



Copyright in the Digital Age: What College Students Need to Know

(Houghton, 2006)

In this lesson, we'll discuss:

Copyright Protection

Academic Honesty

Fair Use Guidelines

Copyright vs. Creativity



So, you have questions about copyright...

(ed_needs_a_bicycle, 2006)



Can you use that idea?

Give


Are you borrowing or stealing?

Take

Share

A young green seedling with three leaves growing out of a stem in dark soil. The seedling is positioned vertically in the center of the frame. The top part shows three bright green leaves with visible veins, emerging from a white stem. The bottom part shows a long, thin, green stem extending downwards into dark, rich soil. A semi-transparent grey horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

Can you take something old and make it new?



**Wouldn't it be nice if copyright rules
were cut and dry?**


A photograph of a man and a woman in a social setting. The man, on the left, has dark hair, a beard, and glasses, and is wearing a striped shirt. He has a thoughtful expression with his hands clasped. The woman, on the right, has long brown hair and is wearing a white shirt. She is looking down with a slightly sad or pensive expression. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing yellow text.

Maybe they are! Let's demystify them, shall we?

(Talbot, 2006)

According to the US Copyright Office (n.d.), copyright protects:

**“Original works of
authorship, including
literary, dramatic,
musical, architectural,
cartographic,
choreographic,
pantomimic, pictorial,
graphic, sculptural, and
audiovisual
creations” (para. 1).**

A woman in a long, flowing red dress is captured in a graceful dance pose, her right arm raised and hand open. She is set against a fantastical, ethereal background. The scene is filled with numerous glowing, multi-colored stars (pink, purple, blue, and orange) that appear to be floating in the air. The lighting is soft and magical, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. The woman's dress is a vibrant red, and her pose is elegant and expressive.

That's right, folks. Even dance moves can be copyrighted (Sandvick, 2016)!

(Henriette, 2008)



But, not all dance moves.

(Ratcliff, 2009)



So, how can you copyright a dance move or any other creation, for that matter?

