

Copyright Infringement Policies and Sanctions

According to the federal copyright law, unauthorized distribution of copyrighted material may subject persons in violation to civil and criminal liabilities.

Copyright infringement is the act of exercising, without permission or legal authority, one or more of the exclusive rights granted to the copyright owner under section 106 of the Copyright Act (Title 17 of the United States Code (USC)). These rights include the right to reproduce or distribute a copyrighted work. In the file-sharing context, downloading or uploading substantial parts of a copyrighted work without authority constitutes an infringement.

Penalties for copyright infringement include civil and criminal penalties.

- In general, anyone found liable for civil copyright infringement may be ordered to pay either actual damages or “statutory” damages affixed at not less than \$750 and not more than \$30,000 per work infringed.
- For “willful” infringement, a court may award up to \$150,000 per work infringed. A court can, in its discretion, also assess costs and attorney’s fees. For details, see Title 17, USC, Sections 504 and 505.
- Willful copyright infringement can also result in criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to five years and fines of up to \$250,000 per offense. For details, see Title 17, USC, Section 506, and Title 18, USC, Section 2319.

For more information, please see the web site of [the U.S. Copyright Office](#)

Peer-to-peer file sharing

It is a violation of copyright law to use file sharing software to download music, movies, and other copyrighted material without permission from the copyright holder. Unauthorized peer-to-peer file sharing may result in disciplinary actions taken against persons who engage in illegal downloading or unauthorized distribution of copyrighted materials using the institution's information technology system. For more information, please see [the Digital Millennium Copyright Act \(DMCA\)](#).