



# How to Copyright your Audiobook... *Is it needed?*

CopyrightTips from experts\* at [CopyrightsNow.com](https://CopyrightsNow.com)

You've written a new book to be published (in print and e-book)... and an Audiobook. So how do you protect all formats from illegal copying and plagiarism?

While you can copyright your book (in print and e-book) on one copyright registration, will you need a separate registration for your audiobook?

Yes. While one application can cover both e-book and print, you need a separate copyright application for the Audiobook.

Your book copyrights (*i.e., e-book and print*) are categorized as '*Literary Works*' for copyright purposes which protects the story — manuscript text, art, images and photos embodied within the work. The Author(s) are the creators of text, art and images in the book.

Audiobooks are categorized as '*Sound Recordings*' for copyright purposes which protects the *performance (i.e., voiceover narration) featured in the recording and the producer who captured and processed the sounds that make up the final recording*. It *does not* cover the underlying content embodied in that recording (which requires a separate copyright registration for the 'Literary Work').

## What rights do you have as a copyright owner?

Your book copyrights grant you five *exclusive rights* — the right to *display, reproduce, distribute, perform*, and create *derivative works*. You own these exclusive rights and may license, sell or assign them, as you want.

Your *derivative rights* enable you to produce derivative works (*i.e., abridgments, dramatizations, film adaptations, translations, and sound recordings*) which also covers audiobooks.

The Author of the audiobook is the voiceover talent who narrates the audiobook (who may or may not be the author of the underlying book).

In addition to voiceover talent, there may be an audio engineer (i.e., a producer) who captures the narrated recordings, mixes snippets of licensed music and sound effects, and produces a final digital master audio file with all creative elements.

If you narrate and record the Audiobook yourself, then you are the Author of the Audiobook. If you hire professional talent or a company to narrate and produce, then by default that entity is the 'Author' and 'Owner' of copyrights *unless there is a written 'work-for-hire' agreement that transfers or assigns all artist's rights in the creative work to you.*

Make sure you also have a 'work-for-hire' contract with the audio engineer with similar copyright-transfer language as the voice talent's contract; and obtain appropriate commercial licenses for any background music or use royalty-free music from a stock music house that permits use in audiobooks.

### When is a copyright effective and enforceable?

Recognize that copyright coverage is effective for original works of authorship — like your audiobook — once they're fixed in a tangible medium (i.e., digital audio file). This covers the narration, music and sound effects, cover art, etc., the moment it's recorded, assuming it's an original expression.

However, in order to enforce the copyright — *including the ability to sue for infringement, claim statutory damages of up to \$150,000 per infringement and recover attorney fees* — you must register with the U. S. Copyright Office.

[Learn\\_more](#)

*When you enroll in CopyrightsNow® — a fast and easy way to file your copyright registrations — you'll access an innovative, streamlined method to file your copyright application - using AI-assisted HELP and get access to expanded versions of these Tips which include step-by-step procedures and sample screenshots.*

*Your application is also reviewed by a Specialist within 48 hours of Submittal for conformance with data requirements and potential inconsistencies that may result in delays or denial by the U. S. Copyright Office.*

Situation	Who is the Author?	Who owns copyrights (i.e., Claimant)?
1) You (the book author) narrate the Audiobook	You	You
2) You hire a professional talent and audio engineer through your company under a 'Work-for-Hire' agreement	Your Company (only under WFH)	Your Company (only under WFH)

Note: You may register the sound recordings as well as accompanying text and artwork (i.e., CD liner text, cover artwork, photos, etc.) as a *'one unit of publication'*, if the all elements are physically packaged or bundled together and if all elements were first published together *by the same claimant* in all the works.

## Who is the Author and Copyright Owner of an audiobook?

An audiobook is a 'derivative work' of the underlying book which is being narrated and therefore requires permission from the copyright owner of the book. The author of an audiobook (*filed as 'sound recording'*) is the performer who narrates the recording. It may be the person or entity who created the book or someone else.

If the book owner personally performed the narration and recording, then he or she is the author and copyright owner of the audiobook. If you hire a professional to narrate the work -- it gets more complicated. By default, the person doing the narration is considered the author and copyright owner, not the hiring party, unless there is a written 'Work-for-Hire' Agreement, stipulating that all rights in the narration are assigned to 'You' - the contracting entity.