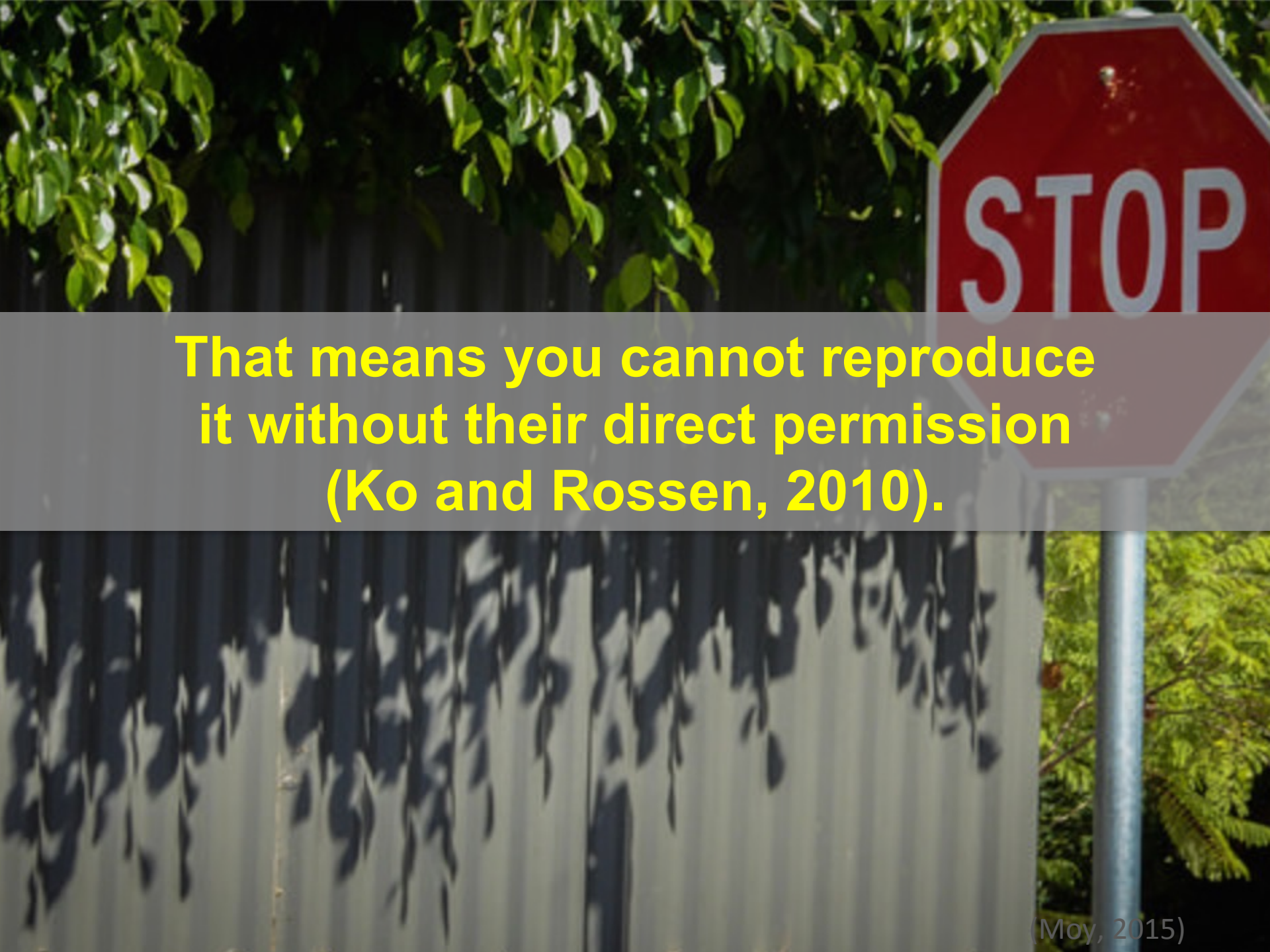
A black and white photograph showing a person from behind, sitting at a desk. The person is holding a mobile phone to their ear. On the desk, there is a drawing tablet with a pencil and some faint lines. A power strip is visible on the desk surface. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong light source from the right.

Once you create something in tangible form, it is copyrighted (Library of Congress, n.d.).

(The Other Dan, 2007)

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a black pen. The hand is positioned with the thumb and index finger gripping the pen. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage. A semi-transparent grey banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text "And, once a creation is copyright protected, the creator owns the rights to it." in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font.

**And, once a creation is copyright protected,
the creator owns the rights to it.**



**That means you cannot reproduce
it without their direct permission
(Ko and Rossen, 2010).**

A silver laptop is shown from a low angle, with its screen open. The laptop is the central focus, with a semi-transparent grey overlay across the middle. The text is in a bright yellow, bold font. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk and another monitor.

**So, what about the images you see online?
Are those copyrighted? Who owns them?**

(Bouffard, 2007)

A close-up photograph of a man with dark hair, looking slightly to the right with a skeptical or questioning expression. His eyes are partially squinted, and his mouth is slightly open. In the background, another man's face is visible, looking in the same direction. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be an indoor setting with lights.

That's where it gets tricky.

(Benjamin, 2009)

A woman in a white lace top is pointing upwards with her right hand in an office setting. Another woman with glasses and a polka-dot top is looking towards her. In the background, a man is working at a computer. The office has large windows and modern furniture.

The copyright is not always clearly stated, but someone probably owns the rights.

A man in a light-colored striped shirt is speaking into a microphone on a stage. He is gesturing with his left hand. Behind him is a large projection screen displaying a presentation slide. The slide has a dark background with white text. The text on the screen includes "the prob" and "It's h... or to get noticed." A semi-transparent grey banner with yellow text is overlaid across the middle of the image.

