



*This article presents general guidelines for Georgia nonprofit organizations as of the date written and should not be construed as legal advice. Always consult an attorney to address your particular situation.*

## **Guide to e-Filing Copyright Registrations**

This article is a guide for nonprofits registering a federal copyright on the eCO Registration System at [Copyright.gov/registration](https://www.copyright.gov/registration) (“eCo”). During the online registration process, you will complete an application, make a payment, and upload a copy of the work (which is called the “deposit materials”). Generally, eCO is user friendly and will prompt you if any required fields have been left blank.

**E-filing vs. Paper Filing** E-filing, when available, is cheaper and faster than paper filing. While e-filing is the more common and preferred method for copyright registrations, some applications, as listed below, must be filed by paper:

- **Must** be filed online:
  - Group registrations: contributions to periodicals, published/unpublished photographs, unpublished works, serials, newsletters, and newspapers
  - Architectural works
  - Supplementary registrations (except those correcting or amplifying a Form GATT, renewal, or nonphotographic database group registration, which must be completed by paper)
  
- May be filed on paper (fill-in forms) or online:
  - Literary works (Form TX)
  - Visual arts (Form VA)
  - Performing arts and motion pictures (Form PA)
  - Sound recordings (Form SR)
  - Single serial issues (Form SE)
  
- **Must** be filed on paper:
  - Vessel designs (Form D-VH)
  - Mask works (Form MW)
  - Copyright renewal claims (Form RE)
  - Works with U.S. copyright restored under the 1994 Uruguay Round Agreements Act (Form GATT)
  - Automated database updates consisting mostly of non-photographic

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content (Form TX)

**Steps for Registering a Claim Online in eCO** After the user has registered to create an account in the eCO system, there are 3 steps to register a claim to copyright:

- (1) Complete an application
- (2) Pay the associated fee (Pay online with a credit/debit card or ACH transfer via Pay.gov, or with a deposit account)
- (3) Submit your work

**Step 1: Application.** After logging into the homepage, on the left side of the page under the “Copyright Registration” header, select one of the registration options.

Click “Start Registration” to open a new application. You must complete all 12 sections (i.e., see all 12 checkmarks on the left-hand side) before the system will allow you to move to the next part of the application. Below are some tips for the application:

- a. ***Type of Work*** - this question is an important part of the application; you cannot change your selection once submitted, and the entire application changes based on your answer. When Type of Work is selected in the drop-down menu, a definition of each type of literary work is provided so that the user can confirm the proper selection. Generally, the correct selection should be fairly obvious; however, if it is not, be sure to read the potential choices very carefully.
- b. ***Titles*** - you must enter at least one “Title of work being registered,” which is the main title of the work that you want to copyright.
  - i. The title does not have to appear in the deposit materials (i.e., copy of the work that you submit to the Copyright Office).
  - ii. The title of the work should be fairly straightforward, except, potentially, in collective works (i.e., works that assemble together multiple individual works). The following example, relating to albums, should provide some clarity regarding the titles of collective works:
    1. If you are registering the entire album, then the album title is the “Title of work being registered” and the track titles are the “Contents titles.”
    2. If you are registering just the track and not registering the entire album, then the track title is the “Title of work being registered” and the album title is the “Title of larger work.”
- c. ***Publication/Completion*** - you must indicate whether the work has been

published (i.e., the distribution of copies of a work to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership). Generally, if the work has been distributed to the public in any manner, then it has probably been published. If it has not been published, then you only need to provide the year that the work was completed.

d. **Authors** - you must provide the name and citizenship of the author(s) of the work.

- iii. An author can be an organization or an individual.
- iv. If a work has multiple authors, then each author's information is entered individually.
- v. You will need to indicate whether the work was a "work made for hire." If you are registering a work made for hire, then the organization is the only author that you need to list. A work made for hire, in the most basic sense, occurs either:
  - 1. when you have an employee authoring the work within the scope of his/her employment; or
  - 2. in a very narrow list of certain types of works, when you commission a work from someone outside your organization and the contract expressly indicates that the work is "made for hire" (this area of law is complicated; consult an attorney for more information).

e. **Claimants**

- vi. You must provide the name and address of the individual/organization on whose behalf you are filing the registration.
- vii. If this individual/organization is not an author, then you will need to indicate how the work was transferred from the author to the claimant:
  - 1. Written agreement (e.g., contract)
  - 2. Inheritance (e.g., will)
  - 3. Other (e.g., court order)

f. **Limitation of Claim**

- viii. If any of the work is not original material, then you need to indicate, generally, the category of the work that is not original material (e.g., photos in a handout that are subject to a different copyright claim). You will not have to specifically highlight the material that is not original.
- ix. If all of the work is original material, then you will not enter anything into this section.

g. **Rights & Permissions** **\*\*OPTIONAL\*\***

- x. Provide contact information for the person in your organization who you want people to contact when they want to use your material (or just your organization's general contact information).

