Four Simple Fair Use Guidelines for Multimedia Projects

Music and video clips really spice up digital projects. Adding clips can give any presentation the polish and energy of a professional creation. Going through the process of getting permission from the copyright owners can be protracted. It may be easier, instead, to follow these 4 simple guidelines to help you determine whether inserting any given media into a project constitutes fair use or foul play.

1. **Fair Use** - Fair Use guidelines clearly limit the amount of copyrighted materials that students, scholars, and educators may use in multimedia projects. The two types of media that are most often abused are for music and video. When using these media, be sure to follow these guidelines:

   * Music - 10% or 30 seconds of a song (whichever is less)
   * Video - 10% or 3 minutes of a video (whichever is less)

   The condition "whichever is less" is important. For example, if a song lasts three minutes (180 seconds), only 18 seconds of it may be used, because in this case, 10% of the song "is less" than 30 seconds. So, to use the maximum length of 30 seconds, you need to generate lists of songs that are at least five minutes long.

2. **Legitimate Copy** - Another factor to remember when seeking media clips is to use a legitimate, "lawfully acquired" copy of a song or video. Using an MP3 clip found online doesn't constitute legal use.

3. **Warning Label** - Place a warning label prominently at the beginning of a project. The label should state something to the effect that "the audio and video clips in this presentation are used under fair use guidelines and are restricted from further use." (There are no guidelines as to specific wording for this label.)

4. **Specific Credit** - Credit for specific clips should be listed in a bibliography or "mediagraphy" at the end of a project. Be sure to include the copyright symbol, the year the media was first published, and the name of the copyright owner.

Remember, when you use media clips according to the laws of fair use, everyone's happy: you, the folks who enjoy your spiced-up presentation, and the clips' artists/copyright owners.

Remember to use the Marine Corps University Copyright Policy (Chapter 4. Section 5 of the MCU EDCOM Staff Regs) as your ultimate guide.

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