

# Using the Single Application

The Single Application is a streamlined option for registering simple claims in one work (not made for hire) by a single author who is also the sole owner of all rights in the work. It is available only for works meeting the Copyright Office's eligibility requirements. This circular is intended as a guide for determining whether or not a work meets those requirements.

The Single Application is a simplified online registration option that allows a single author to register a claim in one work that is solely owned by the same author and is not a work made for hire. Certain types of works are not eligible for the Single Application option, as they create a more complex application that takes additional time to examine. Accordingly, for most works, using the Standard Application to register a copyright claim is most appropriate. The Single Application registration option is available only for works meeting the Copyright Office's eligibility requirements.<sup>1</sup> For a list of representative examples of eligible and ineligible works, please see the table at the end of this circular.

**NOTE:** The Copyright Office will refuse registration of a copyright claim mistakenly filed with a Single Application. Applicants who mistakenly use the Single Application will need to submit a new claim using the Standard Application and pay the full standard filing fee for registration. Copyright Office fees are subject to change. For current fees, see *Copyright Office Fees (Circular 4)*, available on the Office's website at [www.copyright.gov](http://www.copyright.gov) or call the Office at (202) 707-3000 or 1-877-476-0778 (toll free).

Single Application eligibility requirements:

- The claim must be submitted online using the Office's electronic registration system, using the application labelled "One Work by One Author."
- Only one work can be registered (for example, no collections of individual works).
- The work must have been created by a single author (for example, no joint works, works made for hire, or derivative works based on another author's work).
- All the material contained in the work and in the deposit must be by the same individual.

- The author and the owner or claimant must be the same individual.
- The application must be submitted by the author/claimant, or an authorized third party who lists him or herself as the correspondent.

## The Single Application Distinguished from Other Registration Options

The Single Application is a registration option to facilitate registration of simple copyright claims. Accordingly, the Single Application may not be used to register claims in architectural works, choreography, websites, databases, collective works, or secure tests, which are more complex. In addition, the Single Application is distinct from the registration option for units of publication and the group registration options for certain categories of works, such as newspapers and newsletters. If you wish to register multiple works using one application, filing fee, and deposit, please consult *Multiple Works* ([Circular 34](#)).

**NOTE:** Most motion pictures, audiovisual works, and sound recordings are not eligible for the Single Application.

## The One Work Requirement

The Single Application may be used to register one work, generally containing one form of authorship.

If you want to register a single work that includes interdependent or inseparable elements of authorship by the same author (such as an illustrated novel where you are the sole author and owner of the text and illustrations), you may use the Single Application as long as the elements are contained in the work deposited.

Some examples of works with multiple types of authorship that may be registered with the Single Application include:

- A musical work where you are the sole author and owner of the lyrics and music
- A children's book where you are the sole author and owner of the text and illustrations

Works with multiple types of authorship that may not be registered with the Single Application include:

- A novel with excerpts from an upcoming work at the end, even if you are the sole author and owner of both the novel and the excerpts
- A multipart work, such as a series of books or photographs
- A script and accompanying illustrations by a different person
- A sound recording track and liner notes
- A lyric sheet and a separate sound recording containing music without lyrics

## The One Author Requirement

The work must have been created by one individual, and that person must be the copyright owner or claimant. The work may not be a work made for hire or a joint work.

Common examples of works with multiple authors — which must be registered using the Standard Application instead of the Single Application — include:

- A nonfiction monograph with an afterword or foreword written by another person
- A sound recording that includes beats or music purchased or licensed for use on the track
- A derivative work or adaptation of another author’s work
- A musical composition with different authors of the words and music
- A sound recording with multiple performers
- A recorded dramatic dialogue with two performers
- A comic book with text and illustrations by two authors

*Example:* Sam has created two short videos: one video captures an empty meadow with narration by Sam, and the other one captures a friend dancing to disco music. Sam may register the first video using the Single Application, but he must use a Standard Application for the second video.

*Example:* Alex has two sound recordings: one produced by Alex, in which she is the sole performer of her own composition, and the other one produced by Alex, in which she is accompanied by a friend, Jean. Alex may register the first sound recording using the Single Application, but must use a Standard Application for the second sound recording.

