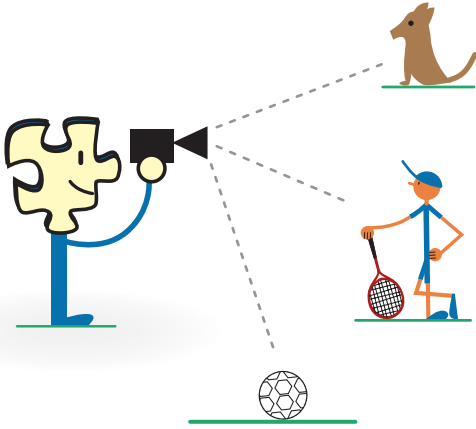
What is allowed on Commons

You may upload works that you created entirely yourself. This includes photos and videos of:

- natural landscapes, animals, plants
- public figures and people photographed in public places
- useful or non-artistic objects

You may also upload original graphs, maps, diagrams and audio.

What is not allowed on Commons

Commons can't accept work created by or based on the work of others — including photographs of it. By default, you can't upload someone else's work. This includes material such as:

- logos
- CD/DVD covers
- promotional photos
- screenshots of TV shows, movies, DVDs, and software
- drawings of characters from comics, TV, or movies — even if you drew them
- most pictures published on the internet
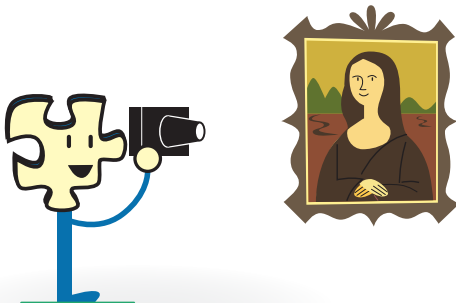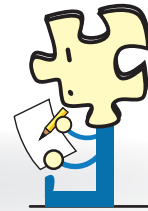
However, there are some exceptions:

- You can upload someone else's work if the author granted permission for anyone to use, copy, modify, and sell it — by releasing it under a free license. (Be sure to provide a link to the source, where the license is stated.)
- You can upload someone else's work if it is in the public domain (usually very old works).
- You can upload your photographs of public domain works, such as old buildings, statues, and art.

How to upload a file

To contribute to Commons, you'll need a user account. If you already have a Wikipedia account, you can use that to log in; otherwise, you can create a new account (which you can also use on Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects).

❶
Go to commons.wikimedia. org, and click "Upload file."

(Be sure you are logged in.)

❷
Click Next at the end of the Puzzly comic.

Accepted file formats

Commons only accepts files in formats that are not restricted by patents. These include:
For photos: .jpg
For graphics: .svg, .png
For animation: .gif
For audio: .ogg (or .oga)
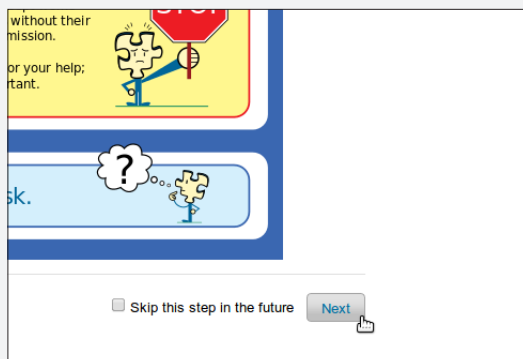For video: .ogg (or .ogv), .webm
For printouts: .pdf

❸
Select a file on your computer to upload.

For more detail on what kinds of files Commons can accept, type Commons:File types *into the search bar on Commons.*
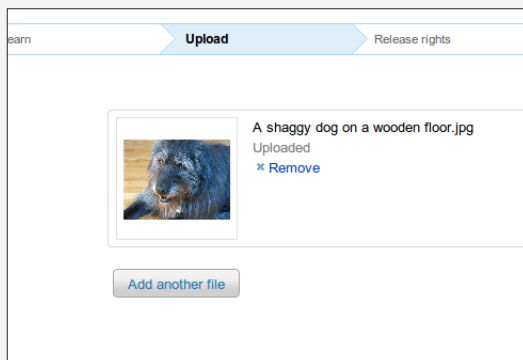
❹
Select whether the file is your own work or someone else's.

If it is someone else's enter the author and the source, then select the applicable copyright status.

5

Enter a unique title that describes the file and a detailed description of it.

Add one or more categories that specify the subject of the file.

An Irish Wolfhound mix, panting...

Adding categories

Wikimedia Commons has a category feature for collecting related files. For example, Category:Irish Wolfhound collects the photos of that breed of dog that have been uploaded to Commons. You can add categories during the upload process (the upload page suggests category names while you type), or afterwards by editing a file page and adding code like this to the end:

```
[[Category:Irish Wolfhound]]
```

The search bar on Commons returns both files and categories of files with your keyword; files similar to yours are likely to have the categories you need. It is important to categorize all the files you upload so that others can find them when browsing for media on the subject.

