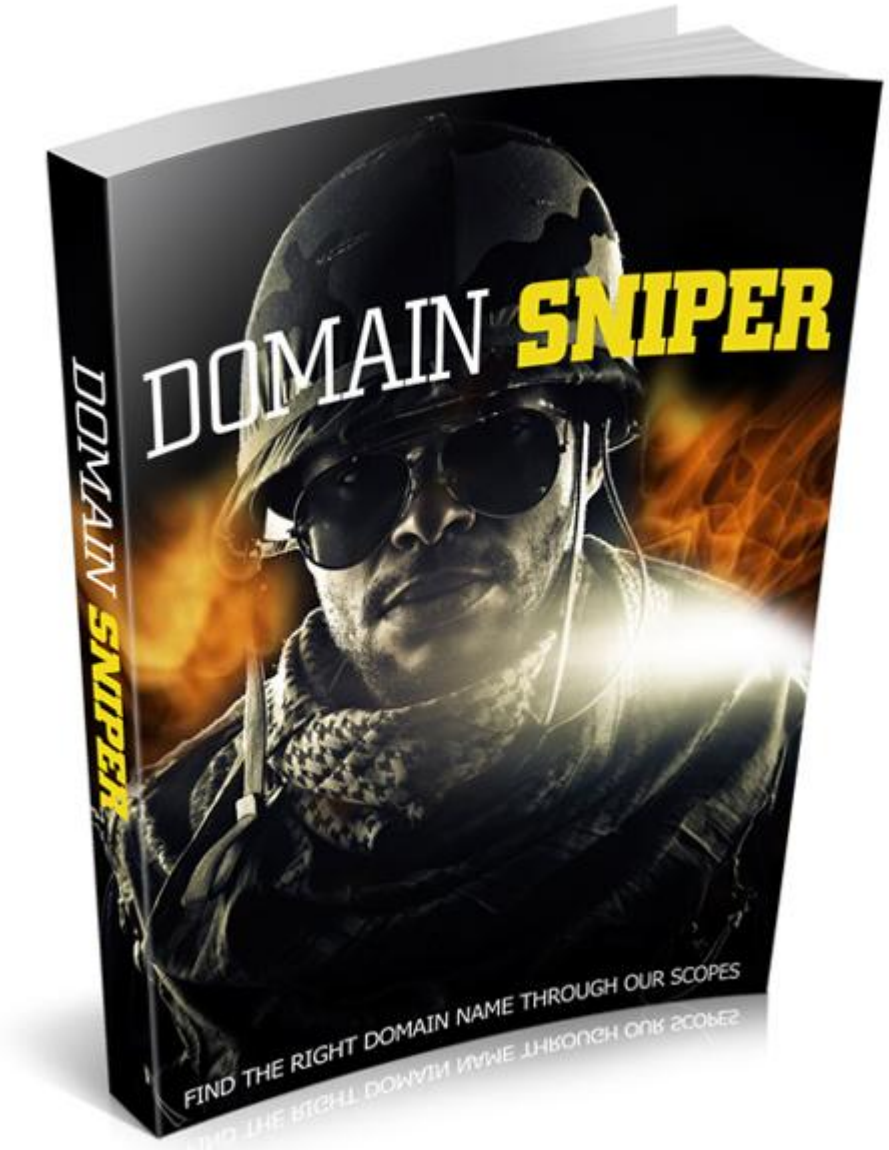
Domain Sniper



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Public Domain

Public Domain is the vast body of material that includes books, photos, music and information that is available for the public to use and republish...free.

All of this is normally protected by copyright laws, but copyright protection is not forever. Intellectual property that is not covered by copyright laws belongs to the public domain. Therefore, it is open to everyone who wants to use it. And that can mean serious financial gain for you.

How Do You Know If a Work is Public Domain?

Copyright laws vary from country to country. In the United States, there are three general rules that you need to follow to help you assess potential public domain works.

RULE #1: Works published in the United States before 1923 are considered public domain.

This rule is cut and dry. There are no exceptions. If the work was published, created, or produced prior to 1923, then it is in the public domain.

RULE #2: Works created after March 1, 1989, even if not published, are copyright protected for 70 years after the author's death. Works made for hire (corporate authorship) after March 1, 1989 are copyright protected for 120 years from creation or 95 years from publication, whichever is sooner.

This rule, of course, means that you do not have to actively file for copyright notice to come under the protection of the copyright law. Under this rule, all creative work produced after March 1, 1989 is automatically covered.

The phrase "works made for hire" actually refers to publications issued for and by a corporation so the legal author turns out to be the employer or corporation. That is why they are sometimes collectively referred to as "corporate authorship" and may include anything from newsletters to employee manuals, annual reports and instructional texts.

Works made for hire may also cover any situation wherein a creative professional is paid to produce a work within the scope of his own employment.

RULE #3: Works published in the United States between 1923 and March 1, 1989 are also copyright protected, provided the formalities are observed.

These formalities include notice of copyright, registration, and/or renewal. Failure to observe these formalities means the work is in the public domain. On the other

hand, if you comply with the requirements, then your work is under copyright protection.

