

COPYRIGHT, ATTRIBUTION, AND PERMISSION

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Occasionally I am asked for guidance on how to give proper credit when sharing material from my website. This document is intended to provide that guidance.

COPYRIGHT

[U.S. Copyright Law](#) (Title 17 of the U.S. Code) protects the **rights of the creator of any original work**, including scholarly books and articles, literary works, musical compositions, art works, photographs, recordings, videos, dramatic and choreographic works, and any other creative material. It covers authors, visual artists, photographers, composers, and choreographers. The law gives a copyright owner “exclusive rights” to the use of the material – meaning that **only the owner of the copyright has these rights** – including its **reproduction, distribution, display, and derivation**. Registration of copyright with the U.S. Copyright Office is not required for the exclusive rights to apply.

“Reproduction,” “distribution,” and “display” include copying and sharing, which only the owner has the right to do. “Derivation” refers to any changes to the material, including altering photos, videos, text, etc. **Paraphrase** (changing some words, their order, etc. while retaining the essential content of the excerpt) is a type of derivation covered by the Copyright Law.

Content on a website, if it is “original expression contributed by an author that contains at least a minimum amount of creativity” ([Copyright Registration of Websites and Website Content](#)), is covered by Copyright Law. This is true even if the author does not include a copyright notice on the website.

Any unauthorized use of a content creator’s work is an infringement of the author’s rights and a violation of law that can be enforced within the legal system. It is also a matter of ethics. Copying and sharing someone else’s original creation **without giving the author explicit credit** is often referred to as **plagiarism**, a form of dishonesty or theft.

ATTRIBUTION

A fundamental right of a content creator under the Copyright Law is the “right of attribution,” or the right “to claim authorship” of the content. Attribution, or acknowledging and giving credit to the author, is an easy and straightforward way to respect the rights of a content creator and avoid plagiarizing. This is a standing ethical policy in the world of education and scholarship, and it should be on the internet as well.

Besides being the honest and courteous thing to do when sharing someone else’s work, attribution has other pluses. It provides your audience with the opportunity to verify the reliability of the material, to explore its wider context and pursue more information, and perhaps to stimulate further research endeavors. It also forestalls any blame that would fall on someone who plagiarizes material that turns out to be wrong.

Unfortunately, many examples of copyrighted material with no attribution can be found circulating on eagle pages. This is a disservice both to the author and to readers.

The proper attribution to content on my website is:

© www.elfruler.com (which links directly to the site), or
© elfruler (which is not a link and thus is less helpful, but at least it attributes authorship)

The word “Copyright” can be substituted for the © symbol.

EXAMPLES

Anyone may copy, download, or print material on my website (text, images, charts, videos, diagrams, documents, etc.) for **private, personal use**. If you wish to copy **and share** any content, please provide proper attribution, and follow these guidelines:

Short excerpts

If you copy a short excerpt of text and share it elsewhere, please enclose the excerpt in **quotation marks** (“*copied text*”), followed by © or the word Copyright and a link to the specific page where the text appears. The **quotation marks are important** because they indicate that **you are not the author** of the text you are quoting. For example:

“Diurnal: active primarily during daylight hours, e.g. eagles and hawks, who hunt and migrate in the daytime” (© https://www.elfruler.com/?page_id=7666)

A short excerpt can serve as a teaser to encourage the reader to go directly to the website to read more. For example:

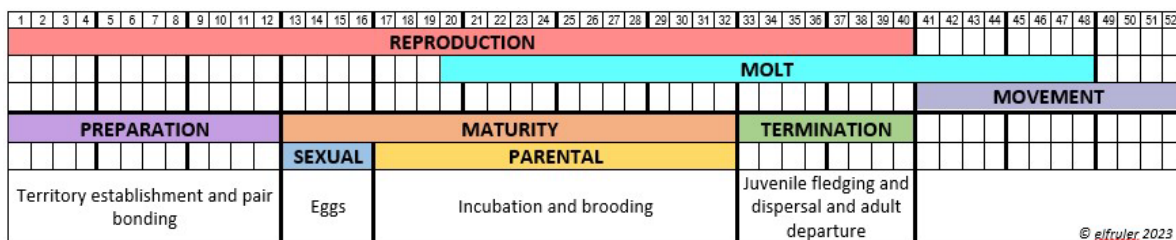
Elfruler discusses how “birds—like all wild animals—must maintain a **balance between the benefits and costs** of the activities that enable them to survive and thrive as species and as individuals. To maintain their evolutionary fitness, almost all species undergo a repeated cycle of activities and physiological changes, a genetically hard-wired program adapted over eons of time that is referred to as a species’ **Life History**.” (© www.elfruler.com. Read more on the page [Life History or Annual Cycle](#).)

Longer excerpts

Please don’t copy and share text from my website that is longer than about 3 sentences, but instead post a short teaser and provide a link to the page you wish to reference.

Images

If the **copyright is embedded in the image itself** as it appears on the site, it is shareable as is. For example:



Including a link to the website page in a comment or caption (https://www.elfruler.com/?page_id=10710) with the image would provide the reader with the opportunity to learn more.

If the **copyright is not embedded in the image**, just adding it in an accompanying caption or comment **is not sufficient**. If the copyright is separate from the image, as in the following example, it would be easy for someone else to copy and share the image without the attribution:



© www.elfruler.com

If you add the copyright **to the image itself** (using some kind of photo editing app) in such a way that it cannot be omitted, it would be okay to share it, for example:



Screen captures

A screen capture of anything on the website is a **reproduction of copyrighted material** and itself is **subject to Copyright Law**. Please **embed the copyright** in the screen capture.

Videos, PDFs & other documents

These may be downloaded for **private, personal use**, but please do not upload or otherwise share them. This includes a PDF that you might create from a web page. A link to the website page will take your reader directly to the material along with its context.

PERMISSION

You don't need my permission to post a link to my website. And as long as you **give proper attribution as described above**, you don't need permission to share a short excerpt, or an individual image, table, diagram, or chart (with embedded copyright).

A particular kind of permission is recognized in Copyright Law. A copyright owner can grant a person, organization, business, or other entity the authorization to exercise some or all of the rights of the owner, such as reproduction, distribution, or derivation of the copyrighted material. Such permission is sometimes referred to as a "license," and its terms would be detailed in a written agreement that authorizes the **use of specific material in a specific way**. The copyright owner usually requires attribution as one of the terms of such a license. Since my website is public and readily available to anyone who has internet access, I can think of no reason for me to grant such a license.

As an educator, I am gratified when anything I have created is considered useful enough to pass along to others. It may seem that whatever is on the internet is "free" and can be copied and shared without acknowledgement. But a website with original content, like mine, is the product of hard work, and anyone who has put in that hard work has earned the right to receive the credit.

Resources from the U.S. Copyright Office

[Title 17 of the U.S. Code](#)

[What Is Copyright?](#)

[Copyright Basics](#)

[Contact me](#) if you have further questions.