6

You'll see a link to the file page.

Placing files into Wikipedia articles

Edit happens here...

VISUAL EDITOR CONTENT TK

Placing files using wikicode

If you're trying to add an image or media file to a page without using the VisualEditor, you'll need to use wikicode. The basic wikicode format for putting images in is like this:

two opening square brackets

pipes: each option (called a parameter) is separated by one of these

by default, photos are aligned right; left and center are the alternatives

two closing square brackets

```
[[File:Shaggy dog on Bernal Hill.jpg | thumb | 220px | right | Bernal Hill is an off-leash dog area.]]
```

the **file name:** from Commons begins with "File:" and ends with the file extension (such as ".jpg")

thumb: adding this word means to use the standard thumbnail format

size: to make the picture a specific pixel width, you can add that here, or leave it out for the standard size

a caption: the text after the last pipe is the caption

You can copy the basic code from the file from the last page of the Upload Wizard or from the Use this file link on the file page. Insert the code into any wiki page by placing it within the text, wherever you want it to appear.

Let's see… I'll add my photo right here. Copy the code. Paste it in the article. Add the caption. And… Save page!

Once you've added the wikicode, click Save page. Your image will now accompany the text.
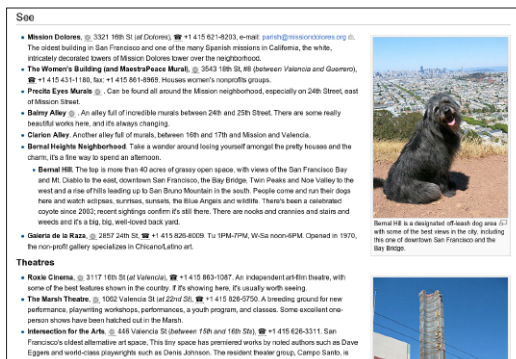
Using files on other sites

The works on Commons are available for anyone to use on other websites. The file page for a work will indicate its copyright status. For public domain works, there are no copyright restrictions at all (although some non-copyright restrictions, such as publicity rights for recognizable images of people, may still apply). For works with free licenses, you must follow the terms of the license — by providing attribution to the author and preserving the license. In either case, it's good practice to provide a link to original file on Commons as well.

The best way to use a Commons file on another website is with a credit line like this:

Pair of Merops apiaster feeding, Pierre Dalous, CC BY-SA 3.0

Title of work as given by its creator

With link to the file page so that others can find and use the original version

Creator's name

With link to their profile page or website, if available

License that the creator has assigned to this work

With link to the specific CC license

If you want to embed an image file directly from Wikipedia, you can use the code provided by the Use this file link on the file page.

How to upload from a mobile device

If you have a smartphone or other mobile device with a camera, you can upload your photos right from there, using either the Wikimedia Commons app for Android or iOS, or the mobile version of a Wikimedia site.

Mobile apps
With the Wikimedia Commons app for Android or iOS, you can:
• Upload, describe and categorize your photos
• View all your uploads

To get the free app, scan this QR code, or search for the "Wikimedia Commons" in the app store of your choice.

1 See where an image would help.

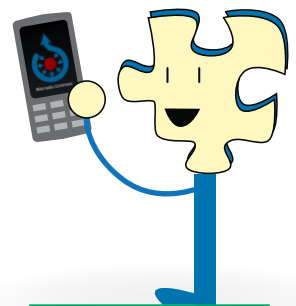**2** Upload and describe your image.

3 See the result.

Mobile web
If you are using the mobile version of Wikipedia or other Wikimedia sites, you can log in and:
• Upload and add original images directly to unillustrated articles
• Share any educational image you have created to Commons
• View your most recent uploads

What is a free license?

The person who creates a work is the owner of the work's copyright – which literally means "the right to copy" – unless they produced it on behalf of an organization or legally transferred the right to somebody else. People use copyright licenses to give others permission to use their works.

A free license is a kind of copyright license that says the creator will allow anyone to use their work, for any purpose, without asking prior permission. Using a free license makes it easier to share your work with others.

The Commons default is the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license (CC BY-SA), which says that —
for a work released under the license, anyone may:
- use it, copy it and share it; or
- modify it and share the new work
as long as the person using it
- provides credit (Attribution) to the original author and notes the license; and
- releases any modifications under the same license (ShareAlike, also known as *copyleft*).

CC BY-SA
The Attribution mark and ShareAlike mark are provided by Creative Commons to indicate you want to be credited for your work, and that any derivatives must be shared under the same terms.