Note: You can use the same contact information for Rights & Permissions, Correspondent and Mail Certificate.

h. **Special Handling** **\*\*OPTIONAL\*\***

- xi. You can only request special handling in the face of litigation, customs issues, or contract/publishing deadlines relating to the work to be copyrighted. Nonprofit organizations will almost never need to request special handling.
- xii. Special handling is very expensive (\$800+ as of April 2026). For more information, refer to the [Copyright Website](#).

i. **Certification**

- xiii. Before submitting this first section of the application, you must certify that:
  - 1. you are the author, claimant, owner, or agent of the same; and
  - 2. the information that you provided is correct.
- i. You can also provide other comments (e.g., if you redacted confidential information from the deposit materials, you can indicate that here).

j. **Review Submission**- review the information that you entered before clicking "Add to Cart."

**Step 2: Make Payment**- after completing the application, you pay the processing fees. This section should be just like any other online payment website.

**Step 3: Submit Deposit Materials**- after paying the processing fees, you will receive a confirmation email from the Copyright Office with a prompt to upload the deposit materials in eCo relating to the work for which you are applying for copyright protection (i.e., a copy of the work). See [this helpful video](#) from the Copyright Office for a walk-through of the process.

- a. Generally, deposit materials for the following works can be submitted

electronically:

- i. unpublished works;
  - ii. works NOT subject to the best edition requirements;
  - iii. works published only electronically;
  - iv. works for which the deposit material is ID Material (i.e., photos of 3-D works or any works larger than 96" in any dimension); and
  - v. group registration options for specific works or sound recordings published on the same album.
- b. If you plan to use the following group registrations options, you MUST upload a digital copy of each work being registered. DO NOT mail a physical copy to the Copyright Office:
- i. Unpublished works created by same author or co-authors;
  - ii. Two-dimensional artworks, published within the same calendar year, created by one author;
  - iii. Group of issues from same serial publication, same newspaper, same newsletter, or a group of updates to the same news website;
  - iv. Group of short online literary works;
  - v. Group of contributions by same individual that were first published in a periodical; and
  - vi. Group of test items that were prepared for use in a secure test.
- c. Usually, you only need to upload one copy of the work. If you cannot submit deposit materials electronically (i.e., the work does not fit into one of the above three categories), then you will probably need to mail two copies of the "best edition" of the work to the Copyright Office (see Section e, below). The following exceptions apply:
- i. you only need to submit one copy of works first published outside the US;
  - ii. you only need to submit the first and last 25 pages of source code of a computer program (there are many special deposit requirements for computer source code; consult an attorney for more information);
  - iii. you only need to submit one copy of a collective work if you are just registering a portion of that work; and
  - iv. you must submit a description and a copy of a motion picture.
- d. Acceptable file type/sizes:
- i. Almost any [file type](#) (e.g., .xls, .pdf, .mp3, docx).
  - ii. No larger than 500MB.
    - 1. If the deposit material is larger than 500MB, then split it into

multiple files and number the files consecutively.

e. “Best Edition”

- i. Published works generally require the deposit of two physical copies of the “[best edition](#),” meaning the highest quality version of the work available. For additional information, refer to the [Copyright Website](#).

Examples of “best edition”:

1. archival-quality paper rather than printer paper;
  2. hard cover rather than soft cover;
  3. illustrations in color rather than black and white; or
  4. larger editions rather than smaller.
- ii. If there is only one version of the work, then two copies of that version will be acceptable.
  - iii. There are exceptions to the two-copy physical mailing requirement. For additional information, refer to the [Copyright Website](#).

The following work types now allow or require electronic deposit:

1. Literary monographs (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, memoirs, textbooks, etc.): generally require only one copy. If more than one copy is required, the Copyright Office will contact the applicant;
  2. Single Serial issues (magazines, journals, newsletters, etc.): a digital upload is now required instead of physical copies;
  3. Musical works: if first published in a phonorecord (CD, LP, or digital file), a digital audio file may be uploaded instead of submitting a physical copy;
  4. Photographs (Group Registration): electronic copies in JPEG, GIF, or TIFF format are required for group registration; or
  5. Architectural works: a digital file of the most finished version of the architectural drawing may be submitted electronically.

For more guidance, see the detailed video eCo tutorials by the U.S Copyright Office at <https://www.copyright.gov/eco/tutorials.html>.