ATTRIBUTION VS. REFERENCING
COPYRIGHT – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

This factsheet is intended for University of Newcastle staff members to use in the context of their employment only and provides general advice. University staff should contact the Copyright Advisor if they have specific questions or concerns.

What is attribution?

'Attribution' is an umbrella term around providing source information for, or credit to, a resource and its creators. It is a requirement in Australia under moral rights (Part IX) in the Copyright Act. Attribution can be a simple sentence or quite detailed. It can be quite specific, such as for Creative Commons or where copyright owners require a set statement. It's therefore important to always check what 'attribution' means for every resource you'd like to use.

Examples of attribution

via Pixabay	© State of New South Wales.
Media provided by Wavebreak Media Ltd, Used by Permission.	Music: [Song Title] from Bensound.com
[Artist's Name]/Shutterstock.com	"Creative Commons 10th Birthday Celebration San Francisco" by Timothy Vollmer is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Is referencing attribution?

Referencing is a specialised form of attribution that has differing requirements ('rules') based on the style. While the intricacies of where capital letters, commas, full-stops, etc., are needed will vary with the referencing style, the basics are usually the same – what the resource is, who created it and when, and where/how it is accessible.

Note that referencing alone might not be enough to satisfy requirements for reuse of material – always check if you need to seek permission (e.g., for use in a digital thesis) and what the attribution requirements are.

There may be times you will need to use a mix of referencing and other attribution elements. For example, where you use Creative Commons (CC) material in a thesis or publication, you may need to follow a particular referencing style but still provide the licensing and usage information needed for the CC attribution (see below).

Creative Commons attribution

Material shared under Creative Commons (CC) licensing includes specific requirements for reuse, including mandatory attribution. Here it can take the form of 'TASL' (Tittle, Author, Source, Licence), see Best practices for attribution. Where material can be adapted under a CC licence, you will need to note any changes you have made (even if it's just cropping an image). CC licensing allows for some flexibility in how attribution is provided – contact the Copyright Advisor for assistance.

Microsoft Office 365 includes a search option for CC images. This does not always function as needed for CC attribution. Where an image's attribution is missing, it's best to swap it for something else to meet the needs of attribution for the licensing.

Do I need to include a copyright statement as part of an attribution?

This will depend on whether one is provided and the owner's wishes. In the State of NSW example above, the copyright statement is the required attribution. Some referencing styles (such as APA) include copyright in figure and table captions. Where a copyright statement is available, it's good practice to include it, unless otherwise indicated. This is especially true where you have received permission from a copyright owner (e.g., © 2023 Joy Smith. Reproduced with permission).

Best practice

- Attribution alone may not be enough – you may still need to seek permission from the copyright owner.
- Double-check what type/level of attribution is needed when you want to make use of third-party material.
- Where referencing is your required attribution, make sure that you follow the referencing style guidelines.
- As shown in the examples above, hyperlinking text may be required as part of the attribution.
- Looking for resources that don't need attribution? Check our Free and open-licensed resources page.

For more information see **Copyright Support** below.

Copyright Support

Ask a question: **newcastle.edu.au/copyright-request**
Phone: **(02) 492 16456**
Web: **newcastle.edu.au/copyright-support**

GETTING COPYRIGHT 'RIGHT'