## Duration of Copyright

<table>
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<th>Act</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| 1909 Copyright Act | • Federal copyright secured on the date a work was published or, for unpublished works, on the date of registration.  
• Lasted for 28 years from the date it was secured.  
• Eligible for renewal during the final, that is, 28th year, of the first term. If renewed, the copyright was extended for a second, or renewal, term of 28 years. If it was not renewed, the copyright expired at the end of the first 28-year term, and the work is no longer protected by copyright. |
| Congressional copyright extensions | • A series of nine acts that provided interim extensions for works whose copyright protection began between September 19, 1906, and December 31, 1918, if they were in their renewal terms. Without these interim extensions, copyrights commencing during that time would have expired after 56 years, at the end of their renewal terms, between September 19, 1962, and December 31, 1976. |
| Copyright Amendment 1992 for works originally copyrighted between January 1, 1964, and December 31, 1977 | • Congress amended the copyright law on June 26, 1992, to automatically renew the copyright in these works (*January 1, 1964, to December 31, 1977*) and to make renewal registration for them optional. |
| 1976 Copyright Act | • Same as 1909 Copyright, except the length of the renewal term increased to 47 years.  
• In affect starting January 1, 1978.  
• All terms of copyright will run through the end of the calendar year in which they expire.  
  - This provision affects the duration of all copyrights, including those in either their first or their second term on January 1, 1978.  
  - For works eligible for renewal, the renewal filing period begins on December 31 of the 27th year of the copyright term. |

### Works Created on or after January 1, 1978

- The law automatically protects a work that is created and fixed in a tangible medium of expression on or after January 1, 1978:  
  - From the moment of its creation  
  - The author’s life plus an additional 70 years

[https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ15a.pdf](https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ15a.pdf)
For a “joint work prepared by two or more authors who did not work for hire”:
  o 70 years after the last surviving author’s death

For works made for hire and anonymous and pseudonymous works:
  o 95 years from first publication or
  o 120 years from creation
    • whichever is shorter (unless the author’s identity is later revealed in Copyright Office records, in which case the term becomes the author’s life plus 70 years)

Works in Existence but Not Published or Copyrighted on January 1, 1978

• The law automatically gives federal copyright protection to works that were created, but neither published nor registered before January 1, 1978.

• Duration of copyright: life plus 70 years or 95 or 120 years, depending on the nature of authorship.

• However, all works in this category are guaranteed at least 25 years of statutory protection.

• The law specifies that in no case would copyright in a work in this category have expired before December 31, 2002.

• In addition, if a work in this category was published before that date, the term extends another 45 years, through the end of 2047.