

Copyright Guidelines: A Tip Sheet for Preparing Your 4-H Project Exhibit

Important Reminder: While creative expression is important and valued, it is illegal to reproduce a trademark or likeness you do not own or have not received permission to use. This is called copyright protection. It is similarly illegal for youth to use an image or brand that someone else owns as part of their 4-H project exhibit without the permission of the copyright/trademark holder.

Use of the 4-H Name and Emblem

Chartered 4-H clubs and enrolled 4-H members are authorized to use the 4-H Name and Emblem. This includes permission for an enrolled 4-H member to use the 4-H name and emblem in exhibits you create for personal use and as part of 4-H sponsored events. This includes 4-H decorated cookies, a 4-H clover printed for use in a scrapbook, etc.

Please note: Any use of the 4-H name and emblem on items intended as gifts or for sale require prior permission using [the form linked here](#). This should be signed by the Extension Director in your county. Any uses of the 4-H name and emblem for sale or promotion online, and/or in statewide events should be signed by the Illinois 4-H Director (Illinois4H@illinois.edu)

Use of the green clover shaped image is not protected. The 4-H “emblem” is distinguished by the four H’s that signify Head, Heart, Hands and Health. No creative rendering, change in color or shape of the official 4-H emblem is allowed. Approved 4-H emblem and details can be found at <https://go.illinois.edu/CloverResources>

Use of other copyright materials

- Youth cannot feature a trademarked character, image, logo in their art without permission from the owner. Everything that is current or popular is trademarked. Examples include:
 - No Mickey Mouse ears or popular characters as cake decorations
 - No painting of school logos (except with written permission) on wood items
 - No company logos, etc. embroidered or quilted on fabric
- Youth CAN use legally sourced branded items as part of their exhibit. Youth **may NOT** replicate a company’s logo, character, branding as part of their exhibit. Huh?
 - They can use Disney art embellishments in their scrapbook project if they purchased the embellishments from a licensed source; they cannot create their own
 - They could use the tailgate of a Ford pickup as part of their woodworking project because the truck was legally created by Ford; they could NOT paint the same logo on the woodworking project.
 - They could add plastic characters they bought on a cake, but they could not recreate the same character with fondant.
- Even military emblems are protected by copyright. Some are allowed; others not. <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Trademarks/DOD%20Guide%20about%20use%20of%20seals%20logos%20insignia%20medals-16%20Oct%2015F.PDF>

Frequently Asked Questions:

Question: Can I create fan art depicting copyrighted characters drawn as illustrated (example Mickey Mouse in a scene from Fantasia)?

Answer: This is never allowed without permission of the trademark owner (Disney, Marvel, etc)

Question: Can I create fan art depicting copyrighted characters in imagined scenes (Black Panther doing something but it's not a movie scene)?

Answer: No, this is never allowed without permission of the trademark owner (Marvel) regardless of the real or imagined scene. There would have to be substantial "transformation" of the character to be allowed.

Question: What does "substantial transformation" mean?

Answer: This is where your creativity can shine! This means while you draw inspiration from a copyrighted work, you also change the purpose, look and/or feel. An example from above could mean taking the scene of Mickey Mouse in Fantasia and recreating it as a mosaic. Or reimagining Black Panther in an Impressionist look and feel.

Try asking yourself, "did I *recreate/reproduce* the original work to illustrate my skill, or was I *inspired* by the original work to create something new and different?"

Question: Can I create depictions of famous people (an art depiction of Mariah Carey for example)?

Answer: The exhibitor would need permission of the copyright owner of the PHOTO they used to paint Mariah. This is the main hang-up in using a celebrity's image. The private use of their own photo of Mariah is allowed if they are not profiting from its use, the likeness does not negatively impact the celebrity, their privacy was not violated to get the photo.