So, which images or pieces of media can you use in, say, your Powerpoint presentation?

(Webvisionsevent, 2011)

**To be safe, Stieben (2014)
recommends that you...**

**Look for media licensed
under [Creative Commons](#)**

**Check the type of license
before you reproduce or
alter media**

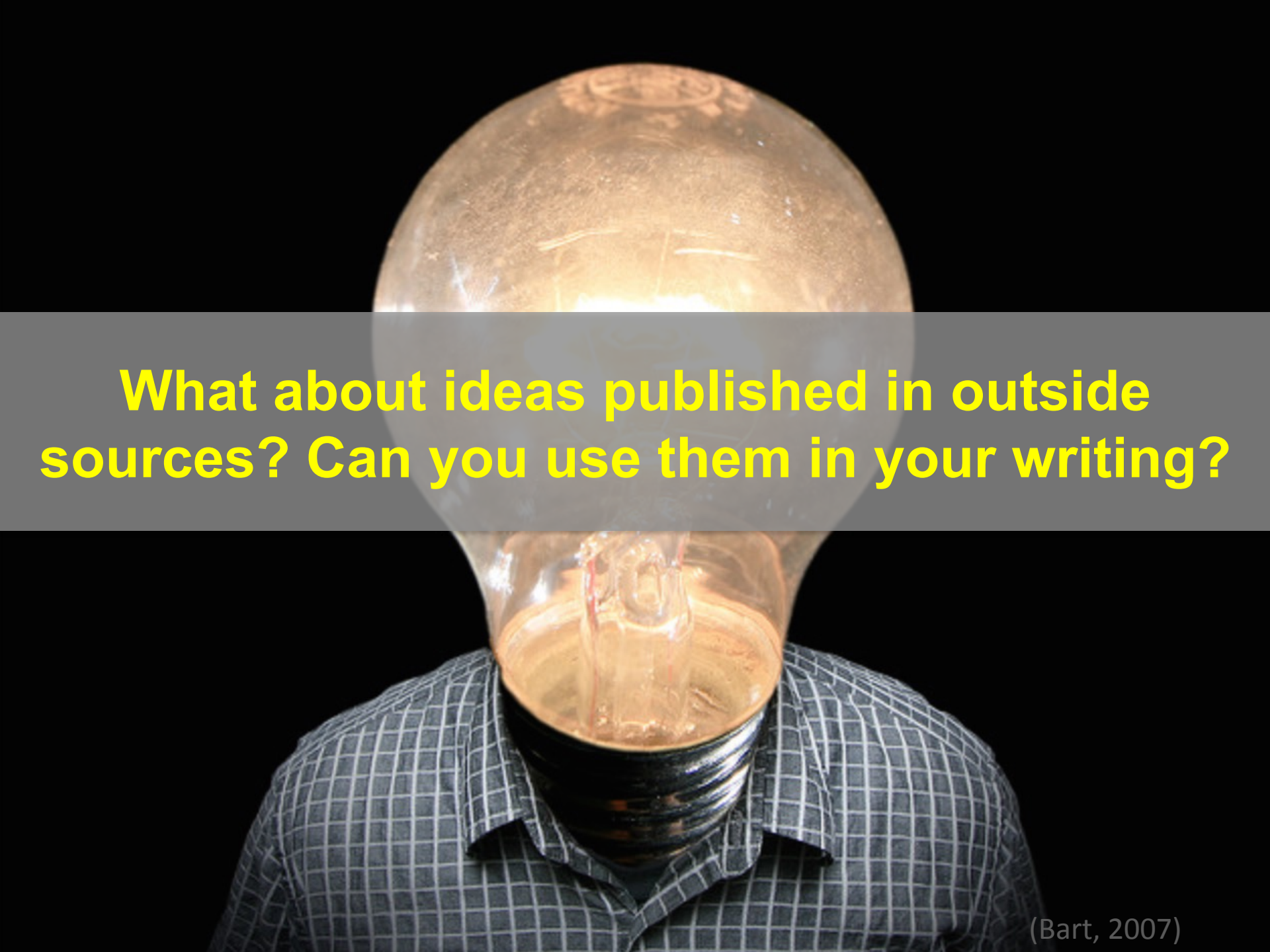
**If you can't find the
license, assume it's
copyrighted**