CC BY
If you want to get credit when people use your work, but you don't mind if someone modifies or remixes it without sharing their new derivative work under the same terms, you can use the Creative Commons Attribution license.

CC ZERO
To release your work with no restrictions at all without requiring people to credit you for your work, you can use the CC Zero public domain dedication to waive all your rights to it.

Misconceptions about copyright licenses

❌ "This photo has a Creative Commons license. That I means there are no restrictions on how I can use it."

❌ "I own a copy of a photo, therefore I am the copyright holder."

❌ "I took the photo of this copyrighted work myself, so it's not covered by anyone else's copyright."

❌ "I scanned and modified this work, so I own the sole copyright for this version."

Wikimedia Commons can't accept works licensed with a NonCommercial (NC) restriction. The purpose of Commons and Wikipedia is to share our educational works as widely as possible. Authors, publishers, filmmakers, artists and others build upon freely licensed works to create their own, and the freedom to sell what they make is essential. (The ShareAlike restriction prevents commercial exploitation by those who are unwilling to share what they make in the same way.)

Finding free photos

There are many places to find freely licensed or public domain photos that could be uploaded to Commons and used in Wikipedia articles. Flickr is a great place for any subject that can be readily photographed, if the subject itself isn't copyrighted. Freely licensed open-access scientific journals, such as the Public Library of Science journals, have many useful scientific and medical illustrations.

When you upload them, just select "This file is not my own work" and enter the author, a link to the source, and the correct free license. Try using Creative Commons Search to find freely licensed files: search.creativecommons.org
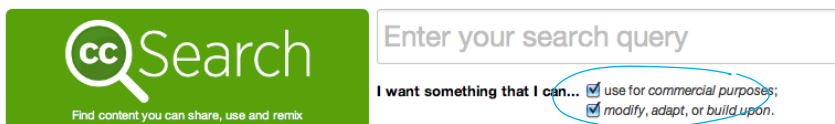
Be sure to check both options: "I want something that I can… use for commercial purposes; modify, adapt, or build upon."

Is it public domain?

A work in the public domain is not covered by anyone's copyright. For some public domain works, the copyright term has expired. How and when that happens is complicated, and varies by country and by the type of work. Other works are not eligible for copyright in the first place. And in some cases, the author has voluntarily given up their copyright.

Here are a few rules of thumb. A work is usually public domain if:
• it was published in the United States before 1923
• it was published outside of the United States and the author has been dead for more than 70 years
• it is a work of the United States Federal Government
• the author explicitly released it to the public domain

For more details on what is and is not public domain, see the page Help:Public domain on Wikimedia Commons.

Modifying existing Commons photos

You may upload modified versions (such as crops or digital restorations) of other Commons photos. For anything except very minor changes, you should upload the modified version with a new file name and link back to the original version.

Misconceptions about public domain

✘ "Content without a copyright notice is not protected by copyright."

✘ "Content from before the Internet existed is too old to be protected by copyright."

✘ "The author has died, so the copyright has expired."

✘ "I didn't have to pay to access this, so it's free of copyright restrictions."

✘ "This work is displayed publicly, so it is public domain."

✘ "This is a publicity shot, so it is public domain."

Glossary

copyright
The exclusive right to copy and utilize a creative work. By default, any creative work is covered by the author's copyright as soon as it is created (even if there is no explicit copyright notice).

copyright license
Formal agreement from a copyright owner that gives others permission to use a copyrighted work under certain conditions.

Creative Commons
A nonprofit organization that distributes the Creative Commons copyright licenses to allow people to share their works. Creative Commons licenses include the Attribution license and the Attribution-ShareAlike license, which are the two major free licenses accepted by Wikimedia Commons. Other Creative Commons licenses include those with "No Derivatives" or "Non-commercial" clauses, which may not be used on Wikimedia Commons because they are too restrictive.

free license
A public copyright license that ensures the freedom to use and study a work, to make and redistribute copies of it, to make changes and improvements, and to distribute derivative works, by any person for any purpose. The most common free licenses are the Creative Commons Attribution and Attribution-ShareAlike (but not the No Derivatives or Non-commercial versions), the Free Art License, and the GNU Free Documentation License (GFDL). For the full definition of a free license, see freedomedefined.org.

public domain
Works in the public domain are free of any copyright restrictions whatsoever. With a few exceptions, a work only enters the public domain once its copyrights expire (which happens many decades after publication).

Talk pages
A page on a wiki (such as Commons) to discuss the corresponding article or file with others. Each file on Commons has a Talk page, which can be found by clicking the "Discussion" tab at the top left the page.

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The nonprofit charitable organization that hosts Wikimedia Commons, Wikipedia, and other educational projects. Wikimedia Foundation is based in San Francisco, California. Its mission is "to empower and engage people around the world to collect and develop educational content under a free license or in the public domain, and to disseminate it effectively and globally."