Copyright registration under a 'Work-for-Hire' Agreement allows you to include the narration as your contribution - even though you did not perform the narration. *Note: The subcontractor talent doing the actual recording doesn't have to be listed in the application.*

By contrast, if an individual narrates the work in the course of his or her employment, under a typical employment relationship, the work is considered a 'Work-for-Hire' and the employer is considered the author and copyright owner of that work, *not the employee.*

If you have your own self-publishing company - and you narrated and recorded the audio in your role as employee of your company - then your performance is considered a 'Work-for-Hire' and your company would be the Author and Owner of the work under copyright law.

If the narration includes text that was not created by the book author, then it should be considered "Pre-Existing Material" and should be excluded from your copyright claim.

## Copyright Filing Scenarios:

- 1) You (the book author) narrate the Audiobook
- 2) Your 'self-publishing' company (owns the book) and hires a professional narrator and producer under 'Work-for-Hire' agreement

Let's review each case:



### 1) You (the book author) narrate the Audiobook

#### Authorship and Ownership:

In this sample application - filed as an Individual - you would list yourself as the Author and Owner (i.e., Claimant) for the narration and any original liner notes.

#### Other elements:

Stock music or sound effects and other creative content in your audiobook that is considered part of '*One unit of Production*' may be part of your copyright application, subject to final review by the U. S. Copyright Office.

This may include royalty-free or licensed music, sound effects, stock art, photos, illustrations, and graphics – which is typically licensed from a 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider (e.g., Free Music Archive (FMA), YouTube Audio Library, Bensound, Shutterstock, Getty Images, etc.), that are part of '*One unit of Production*' - which *should be excluded from your copyright claim as 'Pre-Existing Material.'* If the narration includes some text that was not created by the book author, then '*Text*' *should be excluded from your copyright claim as "Pre-Existing Material."*

This means you don't hold the copyright to the stock music, stock art, text, etc. as the original creator or stock agency does. Your copyright application can only claim protection for the rights that you own or have created, so these other elements are considered "Pre-Existing Material" and are excluded from your copyright claim, while your original contributions (like the audiobook narration and any original content) remain protectable.



2) Your 'self-publishing' company (owns the book) and hires a professional narrator and producer under a 'Work-for-Hire' agreement

Copyrighting an audiobook narrated by professional talent involves several considerations to ensure the work is properly protected.

#### Authorship and Ownership:

In this sample application - filed as an Organization - your company would be the Author and Owner (i.e., Claimant) for the narration, audio recording and production and any original cover or line contents.

#### Other elements in the work:

This may include royalty-free or licensed music, sound effects, stock art, photos, illustrations, and graphics used for bundled cover art, text liner, etc.— which is typically licensed from a 3<sup>rd</sup> party providers — may be included on the same copyright application as '*one unit of publication*' if they were physically packaged or bundled together and if the recording and package were first published together as that integrated unit, by the same claimant in all the works.

Each case is subject to final review and acceptance by the U. S. Copyright Office.

These other elements which are typically licensed from a 3<sup>rd</sup> party providers - which *should be excluded from your copyright claim as 'Pre-Existing Material.'* If the narration includes some text that was not created by the book author, then '*Text*' *should be excluded from your copyright claim as "Pre-Existing Material"'*.

This means you don't hold the copyright to the stock music, stock art, text, etc. as the original creator or stock agency does. Your copyright application can only claim protection for the rights that you own or have created, so these other elements are considered "Pre-Existing Material" and are excluded from your copyright claim, while your original contributions (like the audiobook narration and any original content) remain protectable.

#### Pro Tips:

If you're a 'self-publisher' and your company also registered the underlying book as a 'work-for-hire' (*as an employee of the company - your authorship belongs to the company; therefore the company owns the rights to the underlying text.*)

The audiobook narration is different - and ownership depends on your agreement with the talent. If your company hires a professional narrator under a 'work-for-hire' agreement with 'all rights belonging to you', then the company owns the rights to the audiobook as well.

Without that agreement, the professional talent who narrates might retain rights to the narration, so check your contract.

A clearly written agreement specifying the narration is a 'work-for-hire' with all rights assigned or transferred to the contracting entity is critical!

