



OPEN SCIENCE RESOURCES

# A GUIDE TO CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSES

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Creative Commons (CC) licenses provide a simple, standardised way for researchers, scientists, and institutions to grant the public permission to use their copyrighted work. For anyone reusing scholarly outputs, a CC license answers the essential question: “What am I allowed to do with this work?”

In Open Science, where transparency, reuse, and collaboration are central, understanding CC licenses helps you both share your own work responsibly and confidently reuse the work of others.



## TYPES OF CC LICENSES

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Below is an overview of each CC license from the most open to the most restrictive to help you understand how research and data can be shared and reused.

### 1 CC BY: Attribution

**You can:**

-  Share, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format
-  Use it commercially or non-commercially

**Only requirement:**

-  **BY:** Give credit to the creator

**Best for:** Supporting Open Access research, allowing educators and students to freely adapt materials, maximising the reach and impact of your work by enabling use for any purpose, and promoting innovation through remixes, translations, and new creations.

## 2 CC BY-SA: Attribution-ShareAlike

### You can:

 Share, remix, adapt, and build upon the work in any medium or format, even commercially

### Requirements:


 **BY:** Give credit to the creator

 **SA:** The adaptations of the work must be shared under the same license

**Best for:** Creators who want their work to stay Open for all uses, including commercial ones, and ensure that any derivatives remain Open too.

## 3 CC BY-NC: Attribution-NonCommercial

### You can:

 Share, remix, adapt, and build upon the work in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only

### Requirements:


 **BY:** Give credit to the creator

 **NC:** No commercial reuse

**Best for:** Creators who want their work widely shared, adapted, and built upon for personal, educational, or non-profit use, while preventing others from making a profit from it.

## 4 CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike

### You can:

 Share, remix, adapt for non-commercial use only, and the modified material must be licensed under identical terms

### Requirements:

 **BY:** Give credit to the creator

 **NC:** No commercial reuse

 **SA:** The adaptations of the work must be shared under the same license

**Best for:** Creators who want broad non-commercial use, remixing, and sharing of their work as long as they are credited and any adaptations stay under the same Open terms, making it a strong fit for Open Educational Resources, community projects, and other non-profit creative efforts.

## 5 CC BY-ND: Attribution-NoDerivatives

### You can:

 Copy and share the work, even commercially, in unadapted form only

### Requirements:

 **BY:** Give credit to the creator

 **ND:** No remixes or adaptations

**Best for:** Writers of finished reports and official documents or other creators who want to maintain full control over how their work is presented, allowing wide sharing but only in its original, unaltered form, preventing remixes, translations, or adaptations.

## 6 CC BY-NC-ND: Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives

### You can:

 Copy and distribute verbatim copies of the material for non-commercial use only

### Requirements:

 **BY:** Give credit to the creator

 **NC:** No commercial reuse

 **ND:** No remixes or adaptations

**Best for:** Creators who want to share their work but put great emphasis on preventing adaptations, remixes, or commercial exploitation, making it ideal for photographs or personal projects where integrity and original form are paramount.



## CC0: No Rights Reserved

CC0 (also called CC Zero) is a public domain dedication that allows creators to waive their copyright and release their work worldwide, letting anyone freely copy, modify, remix, and use it in any way, with no restrictions.

### The creator allows:

 All uses, commercial or non-commercial

 Remixing, adapting, building upon

 No conditions

**Best for:** Creators who want to permanently and irrevocably surrender all copyright and related rights to their work, allowing anyone to use, modify, distribute, and build upon it for any purpose. Ideal for scientific and research data, metadata, datasets, public sector information, and resources intended for maximum reuse.

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT LICENSE

## Ask yourself



How open do I want my work to be?

- **Maximum reuse:** CC0 or CC BY
- **Open Source style:** CC BY-SA



Do I want to allow **commercial reuse**?

- **Yes:** CC BY, CC BY-SA, CC BY-ND
- **No:** Any license with NC



Am I comfortable with my work being **remixed or adapted**?

- **Yes:** Avoid ND licenses
- **No:** Choose ND



Do I want downstream users to **share alike**?

- **Yes:** Choose SA
- **No:** Choose any license without SA

If you are unsure, [the Creative Commons License Chooser](#) can help clarify your intention and recommend a license.

## BEFORE LICENSING YOUR WORK



### Ensure you own the copyright

If the work was created as part of your employment or a funded project, the institution or funder may hold the rights.



### Understand that CC licenses are irrevocable

Once people receive your work under a CC license, they can continue to use it under that license forever, even if you later remove it from circulation.



### Confirm that all components of the work are yours to license

If you used third-party images, datasets, or code, you must respect their licensing terms.

# HOW TO COMMUNICATE A CC LICENSE

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## Link to the license

Always include a link to the official CC license page to ensure clarity for users. You can make the text or the CC icon a hyperlink to the correct license deed page.



## Use icons

You can download and include the official CC icons from [here](#).



## For documents

Consider the Creative Commons Add-in for Microsoft Office for Word documents [here](#).



## Use platform tools

If you are sharing on sites like Flickr or YouTube, use their built-in options to select a CC license. You can learn more [here](#).



## For websites

Get machine-readable HTML code from [here](#) to embed on your site.

When incorporating other work, attribution is a **required** license condition and if you don't provide it, the license permissions don't apply. Always follow the **TASL approach: Title, Author, Source, License**, to properly attribute other works you incorporate.

# WHY CC LICENSING MATTERS FOR OPEN SCIENCE

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- Facilitates transparent, reusable research
- Supports reproducibility
- Encourages citizen science and community collaboration
- Removes legal ambiguity and speeds up knowledge transfer
- Aligns with funder mandates for Open Access and Open Data

# RESOURCES

For resources on CC licenses, please check out the following:

[CC: Technology Platforms](#)

[CC: Choose a License for Your Work](#)

[Made with Creative Commons \(Guidebook\)](#)

[Creative Commons and Open Science](#)

[Ohio State University: A Simple Guide to Creative Commons](#)

[Cleveland State University: Creative Commons and Copyright](#)

[FORM: Creative Commons Uncovered: A Guide for Academic Librarians](#)

## ABOUT FORM:

The Forum for Open Research in MENA (FORM) is a non-profit membership organisation supporting the advancement of Open Science policies and practices in research communities and institutions across the Arab region.

Learn more by visiting us at [www.forumforopen.org](http://www.forumforopen.org)

