Copyright Law Quiz

Answer Key

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1. “False is the correct answer
   Copyright notices are not required on works created after 1989. Unless you specifically know otherwise, you should assume that all works are copyrighted whether they have a copyright notice or not.

2. “True” is the correct answer
   Formal registration is not required for a copyright to be valid, though registration does bring additional safeguards and is a good idea for “valuable” works.

3. “False” is the correct answer
   A copyright lasts for a fixed period of time. While the length of a work’s copyright will depend, among other things, on when the work was created and/or published, all copyrights eventually expire. Once a copyright lapses or expires, the work falls into the public domain and can be used without permission of the owner. Of course, you should still give proper credit to the author.

4. “False” is the correct answer
   Copyright ownership in the student media setting is a complicated issue. Generally, however, unless student journalists are compensated and treated as regular school employees while working for student media, current law suggests that students, not the school, will retain ownership in the works they create. Because of the uncertainties of copyright ownership, student media organizations do themselves a favor by establishing formal copyright ownership agreements prior to publication.

5. “False” is the correct answer
   Plagiarism is not a legal term. It is a term for an academic crime, usually defined by professional or academic bodies. Simply stated, a plagiarist is a person who poses as the creator of words, ideas or methods that are not his own. By contrast, a person infringes on another’s copyright when he makes unauthorized use of material that is protected by copyright.
6. “False” is the correct answer
   Simply giving the copyright owner credit for his or her work is not enough to avoid copyright infringement. Explicit permission is required.

7. “False” is the correct answer
   While it would certainly make life easier, there are, unfortunately, no numerical word or time limits in the copyright law. Whether a use is legal (for example, Fair Use) or illegal must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

8. “False” is the correct answer
   Fair Use is a very important exception to the general rule that material protected by copyright cannot be used without consent. The Fair Use Doctrine is, in effect, a compromise and authorizes the use of limited amounts of copyright-protected works for purposes like news reporting and education so long as the use does not destroy the commercial value of the work.

9. “True” is the correct answer
   Age is no barrier to a successful copyright infringement suit.

10. “True” is the correct answer
    Copyright law also recognizes a distinction between “expression” and “ideas.” Only creative expression, and not mere ideas or facts, qualifies for copyright protection. You are free to use facts reported by other news sources in articles or other works that you create.

“Test Your Knowledge of the First Amendment” was developed by the Student Press Law Center with a grant in 2005 from the Newspaper Association of America Foundation (now known as the News Media Alliance, newsmediaalliance.org). SPLC staff periodically review and update the quizzes.