## How to file an Audiobook copyright registration

As you can see from the above complexities, filing your copyright application can be confusing - so while you can file directly at the government copyright site or use paper forms... we'll show you an easy method using CopyrightsNow®... Mobile / Desktop App... with simple 'step-by-step' screen prompts:

### 1) Enroll in CopyrightsNow® from your authorized reseller

When you Enroll in CopyrightsNow your account is pre-authorized for the number of copyright titles you purchased.

Log-in from your PC or MAC Browser or iPhone/iPad or Android App to access your CopyrightsNow Dashboard.

The first time you access CopyrightsNow, you'll need to set-up your Account and select your *Role* as *Author* (if you intend to file your copyright as an individual) or *Publisher* or *Agent* (if you intend to file as a company - on behalf of the Author).

From your Dashboard, *Start New Project* then enter your Book Title, optional ISBN and Copyright category:

**CopyrightsNow**  
CopyrightsLock

Log-off


Next >

BOW4UP-75
Network Solutions (Audiobook)
Copy Y  
Lock N
10%

## Create/Edit - Copyright Project

Proj Acronym

*Title must use 'English' character set only*

Project Title

ISBN (If Available)  (What's an ISBN?)

Copyright category  What's this?

Other  What's this?

Year created or completed?

In above example, we select 'Audio Recording / Audio Book' as the Copyright category. (Note: this category is automatically converted to 'Sound Recording' for USCO filing.)

**Tip:** For AI-assisted help, click ?

Enter additional Project Info including intended media formats...

**Tip:** For AI-assisted help on any field, click ?

**CopyrightsNow**  
CopyrightsLock

Log-off


Next >

BOW4UP-75
Network Solutions (Audiobook)
Copy Y  
Lock N
20%

## Create/Edit - Copyright Project

Is your work Published?

For Copyright Application purposes, 'Published' means the work has been distributed to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership; or by rental, lease or lending. A work is also 'Published' if there has been an offering to distribute copies to a group of persons for the purposes of further distribution, public performance or public display.

Published? ☒ Yes ☐ No *Has work been published or distributed to the public?*

*Leave blank (if not published)*

Date of first Publication?  Nation of first Publication?

Intended Media Formats ☐ Print ☒ Audiobook ☐ Electronic ☐ Video

*Note: You can register Print & Electronic on one application; Audiobook and Video require a separate application*

Enter if your Audiobook was published, the date of first publication and the Nation where published



## Scenario #1 - Filing as an Individual Author

Enter Author Info (see sample below):

For on-line help on any field, click ?



**CopyrightsNow**  




Log-off[Next >](#)

VIP7GS-05      Book Title      Cpy: Y  
Lck: N      40%  
**Author Information**      ☒ Individual    ☐ OrganizationFirst Name  Last   
Enter your full legal name (or 'leave blank if 'Organization' is selected) --  
(To use 'Pen Name' - click ? for Help) Company\*   
\* Leave Company blank (no spaces in the field) if 'Individual' is selected Address City  St  Zip Country  Yr of Birth   
(Optional)Phone E-Mail ☐ Check to use Author's contact information as the only  
Copyright Owner (Claimant) and Certificate mailing address

Enter Author Contribution Info (see sample below), then click [Next](#)

Note: Click ? for on-line help on any field

**CopyrightsNow**  


Log-off[Next >](#)

BOW4UP-7S      Network Solutions (Audiobook)      Cpy: Y  
Lck: N**Author Information** (A/V / Sound Recording / Audio Book)First Name  Last Name  OR Company Author Contribution  ☐ Motion Picture / AV Work  
☒ Audio Recording  
☐ Other...  
Check all categories of  
your creative  
contribution to the workIf 'Other'  
checked above  
enter description  
[What's this?](#)  
Limited to 99 characters    Ex: Script/Screenplay, Music, Sound Effects, etc.  
On a later screen 'Limitation for Pre-Existing Material' - you can enter 'Add'l Notes'

In above example, the Author narrated the performance and created some text on the liner and also used 3<sup>rd</sup> party Stock Art. (So 'Audio Recording' and 'Text for CD liner' are indicated as Author Contribution. In a later screen, you will see how Stock-Art is treated as 'Pre-Existing Material')