## **Content Requirement**

All material within the work and deposit must be created by the same individual in order to use the Single Application. Common examples of works containing material created by other individuals include:

- Works incorporating stock photographs, family photographs, clip art, or images found online
- A deposit consisting of a separate lyric sheet and a separate sound recording of music without lyrics
- A video taken by one person featuring another person performing a song

## **Consistent Author and Claimant Requirement**

The Single Application may only be used when the author is the only copyright owner or claimant in the work. Because the author and claimant must be the same individual in order to use the Single Application, the information provided in the “author” and “claimant” fields must be identical.

*Example:* Sue is the composer and lyricist in “My Song.” Prior to registration, she assigns the exclusive right of publication to ABC Company. To register the work, she will need to use a Standard Application.

## Registration Procedure for the Single Application

After you (or an authorized third party) log into the Copyright Office’s electronic registration system and click on “Register One Work by One Author,” you will be asked to confirm the following information:

1. You are registering one work (such as one poem, one song, or one photograph).
2. The work was created by one individual.
3. All of the material contained within the work was created by the same individual.
4. The author and the owner/claimant of the work is the same person, and that person owns all of the rights in the work.
5. The work is not a work made for hire.

If you are unable to confirm all of the above information, you should return to the main menu and select a different form. The Standard Application is the most commonly used application, and it allows you to enter multiple titles, authors, and claimants.

**NOTE:** If your application is submitted by an authorized third party, the third party must list himself or herself as the correspondent in the application.

## Uploading Multiple Files for One Work

To complete an application, you must submit a copy of your work. The Office recommends that, when possible, you upload digital files through the electronic registration system rather than submitting a physical copy through the mail. In general, works that are eligible for the Single Application should be uploaded in one digital file, such as one .doc file, one .avi file, one .mp3 file, or one .jpg file.

If you intend to upload more than one file, it is highly unlikely that your claim meets the requirements for the Single Application. As discussed above, this application is limited to one work (*i.e.*, one item), and it cannot be used for one upload that contains multiple works (*i.e.*, two or more items). Applicants should upload multiple files only in limited cases, such as when you must upload “identifying material” containing multiple representations of the same work (in such limited cases, a .zip file may be uploaded).

*Example:* Jack, the author and claimant, wishes to use a Single Application to register his sculpture. To submit a deposit to the Office, he must submit identifying material, such as photographs, that adequately represent the authorship claimed in the sculpture. He may submit multiple photographs to sufficiently show all of the sculpture’s copyrightable elements.

## Consequences of Mistakenly Using the Single Application

If you attempt to use the Single Application to register a work that does not meet all of the eligibility requirements, the Copyright Office will refuse to register your claim, and you will need to refile using a Standard Application. This will result in a delayed effective date of registration, additional filing fee, and submission of a new deposit. The Office will review Single Applications to determine

if they meet all the eligibility requirements. Please note that the Office will make the final determination on whether or not a work is eligible for registration using the Single Application.

## **Application Tips**

Mistakes in applications lead to delays in registration, so it is important to complete the application accurately. Instructions for completing an online application appear in the “help” text that accompanies the application. Here are some tips regarding common points of confusion.

### ***Anonymous and Pseudonymous Works***

The author and claimant must be the same person in order to use the Single Application. When submitting an anonymous work or a pseudonymous work, be careful not to inadvertently include the author’s real name in the application, as it will become part of the public record and cannot be changed once the Office has issued a registration.

The appearance of an author’s real name in the public record may affect the term of copyright protection. For works created on or after January 1, 1978, the copyright in a pseudonymous or anonymous work expires 95 years from the year of publication or 120 years from the year of creation, whichever is shorter. However, if the legal name of the author is identified in the records of the Copyright Office, then the term of copyright will be the life of the author plus seventy years.

When you complete a Single Application for an anonymous work, you may check the box indicating that the author did not put his or her real name on the work. The system will automatically add the term “Anonymous” to the name of the author and claimant.

When you complete a Single Application for a pseudonymous work, you may check the box indicating that the author used his or her pseudonym on the work instead of providing his or her real name. The system will instruct you to enter the pseudonym on the application instead of providing the author’s real name.

Only check the “Anonymous” box if the author’s name does not appear on the deposit copy of the work. If you select “Anonymous,” even though the work contains the author’s real name, the Office may communicate with you about the discrepancy, leading to a delay in registration.

### ***Authorship Statement***

To register a work with the Single Application, the applicant must select, from a dropdown box listing works typically registered with the Single Application, the type of new copyrightable authorship that the author created. Instead of identifying the individual elements of the work, applicants are asked to assert a claim in the work as a whole. For example, if the author created a poem or a painting, the applicant should select “one poem” or “one painting” from the dropdown box.