A large, stylized black and white illustration of a hand pointing downwards is superimposed over a photograph of a man walking past a red brick wall. The hand is positioned in the upper left quadrant, with the index finger pointing towards the man. The man is in the lower right quadrant, walking from left to right. The red brick wall is the background for the entire scene.

If the image is licensed for Creative Commons, include attribution! Give credit to the license holder (Ko & Rossen, 2010).

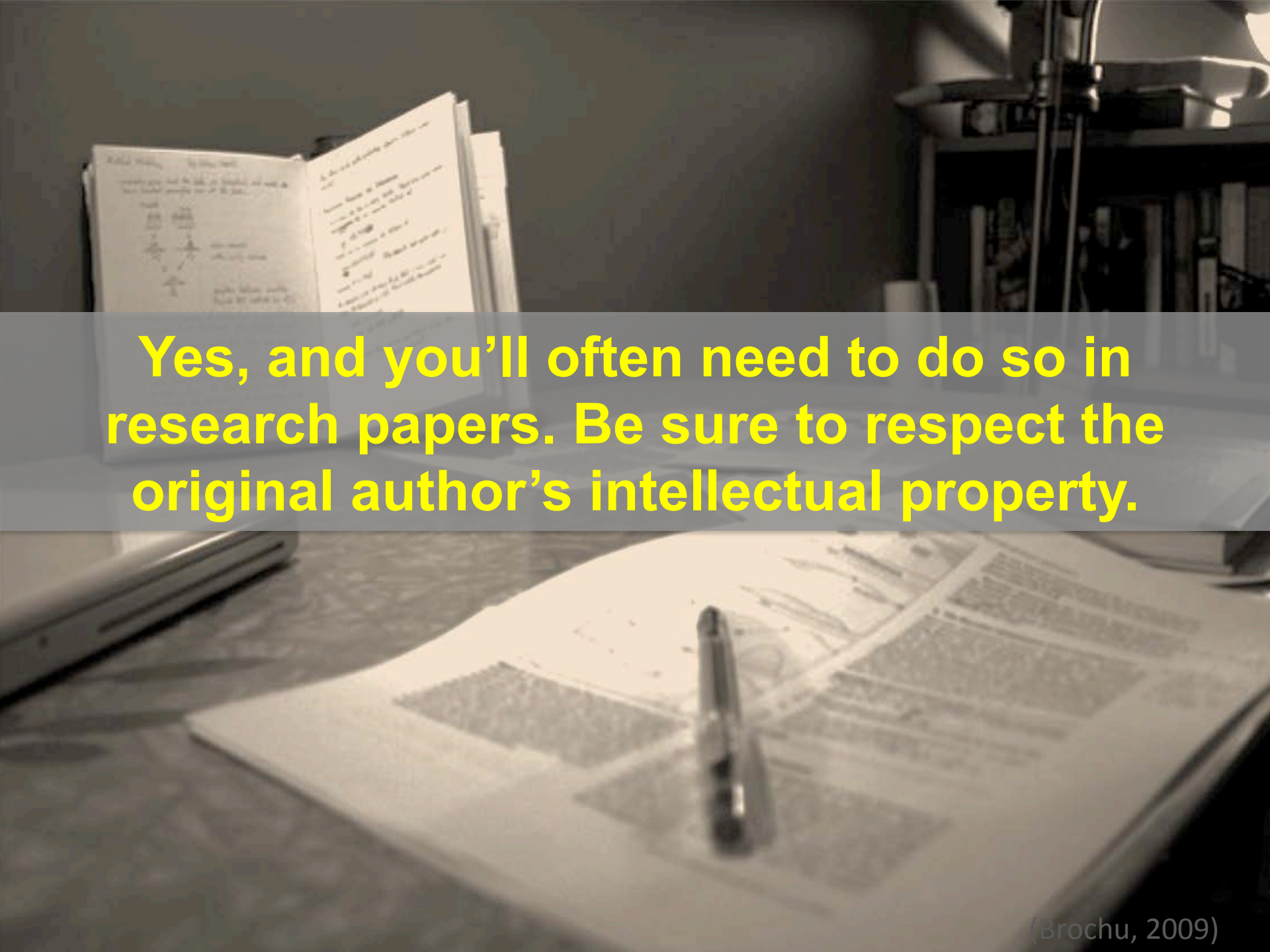
IF IN DOUBT PLEASE ASK

If the media is copyrighted, either don't use it or, as Ko and Rossen (2010) recommend, contact the owner to ask for permission.

