

Multiple Works

In most cases, the Copyright Office requires each work of authorship to be registered on a separate application. There are, however, limited exceptions to this rule. This circular introduces the Office's practices and procedures for registering multiple works on one application. It covers

- Collective works
- Group registrations
- Unpublished collections
- Works packaged as a single unit

As a general rule, a copyright registration covers an individual work, and you must prepare a separate application and submit a separate filing fee and deposit for each work you want to register. There are, however, some limited exceptions to this rule:

- When a number of separate and independent contributions are assembled into a collective whole (collective works)
- When multiple serials, daily newspapers, daily newsletters, contributions to periodicals, published photographs, or database updates meet Copyright Office requirements for registration on one application (group registrations)
- When a group of unpublished works share at least one author, and the copyright claimant for all of the elements and the collection is the same person or organization (unpublished collections)
- When multiple works are physically bundled or packaged together and first published as an integrated unit (unit of publication)
- When the copyright in a sound recording and the musical, literary, or dramatic work embodied in the recording is owned by the same individual or organization

If you choose to register multiple works under one of these exceptions and the Copyright Office determines that the works do not qualify, the Office will refuse your application, and you will be required to submit a separate application and filing fee for each individual work.

This circular provides general information on the requirements for registering multiple works with one application and one filing fee.¹ For more information, see [chapter 1100](#) of the *Compendium of U.S. Copyright Office Practices*.

Collective Works

A collective work is a compilation in which a number of contributions, constituting separate and independent works in themselves, are assembled into a collective whole. The “authorship” in a collective work comes from the original selection, coordination, and arrangement of the independent works included in the collective work.

Under the Copyright Act, a collective work is considered one work for purposes of registration. A registration for a collective work covers the copyrightable authorship in the selection, coordination, or arrangement of the work. A registration for a collective work covers the collective work as a whole and may cover the individual works contained in it if (1) the collective work and the individual works are owned by the same party, (2) the individual works have not been previously published or previously registered, and (3) the individual works are not in the public domain.

For purposes of registration, representative examples of collective works include

- A newspaper, magazine, or other periodical containing multiple articles, illustrations, and photographs
- An anthology containing multiple poems, short stories, or essays
- An online encyclopedia containing multiple articles, entries, or postings on various topics
- An album containing multiple sound recordings that embody multiple musical works
- A DVD containing a motion picture, theatrical trailers, deleted scenes, and audio commentary from the director

A collective work is not

- A single unified work that contains separate parts or elements, such as
 - a novel consisting of multiple chapters*
 - a song with melody, harmony, and rhythm*
 - a drawing in pencil and ink*
 - a carpet design of overlapping figures and colors*
 - an architectural work or technical drawing with multiple illustrations of the same object*
 - an illustrated children’s book created by one author*
- A unified work created by multiple authors, such as
 - a musical work created by a singer and songwriter in collaboration with each other*
 - a musical with script, music, and lyrics by two or more authors*
 - a motion picture with screenplay, soundtrack, directing, acting, cinematography, costume design, visual effects, or other production elements contributed by multiple authors*
 - a children’s book created by a writer and illustrator in collaboration with each other*
 - a textbook*
- A single contribution to a collective work

Contribution to a Collective Work

A contribution to a collective work is a separate and independent work that is included within a collective work. A contribution to a collective work can be registered separately from the collective work or in combination with the collective work if certain requirements are met.

Examples of separate and independent works within a collective work include

- An article within a periodical
- A song included on an album
- Separate articles and photographs that appear in a newspaper

Registration of a Collective Work with Its Individual Works

A collective work and its individual works can be registered on one application with one filing fee only if

- Each work within the collective work contains a sufficient amount of original authorship;
- The copyright in the collective work and the copyright in the individual works is owned by the same party; *and*
- The individual works have not been previously published or previously registered.

For example, an album that contains multiple sound recordings that embody multiple musical compositions is considered a collective work for purposes of registration. Typically, the party that owns the copyright in the sound recordings also owns the copyright in the album, because that party is usually responsible for creating the album as a whole. If that is the case, the album and the multiple sound recordings can be registered together on one application as a collective work (assuming the recordings have not been published or registered before).

If the copyright owner of the album owns both the sound recordings and the musical compositions that are embodied in each recording, then the album, the musical compositions, and the sound recordings can be registered together on one application as a collective work (assuming the compositions and the recordings have not been published or registered before).

By contrast, if the copyright owner of the album does not own the copyright in the musical compositions (or vice versa), or if the compositions have been previously published, then each composition must be registered separately as an individual contribution to the collective work.

If you submit multiple works with one application, and the Copyright Office determines that the works can be registered together as a collective work, the Office may add an annotation to the certificate, such as “basis for registration: collective work.” As a general rule, the Office will not annotate the certificate if you expressly assert a claim in the “collective work” or the “compilation.”