*Example:* Andy, the author and claimant, wishes to use a Single Application to register his children’s book. Andy created both the text and artwork appearing in the book. To describe this work, Andy should select the option for “one short story.”

*Example:* Andrea, the author and claimant, wishes to use a Single Application to register her logo. Andrea created the logo by herself. To describe this work, Andrea should select the option for “one logo.”

*Example:* Sam, the author and claimant, wishes to use a Single Application to register his video of an empty field. Sam created both the motion picture of the field and the accompanying narration. To describe this work, Sam should select the option for “one audiovisual work by one author.”

*Example:* Samantha, the author and claimant, wishes to use a Single Application to register the sound recording of her performing her original composition. Samantha was solely responsible for producing the sound recording as well as performing and writing the music and lyrics. To describe this work, Samantha should select the option for “sound recording and musical work (with or without lyrics) by same author.”

**Limitation of Claim**

If the work contains an appreciable amount of material that the author created and previously published or registered, you must exclude that material from the claim. To do so, on the “Limitation of Claim” screens, describe in your own words the material that was previously published or previously registered. The Office will assume that you intend to register all other copyrightable aspects of the work.

**NOTE:** A Single Application cannot be used if the work contains material co-created or co-owned by two or more people. If you intend to use the Limitation of Claim screen to exclude another person’s work from the claim, you likely need to use a Standard Application rather than the Single Application.

<i>Work Category</i>	<i>Eligible for registration using the Single Application</i>	<i>Ineligible for registration using the Single Application</i>
<i>Literary Works</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one article</li> <li>• one nonfiction monograph</li> <li>• one essay</li> <li>• one novel</li> <li>• one poem</li> <li>• one short story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two or more articles</li> <li>• two or more stories</li> <li>• two or more poems</li> <li>• dictionaries</li> <li>• directories</li> <li>• encyclopedias</li> <li>• serials</li> </ul>
<i>Motion Pictures and Audiovisual Works</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one “selfie video” featuring one person</li> <li>• one video game</li> <li>• one motion picture created by the only individual shown in the work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two or more motion pictures</li> <li>• two or more audiovisual works</li> <li>• more than one version of a motion picture</li> <li>• more than one version of an audiovisual work</li> <li>• one motion picture featuring two or more people</li> <li>• one motion picture featuring one person who is not the person recording the motion picture</li> </ul>

<b>Work Category</b>	<b>Eligible for registration using the Single Application</b>	<b>Ineligible for registration using the Single Application</b>
<i>Performing Arts Works</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one song with music and lyrics, if any, fixed in sheet music by the same author</li> <li>• one instrumental composition</li> <li>• one screenplay</li> <li>• one script</li> <li>• one treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two or more songs</li> <li>• more than one version of a song</li> <li>• a song and liner notes</li> <li>• two or more scripts or treatments</li> <li>• more than one version of a script or treatment</li> <li>• a musical play, script, and songs</li> </ul>
<i>Sound Recordings</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one sound recording where the author and owner is the only performer and producer in the recording</li> <li>• one song, literary work, or dramatic work and sound recording where the same individual is the author of both the song and the sound recording, and that individual is the only performer and producer of the recording</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• two or more sound recordings</li> <li>• different versions of a sound recording</li> <li>• one sound recording produced and performed by two or more people</li> <li>• one sound recording performed by one person who is not the author of the song contained in the recording</li> </ul>
<i>Visual Arts Works</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one carpet design</li> <li>• one drawing</li> <li>• one fabric design</li> <li>• one logo</li> <li>• one photograph</li> <li>• one map</li> <li>• one technical drawing of one object</li> <li>• one piece of jewelry</li> <li>• one poster</li> <li>• one sculpture</li> <li>• one wallpaper design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a collection or set containing multiple pieces of jewelry</li> <li>• a portfolio of photographs</li> <li>• two or more drawings (even on the same page)</li> <li>• multiple versions of a logo</li> </ul>

**NOTE**

1. This circular is intended as an overview of the requirements for using the Single Application. 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, copyright regulations, and the *Compendium* are available on the Copyright Office website at [www.copyright.gov](http://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](http://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

Library of Congress  
U.S. Copyright Office  
Publications Section  
101 Independence Avenue, SE #6304  
Washington, DC 20559-6304