A photograph of a person whose head is replaced by a glowing incandescent lightbulb. The person is wearing a dark blue and white checkered shirt. The background is black. A semi-transparent grey horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing yellow text.

What about ideas published in outside sources? Can you use them in your writing?

(Bart, 2007)

A dimly lit desk with a laptop on the left, an open notebook with handwritten notes and diagrams in the background, and a pen resting on a document in the foreground. A semi-transparent grey box with yellow text is overlaid in the center.

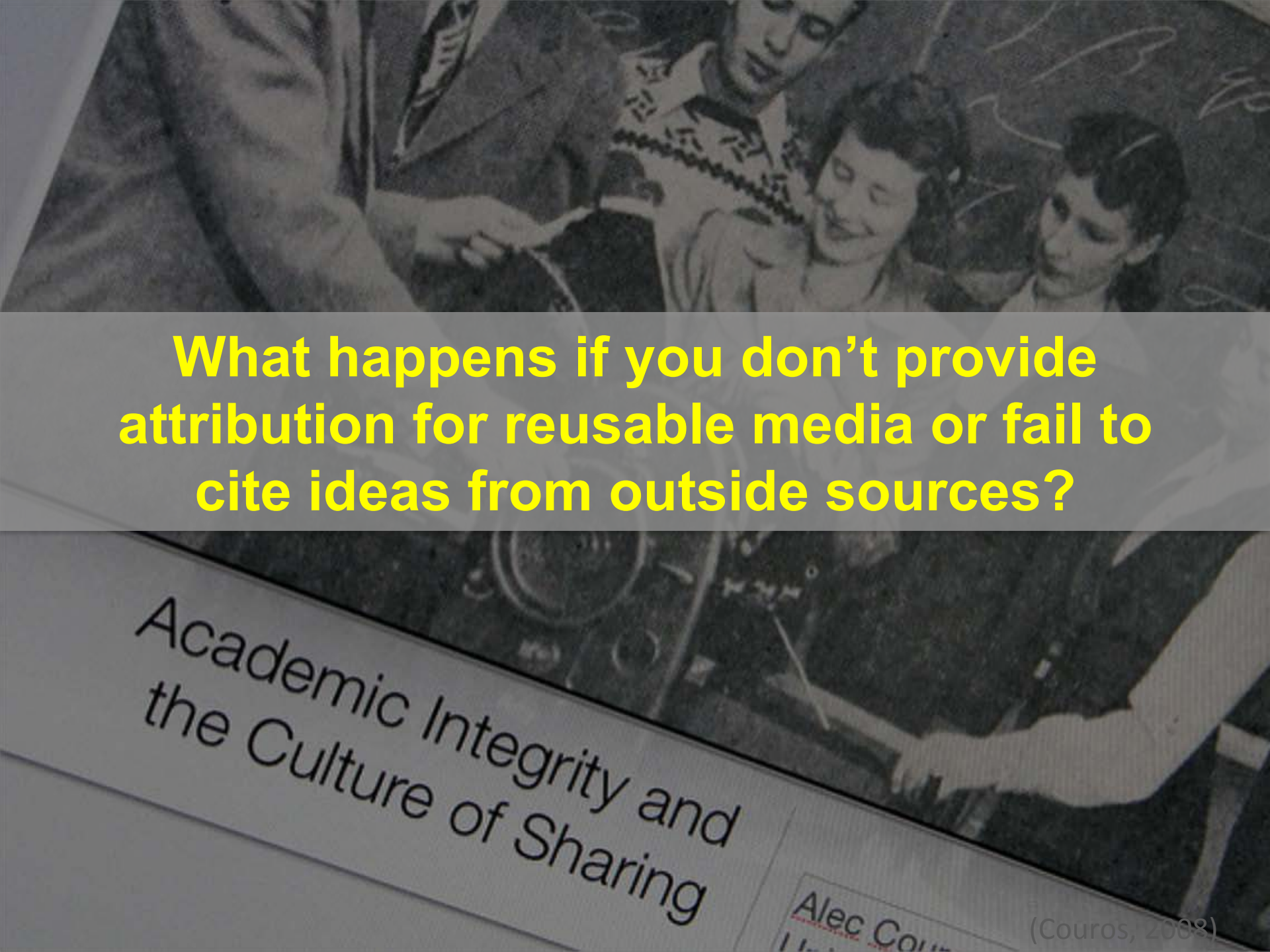
Yes, and you'll often need to do so in research papers. Be sure to respect the original author's intellectual property.