Continue with other Author Contribution Info, then click [Next](#)

The screenshot shows the 'Author Information' section of the CopyrightsNow interface. The header includes the CopyrightsNow logo, a 'Log-off' button, and navigation buttons for help, back, and next. The form fields are as follows:

- Product Info:** BOW4UP-7S, Network Solutions (Audiobook), Copy Y, Lock N.
- Author Information:**
  - First Name: John
  - Last Name: Writer
  - OR Company: (empty)
- Work-for-Hire?\*** ☐ Yes ☒ No. A help icon (?) and a red note state: '\* If you are registering Author as an 'Organization' you must select 'Work-for-Hire''.
- Anonymous** ☐ Yes ☒ No. A help icon (?) is present.
- Pseudonym** ☐ Yes ☒ No. A help icon (?) is present.
- Pen Name:** (empty field) with a help icon (?)
- Co-Author?** ☐ Yes ☒ No. A help icon (?) is present.

In above example, the Author (him or herself) narrated the performance and created some text on the liner - so check **No** for 'Work-for-Hire'

Enter Copyright Owner (i.e., Claimant Info)

The screenshot shows the 'Owner (Claimant)' section of the CopyrightsNow interface. The header is identical to the previous form. The form fields are as follows:

- Product Info:** VIP7GS-05, Book Title, Copy Y, Lock N.
- Owner (Claimant):** ☒ Individual ☐ Organization. A 'Copy from' button and radio buttons for 'User Acct' and 'Author1' are also present.
- First Name:** John
- Last:** Writer
- Company\*:** (empty field). A red note states: '\* Leave Company blank (no spaces in the field) if 'Individual' is selected'.
- Address:** 1000 Main St
- City:** Ann Arbor
- St:** MI - Michigan
- Zip:** 48108
- Country:** United States
- Phone:** 734-999-9999
- E-Mail:** jwriter@samplewriter.com
- Transfer Type:** (dropdown menu) with a help icon (?)
- Other:** (empty field)
- Co-Owner?** ☐ Yes ☒ No. A note states: 'If there is a co-owner for this work, check 'Yes' (default No)'.

In above example, the Author (him or herself) is also the Claimant. (Note: You can copy and populate info from the [User Account](#) or [Author1](#) or enter the Information directly on the screen.)

## Scenario #2 - Filing as a Company (w/'work-for-hire')

Enter Author Info (see sample below):

For on-line help on any field, click ?

The screenshot shows the 'Author Information' form on the CopyrightsNow website. The form is for an 'Organization' (selected with a radio button). The fields are filled with the following information:

- First Name: [Blank]
- Last: [Blank]
- Company\*: My Publishing Company
- Address: 100 Main St
- City: Ann Arbor
- St: MI - Michigan
- Zip: 48108
- Country: United States
- Yr of Birth (Optional): [Blank]
- Phone: 734-999-9999
- E-Mail: jwriter@samplewriter.com

Below the form, there is a checkbox labeled 'Check to use Author's contact information as the only Copyright Owner (Claimant) and Certificate mailing address', which is checked.

Enter Author Contribution Info (see sample below), then click [Next](#)

Note: Click ? for on-line help on any field

The screenshot shows the 'Author Contribution' form on the CopyrightsNow website. The form is for an 'Organization' (selected with a radio button). The fields are filled with the following information:

- First Name: [Blank]
- Last Name: [Blank]
- OR Company: My Publishing Company
- Author Contribution: ☒ Audio Recording
- Other...: [Blank]
- Liner text (bundled as one Unit of Publication): [Blank]

Below the form, there is a checkbox labeled 'Check to use Author's contact information as the only Copyright Owner (Claimant) and Certificate mailing address', which is checked.

