

Using Public Domain Assets

Public domain sources are free to use, with attribution and documentation.



What Is a Public Domain Asset?

Any image, text, video, audio, or other source that is free of copyright restrictions is a public domain asset. There are three ways a source can gain public domain status:

- The source was created by a public agency (such as the government) that is not covered by copyright laws.
- The copyright restrictions have expired, which usually happens 70 years after the copyright holder has died.
- The asset was specifically designated as in the public domain by whoever created it.



Why Use Public Domain Assets?

Public domain assets are free to use in your projects. They have no copyright, so you do not need to ask for permission. In many cases, these assets are also highly credible and high quality, such as those shared by NASA, the U.S. military, and the U.S. National Archive.



Why Is Attribution and Citation of Public Domain Assets Important?

Telling people where the public domain sources you use came from accomplishes three things:

- It credits the original creator of the source.
- It establishes credibility for the source.
- It shows people where to get more information about the source.

I acknowledge the Tutelo/Monacan people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which this resource was created, and recognize their continuing connection to the land, water, and air that I consume. I pay respect to the Tutelo/Monacan Nations, and to their elders past, present, and emerging.

This resource was designed to accompany my projects on how to teach attribution and citation of assets in highly multimodal projects (those that move beyond print style essays). Icons from The Noun Project, downloaded as a NounPro for Education member. Design inspired by [Thinking Visually](#) features in Markel's *Practical Strategies for Technical Communication* (2nd ed). Created by Traci Gardner. Available under a CC BY SA NC 4.0 license.