

## [Royalty Free Music - Licensing & Copyright](#)

If you want to use music for your website, in multimedia or traditional media productions you need to know about music licensing. Website designers, video makers, TV show producers and all other creative artists are constantly looking for music in their productions.

It's important to understand what copyright means, how it applies to music, and how you can obtain the rights to use music for your production. Terms such as "royalty-free music" and "synchronization licensing" get tossed around loosely, and this adds to the confusion. Hopefully this mini-tutorial will shed some light on this.

### A Tale Of Two Copyrights: Composition And Master

Copyright is intellectual property. If you own the copyright to something, it means, quite simply, that you have the right to decide who can make a copy. Copyright is the right to copy. Obviously it's more complex than that but we'll keep it basic for now.

In terms of music, the key thing to understand is that each recording of music actually includes two distinct copyrights:

1. The copyright in the song itself, or the musical composition, or simply the Composition. This means the rights in the words and music of a song, and is often referred to as the 'Publishing' rights. Think of an old-school songwriter sitting at a piano, writing music and lyrics to a song. That song exists before it is recorded. Often musicians (especially in electronic music and hip hop) have a hard time grasping this distinction because they write music while they are producing it - sitting at their computer. Copyright is formed when you write a song, by virtue of the fact that it is new and original and takes a graphic form, such as writing down the lyrics or doing a demo. The copyright in this Composition is owned by whoever wrote it.
2. The copyright in a sound recording, also known as the Master. The Master is a Recording of a Composition. The copyright to the Master is owned by whoever produced it. Often this is a record company. To illustrate this, think of a famous song such as "Georgia on my Mind". Each record company that produces a version of that song owns their own recording (the Master), but the fundamental rights to the composition remain with the original composer, who owns the Composition - the copyright of the song itself.

### Synchronization And Master Use Licenses

Normally, since there are two copyrights involved, two licenses need to be issued to make use of a recorded song:

1. Synchronization License: gives you the right to 'synchronize' the Composition with images or voice-over in your production.
2. Master Use License: this is exactly the same rights as the synchronization license, except it applies to the Master, the actual recorded interpretation of the musical composition.

Since the composer usually owns the Composition and the record company owns the Master, two different negotiations often have to take place, with two different contracts, for a song to be used in a Production. This can lead to complicated and time-consuming negotiations.

If a single company owns or controls the rights to both the Master and the Composition, this is called a One-Stop-Shop. This means that the company can sign both the Synchronization license and the Master Use license, which is less complicated and more attractive from the point of view of a website designer, an audio-visual show producer - or anyone who needs production music.

Most royalty free music libraries are such One-Stop-Shops since they control both the Master and the Compositions of the music on their website. Purchasing royalty free music means that once you have paid the one-time fee, you can use that music as many times as you want for as long as you want without ever having to pay additional money to the licensor.

It does not matter if one visitor or 100,000 visitors come to your website; or if the music is used for 3 months or 3 years - the purchase fee is exactly the same. If a piece of royalty-free music is purchased for use on a TV show, there is only the one-time fee, it doesn't matter if the show is presented 5 times or 1,000 times. The TV show producer will never have to pay any additional fee for the music. This saves time and considerable expense.

Royalty free music does not mean however that anyone gives up their copyrights or their rights to administer a song. For instance, if you purchase a music license for a film project which goes on TV, the composer can still collect public performance royalties for the TV performance since these are paid by the broadcaster, and not by you the producer. The music may be offered on a royalty free basis but is not copyright free. The music composer

and the publisher remain the copyright owners.

We hope this short article helps you understand the basics of music licensing.

### About the Author

Gilles Arbour is one of the partners at [www.premiumbeat.com](http://www.premiumbeat.com) a [Royalty Free Music](#) Library. Premium quality affordable production music - 100% Copyright Clear. Music downloads instantly available. Easy simple music licensing.

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