In above example, the Company is the Author - since the professional narration is covered by by 'work-for-hire' agreement. If there is a liner sleeve which uses stock-art, it will be shown as 3<sup>rd</sup> party Stock Art. (So 'Audio Recording' and 'Liner text' are indicated as Author Contribution. In a later screen, you will see how Stock-Art is treated as 'Pre-Existing Material')

Continue with Author Info (see sample below), then click [Next](#)

Note: Click ? for on-line help on any field

The screenshot shows the 'Author Information' section of the CopyrightsNow website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a home icon, the CopyrightsNow logo, a 'Log-off' button, a help icon (?), a back arrow, and a 'Next >' button. Below the navigation bar, the form displays the work ID 'BOW4UP-7S', the title 'Network Solutions (Audiobook)', and a progress bar at 48%. The 'Author Information' section includes fields for 'First Name', 'Last Name', and 'Company' (with 'My Publishing Company' entered). Below these fields, there are several questions with radio button options: 'Work-for-Hire?' (Yes/No, with 'Yes' selected), 'Anonymous' (Yes/No, with 'No' selected), 'Pseudonym' (Yes/No, with 'No' selected), and 'Co-Author?' (Yes/No, with 'No' selected). Each question has a help icon (?). A red note states: '\* If you are registering Author as an 'Organization' you must select 'Work-for-Hire''. A final note says: 'If there is a co-author for this work, check 'Yes' (default No)'.



In above example, 'Work-for-Hire' is 'Yes' - since the company has a WFH agreement with the professional narrator.


Enter Copyright Owner (i.e., Claimant Info)

The screenshot shows the 'Owner (Claimant)' section of the CopyrightsNow website. The navigation bar is identical to the previous form. The form displays the work ID 'BOW4UP-7S', the title 'Network Solutions (Audiobook)', and a progress bar at 60%. The 'Owner (Claimant)' section includes a dropdown menu for 'Owner (Claimant)' with 'Individual' and 'Organization' options, and a 'Copy from' button. Below this, there are fields for 'First Name', 'Last', 'Company\*' (with 'My Publishing Company' entered), 'Address' (with '100 Main St' entered), 'City' (with 'Ann Arbor' entered), 'St' (with 'MI - Michigan' entered), 'Zip' (with '48108' entered), 'Country' (with 'United States' entered), 'Phone' (with '734-999-9999' entered), and 'E-Mail' (with 'jwriter@samplewriter.com' entered). A red note states: '\* Leave Company blank (no spaces in the field) if 'Individual' is selected'. Below the contact information, there is a 'Transfer Type' dropdown menu and a 'Co-Owner?' question with 'Yes' and 'No' radio button options. A final note says: 'If there is a co-owner for this work, check 'Yes' (default No)'.

In above example, the Company is the Author and Claimant. (Note: You can copy and populate info from the [User Account](#) or [Author1](#) or enter the Information directly on the screen.)

## Enter Certificate Mailing Info

**CopyrightsNow**  
CopyrightsLock

Log-off[Next >](#)

BOW4UP-75      Network Solutions (Audiobook)      Copy: Y      Lock: N



☐ User Acct  
☒ Author1  
☐ Claimant1



[Copy from](#)First Name  Last Company Address City  St  Zip Country 

(Note: You can copy and populate info from the [User Account](#) or [Author1](#) or enter the Information directly on the screen.)

Enter Limitation for 'Pre-Existing Material' (see sample below), then click [Next](#)

Note: Click [?](#) for on-line help on any field

**CopyrightsNow**  
CopyrightsLock

Log-off[Next >](#)

BOW4UP-75      Network Solutions (Audiobook)      Copy: Y      Lock: N

Pre-existing material? ☒ Yes ☐ No 

Check 'Yes' if you used any material which you did not create yourself including stock art, other licensed material and public domain/fair use material. 

Description  
Describe type of pre-existing 3rd party material you used.

List 'Type' of material (i.e., Text, Art, Audio, etc.) *Not a list of all 3rd party material!*

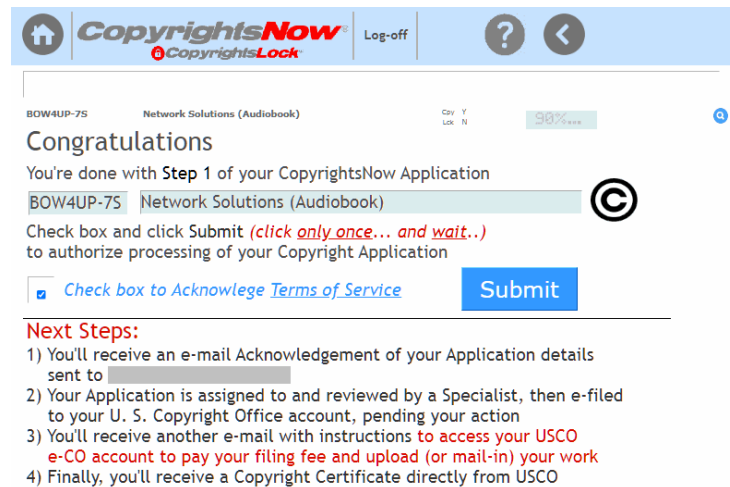
Add'l Notes  
Indicate other notes regarding content used / created