So, to summarize, you know that a particular work falls into the public domain if it comes under any of the following conditions:

- Published before 1923
- Published between 1923 and 1978 without a valid copyright notice
- Published between 1978 and March 1, 1989, without a notice and registration
- Published between 1923 and 1963 with a copyright notice but author failed to renew it *(According to a report, only 7% of copyrights issued through 1958 were renewed)*

However, a work is *not* public domain if any of the following conditions apply:

- Published between 1923 and 1963 with a copyright notice, properly renewed before its expiration for the first 23-year protection term
- Published between 1963 and March 1, 1989 with a valid copyright notice
- Published or created any time after March 1, 1989 *(Works after this date are deemed automatically under copyright protection)*

Where Can You Find Public Domain Work?

There are two basic methods for finding public domain work.

The first is classic ***DIY*** or do-it-yourself. This method is not very fast and will probably not yield that many results, but it will cost you virtually nothing. The other method is the ***paid way***, wherein you pay a third party to do the research for you.

Whichever you prefer, you may still want to know how to locate public domain work on your own.

Internet

Start by searching for keywords and phrases like:

- public domain music
- public domain images
- public domain books
- public domain movies
- public domain works
- public domain library
- public domain software

****A word to the wise -- Don't trust everyone.** Information from the Library of Congress is reliable. If you're doing the research yourself, it's in your best interest to contact a copyright lawyer before you publish the work, just in case it falls outside the copyright laws.

- **Talk it Out**

  Besides regular websites, public domain works are also available in boards with public posting access, e.g. forums, message boards, and e-groups. Just do a search for “public domain forum,” substituting “forum” with message boards, list, group, news, community, etc.

  *****Just remember:*** *Before you join any group, forum, or community, browse through the forum posts and member profiles first to determine if the members are easy to talk with and are not averse to answering questions (okay, a lot of questions) from newbies.*

- **Go Right to the Source**

  When you do your search for public domain works, you will find that many libraries and groups offer you a wide range of creative work in the public domain. Countless copies of work without copyright protection are digitized, archived in online databases, and made freely available to the public.

  According to them, this helps ensure the information is freely available to scholars, educators, students, and the general public.

Start your search using the following resources:

- www.Bartleby.com – For a collection of online reference books, this site is the place to go. It also contains literature (fiction and non fiction), verse, quotations, and books in the public domain.

- www.Ibiblio.org – A collaborative project between the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill's MetaLab and the Center for the Public Domain, Ibiblio.org is a database of freely available information, including software, music, literature, art, history, science, politics, and cultural studies.

- www.ReadPrint.com – As a *free* online library, this site offers thousands of free books that a student, teacher, or even the classic enthusiast can use completely without charge. It has an author index which allows you to read free biographical information about them.

- www.Gutenberg.org – Approximately 18,000 free public domain e-books are available.

The Traditional Way

Public libraries are often a treasure trove of public domain work. Often the staff will be able to direct you to the resources you're looking for. Browsing through the card catalog will also turn up golden nuggets, as they usually contain the date of publication.

After finding the public domain materials you need, you are now ready for the next step, which is preparing this work for resale. One of the proven packaging methods to re-sell public domain works is through an e-book.

An ***e-book*** is a term that refers to a digital version of a book.

How to Create an E-Book

Creating an ebook is simple. You can scan a physical book, compile the scans and transfer them to a PDF file, or you can hire a freelancer to transcribe the book in Word or another data processing program, so you can turn that into a PDF file.

The beauty of e-books is they can be easily downloaded from the Internet, whether direct from a website or as an email attachment. However, downloading can be slow for some consumers, especially if they are not using a broadband connection.

E-books that are particularly long can take quite a long time to download and can be a source of hassle for your consumers. Aside from cutting your e-book into mini, easy to download file sizes (which would totally defeat the whole purpose of having an e-book for a product in the first place), the best option you have is to ***zip your e-book into an archive***. This will compress your e-book into a smaller file and will make it easy to download.

You can download free PDF software from www.Software995.com

How to Turn E-Books into Money-Making Machines

Your public domain work can be used to make money in a variety of ways. Take your inspiration from these well known stories:

Walt Disney

Walt Disney has made a billion dollar fortune on timeless stories that we have always loved. His entire empire is built on characters from these stories, making everything from movies, TV shows, songs, music, theme parks, and so much more.

His source? The Grimm Brother's Collection of Fairy Tales – a public domain work. Disney simply copied them, tweaked the characters' names, rewrote a happy ending, slapped the whole thing on a piece of film, added some music, and voila! He opened a whole new world of magic while he made profit out of it.

Ted Turner

Turner Classic Movies (TCM), a cable network that earns millions of dollars a year in gross profits, broadcasts classic films that have long since entered the public domain, Ted Turner only pays a very minimal cost when broadcasting.

This is a far cry from other broadcast stations who must shell out millions to pay for royalties and other fees.

As a shrewd businessman, Ted Turner saw the opportunity of a lifetime that public domain offered – re-distributing copyright-free works and earning a fortune for his effort.

You will find many more examples of rags-to-riches stories around public domain re-selling. Who said this kind of stories only exist in fairy tales? You can create your own fairy tale, too, by turning public domain ideas into dollars.