Scope of a Registration for a Collective Work

A collective work is considered a single work for purposes of calculating statutory damages; therefore, registering a collective work together with the individual works contained in it may have important consequences in an infringement action. Section 504(c)(1) of the Copyright Act states that a copyright owner may be entitled to recover “an award of statutory damages for all infringements involved in the [infringement] action, with respect to any one work,” and “[f]or the purposes of this subsection, all the parts of a compilation . . . constitute one work.” The statute also states that a collective work is, by definition, a compilation. Thus, when you register a number of individual works as part of a collective work, you may be entitled to seek one award of statutory damages for the collective work as a whole rather than a separate award for each individual work, even if the defendant infringed all of those works.

Group Registration

The Copyright Office has established an administrative procedure that allows you to register a group of related works in certain limited categories with one application and one filing fee. This procedure is known as a “group registration.”

A group registration covers all the works that are included within the group, provided that you comply with specific requirements.

The Office currently offers group registration options for the following types of works:

- Serials
- Daily newspapers
- Daily newsletters
- Contributions to periodicals
- Published photographs
- Database updates and revisions

For information about the specific requirements for these group registration options, see **chapter 1100** of the *Compendium of U.S. Copyright Office Practices*.

Scope of a Group Registration

When the Copyright Office issues a group registration, it prepares one certificate of registration for the entire group and assigns one registration number to that certificate. A registration for a group of published photographs or a group of contributions to periodicals covers the copyrightable authorship in each work that has been included in the group, and each work is considered to be registered as a separate work. Similarly, a registration for a group of serials, newspapers, or newsletters covers each issue in the group, and each issue is considered to be registered as a separate work.

These facts may have important consequences in an infringement action. As noted above, section 504(c)(1) of the Copyright Act states that a copyright owner may be entitled to recover “an award of statutory damages for all infringements involved in the [infringement] action, with respect to any one work,” and “[f]or the purposes of this subsection, all the parts of a compilation [collective work] . . . constitute one work.”

A group registration does not create a compilation or collective work for the purposes of section 504, as the group is merely an administrative classification created solely for the purpose of registering multiple works or multiple issues with one application and one filing fee. The selection of the works for group registration is based on the regulatory requirements for group registration options. Any coordination or arrangement of the works is merely an administrative formality that facilitates the examination of the works. In addition, when works are combined for the purpose of registration, they are not recast, transformed, or adapted in any way.

Because a group registration as a whole is not a compilation or a collective work, the Office takes the position that a copyright owner may be entitled to claim a separate award of statutory damages for each work or each issue (in the case of newspapers, newsletters, or serials) covered by a group registration.

NOTE: A database is, by definition, a compilation of digital information. A group registration can cover new updates or revisions to one database during a specified time period. When the database and its updates are registered as a group, the copyright owner is entitled only to one award of statutory damages. For more information on databases, see **chapter 700**, Section 727, of the *Compendium*.

Unpublished Collections

The Copyright Office has established an administrative procedure that allows you to register a number of unpublished works with one application and one filing fee. This is known as an “unpublished collection.”

Registration of an Unpublished Collection

You can register a number of works as an unpublished collection, provided that the following conditions have been met:

- All of the copyrightable elements that are otherwise recognizable as self-contained works must be unpublished.
- The elements must be assembled in an orderly form.
- You must provide a single title for the collection as a whole.
- All of the elements must be created by the same author or, if the elements were created by multiple authors, at least one of the authors must have contributed copyrightable authorship to each work in the collection.
- The copyright claimant for all of the elements and the collection as a whole must be the same person or organization.

Works that do not satisfy these requirements cannot be registered as an unpublished collection.

In particular, you cannot use this option to register a number of published and unpublished works. If any of the works you want to register have been published, you must exclude those works from the claim.

For information about the specific requirements for registering an unpublished collection, see **chapter 1100**, section 1106, of the *Compendium*.

Scope of a Registration for an Unpublished Collection

A registration for an unpublished collection will remain in effect even if the works included in it are subsequently published, either separately or together. You can seek another registration for the first published edition of a work in the collection. However, it is entirely optional and not necessary to secure the statutory benefits of registration.

As a general rule, a registration for an unpublished collection covers each work in the collection that is copyrightable, and each work is considered to be registered as a separate work. It also may cover the authorship involved in selecting the works and assembling them into the collection as a whole, but only if you expressly claim that authorship in the application.

These facts may have important consequences in an infringement action. As noted above, section 504(c)(1) of the Copyright Act states that a copyright owner may be entitled to recover “an award of statutory damages for all infringements involved in the [infringement] action, with respect to any one work,” and “[f]or the purposes of this subsection, all the parts of a compilation [collective work] . . . constitute one work.”

Ordinarily, the unpublished collection itself is not considered a compilation or a collective work. It is merely an administrative classification created solely for the purpose of registering multiple unpublished works on one application with one filing fee. The Office therefore takes the position that copyright owners may be entitled to claim a separate award of statutory damages for each work that is included in an unpublished collection.