Illustrations (Licensed Stock-Art - on CD liner)

CD liner (bundled as one Unit of Publication)

If there is a bundled CD or Flashdrive sleeve which includes some 3<sup>rd</sup> party content (i.e., stock-art) indicate 'Yes' for Pre-existing material and describe the material used. "Pre-existing material" is excluded from your copyright claim - and refers to content used in your work that was not created by you, such as: text, images, art and illustrations. If the narration includes some text that was not created by the book author, then 'Text' should also be excluded from your copyright claim as "Pre-Existing Material".

On the last screen, review Terms of Service and click [Submit](#)



**Congratulations**

You're done with **Step 1** of your CopyrightsNow Application

**BOW4UP-75** Network Solutions (Audiobook) ©

Check box and click Submit (*click only once... and wait...*) to authorize processing of your Copyright Application

☐ Check box to Acknowledge [Terms of Service](#) **Submit**

**Next Steps:**

- 1) You'll receive an e-mail Acknowledgement of your Application details sent to [redacted]
- 2) Your Application is assigned to and reviewed by a Specialist, then e-filed to your U. S. Copyright Office account, pending your action
- 3) You'll receive another e-mail with instructions **to access your USCO e-CO account to pay your filing fee and upload (or mail-in) your work**
- 4) Finally, you'll receive a Copyright Certificate directly from USCO

Congratulations.... you have completed and submitted your application.

It is now scheduled for review by a human Specialist within 48-hrs... then filed with the U. S. Copyright Office - *pending your final review, payment of mandated USCO filing fee(s)\*\*\* and uploading or mailing in a copy of your work. Once filed your copyright is effective and you can narrate and place a notice such as: © 2025 Your Name. All Rights Reserved*

*Sound confusing? Rest Easy...* By using a copyright preparation tool like CopyrightsNow®... the system edits and validates your application with AI algorithms... and each application is reviewed by a Specialist to minimize potential issues which may cause delays or rejection by the USCO. As a CopyrightsNow client, you can access *free 'Copyright Tips' with 'BEST-PRACTICE* procedures, AI-assisted On-line HELP and 24/7 Email Support.

To start your copyright registration protection, click to [learn more!](#)

*\* This article is intended as an introduction to registering audiobooks (i.e., sound recordings.) The authoritative source for U.S. copyright law is the Copyright Act, codified in Title 17 of the United States Code. Copyright Office regulations are codified in Title 37 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Copyright Office practices and procedures are summarized in the third edition of the Compendium of U.S. Copyright Office Practices, cited as the Compendium. The copyright law, regulations, and the Compendium are available on the Copyright Office website at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov). For more information, see Circular 56 - Copyright Registration for Sound Recording.*

*\*\* Supreme Court ruling mandates that to sue an infringer to enforce your copyrights, you must register copyrights within 3-months of publication or before publication and before any infringement occurs.*

*\*\*\* Each copyright title requires a separate \$65 filing fee which you pay to the U. S. Copyright Office*

*The information contained in this post and software application are believed to be accurate at the time of publication; however, copyright regulations change and subject to various interpretations... so always consult with a personal attorney for legal advice regarding your registration and legal forms.*

*DISCLAIMERS: Neither Digi-Rights Direct LLC nor its Affiliate Partners or Service Providers are attorneys and we do not provide legal advice regarding copyrights and licensing, and we are not liable for any damages resulting from reliance on the software, statements and tutorial material.*

*Digi-Rights®, CopyrightsNow®, CopyrightsLock® and Copyrights-EXpress® are registered trademarks of Digi-Rights Direct LLC. CopyrightsNow is not affiliated with the U. S. Copyright Office.*

*Screenshots and Text © 2025 Digi-Rights Direct LLC. All rights reserved. Rev 4.28.25*