After choosing one or two works from the public domain that incites your passion, now is the time for you to generate sales. Here are some tips to help you:

Re-sell, Re-distribute, and Reap the Profits

One of the easiest ways to earn money from public domain e-books is duplicating the exact content of public domain works and re-selling them.

Since the product is already in the public domain, there are no royalties and no worries about copyright infringement. You do not even have to get permission from the original author in order to excerpt, reprint, or advertise their products.

You can make as many copies as you want of the original public domain work, convert them into downloadable e-book format (See previous section for instructions on how to create an e-book) and can start re-selling, re-distributing, and reaping the profits.

Give E-Books a Face-lift and Make Money

Have you noticed how successful companies re-package their products over and over?

Walt Disney made use of this great business strategy. He came up with a new way of telling old fairy tales, giving the stories a refreshing feel. You can do this, too, with an old public domain story.

Just choose the public domain work you want. Create a revised edition of it and then sell it as your own. Or, rework the piece, add your own style, repackage it and sell it as your own. Because of the copyright protection attached to it, no one else can copy your work. This means the work is completely yours – free for your use, private or otherwise.

Giving public domain work a face-lift does not take a creative genius. The whole thing can be simple; just change the format of a work by doing any or all of the following:

- Make the type face cleaner;
- Make the text more attractive by arranging it into sidebars and tables. This would make the content much easier to read than blocked text arranged in a boring, monotonous paragraph;
- Add graphics, headings, or color texts;
- Make a few actual changes to the text, either by adding new material or subtracting unnecessary lines.
- turn a book into an audio or video

****NOTE:** If you only made minor revisions to a public domain work and did not make any actual changes to the content, it is not advisable to file for a separate copyright notice for the “new” work. If you must protect your product, then use the protection feature that most e-book creation software offers – one that makes it possible for you to protect your files from major theft and tampering.

Recreate Public Domain Images and Sell Them

Besides modernizing public domain text, another alternative is recreating copyright-free images. Again, you do not have to be an artist to do this sort of thing. You do, however, need to know a little about digital art software like Photoshop or Corel Draw.

With the help of a good image editing software, you can make alterations in a public domain image, depicting tired old works like Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* or Picasso’s Woman in front of the Mirror in a humorous twist.

In fact, there may already be several funny depictions of these works circulating the net – propaganda posters like the US Government’s We Can Do It!, Leonardo da Vinci’s The Vetruvian Man, and many more. These images are in the public domain so they are free for use by the public any which way they want.

Once you have a collection of these “modernized” public domain images, you can group them and publish them as themed calendars, posters, bumper stickers, coffee mugs, or other gift items. You can even print your products and sell them online as t-shirts, hats, book bags, cards, and more.

There are two ways of doing this. You can hire a company that specializes in promotional products. Have them make an inventory of all your altered public domain images so you can store them and ship them whenever a buyer decides to purchase from your site. Or, you can enlist the services of a Print on Demand company like Café Press or Lulu and let them reproduce or reprint copies of your public domain images.

Redistribute Public Domain Works on eBay

Right now, eBay is one of the most powerful websites for selling products to the world. Based on auction-style selling, buyers can bid on a product up until the time deadline and then the highest bid wins the product.

Make CD Versions of Public Domain Work

Repackaging public domain work on CDs gives your business a new dimension and it's easy to do.

CD versions of public domain works are especially profitable if you are making revisions or updates on an existing product.

How to Convert your E-Book into Articles or E-Courses

Not everyone will find a book-length public domain work appealing. Most online users are browsers and scanners, so they like to consume information in bite size pieces.

Instead of offering them an entire e-book, you can offer them a series of articles or an e-course. It can take as little as an hour to convert your e-book into an e-course. Simply separate the chapters into bite size pieces and load them into your autoresponder, or present them on your website as individual pages.

Create Amazing Titles

The title of your e-book, e-course or articles is the key to getting people to read. Instead of "Flower Gardens" embellish a bit and turn your title into something like "10 Easy Steps to Make Your Own Backyard Oasis"?

If you post a list of the article titles in your series or a lesson plan of your e-course, readers will be drawn in and start placing orders.

Link Building

The core of internet marketing is link building. When you post articles to article directories, your link points back to your website. When you trade links with other related sites, those links point back to your website too. As you increase the number of links to your website, the search engines take notice and you get listed higher in the rankings. As you list higher in the search engines, you get more visitors and eventually, more sales.

****NOTE:** Some website owners will be grateful to you for providing their links and to show your gratitude they may even be willing to link back to you. Try to explore this aspect of link building and see what possibilities open up for you.

Automate Everything

To keep your subscribers updated and to send your articles and e-courses, you need an autoresponder. An autoresponder is simply your email management program. It sends email for you on a pre-scheduled basis. You enter your messages into the system once and the software sends them for you forever.

CONCLUSION

Using the public domain can be a cash cow. You have very little product development time and you have an endless source of raw material. Your only limitation is your imagination, so let those creative juices flow and who knows, maybe you'll be the next Walt Disney :)

I wish you much success.