Cite quotes and paraphrased ideas using the citation style your instructor requires.



(Thompson River University, 2012)



What happens if you don't provide attribution for reusable media or fail to cite ideas from outside sources?

Academic Integrity and
the Culture of Sharing

Alec Couros
University of Regina

(Couros, 2008)



Well, it's not pretty.

(Por, 2009)

If you plagiarize, you could earn a 0 for the assignment, you could fail the class, or you could even be expelled.




If you infringe on copyright in your career,
you could be sued, lose a lot of \$\$\$,
and even lose your freedom.

(The Comedian, 2008)

A photograph of a man in a dark suit and a red, white, and blue patterned tie looking directly at the camera with a wide-eyed, surprised expression. He is surrounded by other people in formal attire, including a woman in a black and white patterned dress holding a red folder. In the background, an American flag is visible on a balcony of a multi-story building.

But wait, what about that thing called “fair use?”

(Buehler, 2003)

A black and white photograph of a room. In the foreground, there is a stack of books on the left and a chair on the right. In the background, a lamp with a white shade is visible. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing yellow text.

**Suppose you want to make something new
from elements of something old.
Can you do that under fair use?**



Well, maybe. It depends.



Ko and Rossen (2010) suggest that you ask yourself the following questions:

Is it for non commercial, educational use?

Is the nature of the work factual or creative?