There is an important exception to this rule. If you expressly assert a claim in the selection, coordination, or arrangement of works in a collection, or assert a claim in the collection as a whole, the Office will register the works as a collective work rather than as an unpublished collection. Under section 504(c)(1) of the Copyright Act, all parts of a collective work constitute one work. So when you register works as a collective work rather than as an unpublished collection, the Copyright Office takes the position that you may be entitled to one award of statutory damages but may not be entitled to a separate award for each individual work, even if the defendant infringed all of the works specified in the registration.

If you submit two or more unpublished works on one application, and the Copyright Office determines that the works can be registered together as an unpublished collection, the Office will add an annotation to the certificate, such as “basis for registration: unpublished collection.” By contrast, if the applicant asserts a claim in the collection as a whole, the Office may add an annotation, such as “basis for registration: collective work.”

Unit of Publication

The Copyright Office has established an administrative procedure that allows you to register a number of published works on one application with one filing fee provided that the works were physically packaged or bundled together as a single unit and that they were first published in that integrated unit. Such a registration is known as the “unit of publication” option.

Definition and Examples

A unit of publication is a physical package that contains a number of separately fixed works that have been physically bundled together for distribution to the public as a single, integrated unit.

The following are representative examples of separately fixed works that could be considered a unit of publication:

- A bound volume published with a dust jacket
- A book published with a CD-ROM
- A multimedia kit containing a book, a compact disc, and a set of stickers
- A compact disc containing multiple sound recordings packaged together with liner notes and cover artwork
- A box set containing multiple compact discs containing multiple sound recordings, packaged together with a booklet containing liner notes and photographs
- A multi-DVD package with a disc containing a motion picture, a disc containing trailers and deleted scenes from the motion picture, and a disc containing interviews with the director and the cast
- A physical package containing a computer program and a user’s manual
- A physical package containing a videogame, cover artwork, and written instructions for installing the game
- A package of greeting cards
- A board game with playing pieces, game board, and written instructions
- A jewelry set of a necklace and earrings that are sold to the public as a single unit

Registration of a Unit of Publication

The requirements for registering a number of works as a unit of publication are very specific, and most works do not qualify for the unit of publication option. You can use it only if

- All of the copyrightable elements are recognizable as self-contained works.
- All of the works claimed in the application are first published as a single unit on the same date.
- The copyright claimant for all of the works claimed in the unit is the same.
- The unit, and all of the works within the unit, is distributed in a physical format.
- The unit contains an actual physical copy or phonorecord of all the works.
- The unit is distributed to the general public.

You can use the unit of publication option if the copyright claimant is the party primarily responsible for manufacturing, producing, publishing, packaging, or otherwise creating the single, integrated unit. However, the unit cannot have been created solely for the purpose of registering the works with the Copyright Office; instead, the works must have been distributed to the general public within that single, integrated unit.

The following are representative examples of works that cannot be registered as a unit of publication:

- Works first published in a digital form, even if sold together (for example, a digital music album and music video)
- Works that were first published on different dates
- Works first published on the same date either separately or in different units
- Works first published as separate and discrete works that were subsequently distributed together in the same unit
- Works distributed to wholesalers, retailers, or other intermediaries, even if on the same date
- Works that have been offered to the general public both individually and as a set
- Works created as part of the same collection, series, or set that have not been distributed together as a single, integrated unit
- Works that share the same characters, the same theme, or other similarities that have not been distributed together as a single, integrated unit
- Works uploaded to the same website, even if on the same date
- Works offered to the public as a unit but never distributed to the public
- Multiple photographs taken at the same photo shoot
- A catalog with photographs of copyrightable works offered for sale, either individually or as a unit

For additional information concerning the requirements for registering a unit of publication, see [chapter 1100](#), section 1107, of the *Compendium*.

Registration of Sound Recording with Work Embodied in It

The Copyright Office has established an administrative procedure that allows you to register a sound recording together with the musical, literary, or dramatic work embodied in that recording. You can register these works together on one application with one filing fee only if

- The claimant is the author of both the sound recording and the work embodied in that recording, or the claimant owns the copyright in both of those works

- You check “Sound Recording” on the “Author Created” screen if you complete an online application and describe the authorship of the musical, literary, or dramatic work in the “Other” field
- You use Form SR if you complete a paper application
- You submit a phonorecord that contains both the sound recording and the musical, literary, or dramatic embodied in that recording

NOTE

1. This circular is intended as an overview of registering multiple works with the Copyright Office. 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.

For Further Information

By Internet

The copyright law, the *Compendium*, electronic registration, application forms, regulations, and related materials are available on the Copyright Office website at www.copyright.gov.

By Email

To send an email inquiry, click the *Contact Us* link on the Copyright Office website.

By Telephone

For general information, call the Copyright Public Information Office at (202) 707-3000 or 1-877-476-0778 (toll free). Staff members are on duty from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, eastern time, Monday through Friday, except federal holidays. To request application forms or circulars by postal mail, call (202) 707-9100 or 1-877-476-0778 and leave a recorded message.

By Regular Mail

Write to

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U.S. Copyright Office
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