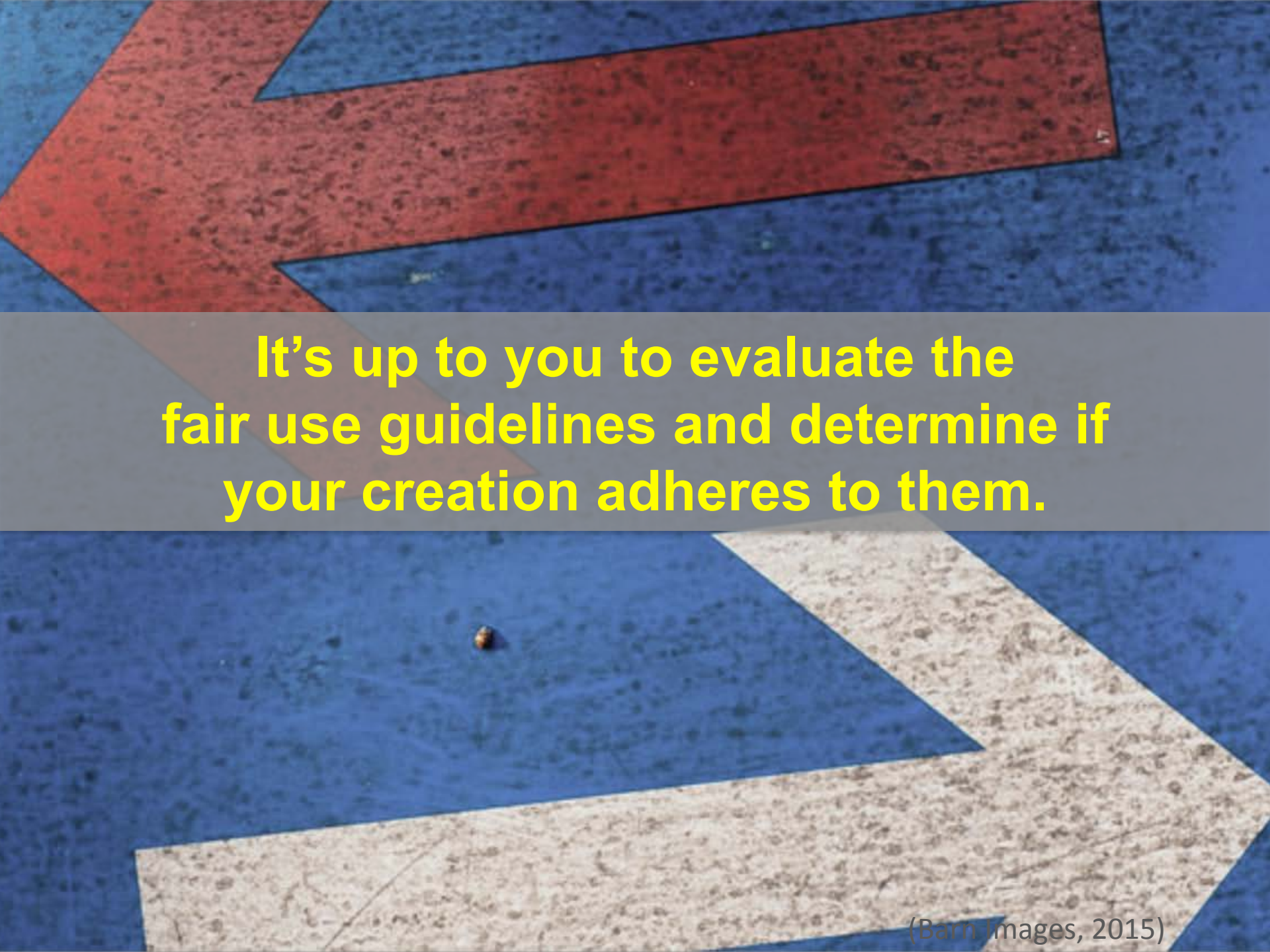
How much of the work will you use?

Will your use affect the owner's ability to make money?



**If you want to make a YouTube video mashup,
or use an old sample in your new
song, or write some fan fiction, well...**





It's up to you to evaluate the fair use guidelines and determine if your creation adheres to them.



So, do all of these rules limit creativity in the digital age when we have better access to media and technology?



That's debatable. Copyright laws attempt to protect the original creator, but may hinder new creators (Watts, 2009).

A close-up photograph of a young child with dark hair, wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt, looking intently at a tablet device. The child's right hand is touching the screen. The background is a soft, out-of-focus yellow light. A semi-transparent grey banner with yellow text is overlaid across the middle of the image.

**It's possible that copyright law will evolve.
“The Internet may essentially make copyright
laws obsolete” (Watts, 2009, para. 2).**



But for now, get permission, look for free use licenses, and cite your sources. Simple.

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(Samis, 2007)