

Picture This: Free Images for Use on the Web

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Navigating the Web for photos to populate your website, company newsletter, or other marketing tools can be like tip-toeing through a minefield. You might emerge on the other side completely unscathed, but one wrong step can blow up into a legal morass.

Just about everyone has, shall we say, appropriated an image from another website at one time or another. If you're illustrating a report or PowerPoint presentation, there's no problem. But if you use that photo for external marketing – in other words, put it out there as your own, without permission of the website or copyright holder – you can get hit with a copyright infringement suit.

Think about Shepard Fairey. After his stylized portrait of then-Senator Barack Obama over the word "Hope" became ubiquitous on posters, T-shirts and innumerable other products, the Associated Press, for whom freelance photographer Mannie Garcia took the original photo in 2006, filed suit. Eventually, the parties settled out of court.

Even if you're not using an image directly to sell things, you may still be guilty of stealing someone's intellectual property. And if you thought buying a stock photo was expensive, try getting hit with a copyright infringement fine. So why risk stepping on a landmine when you can get hundreds of thousands of copyright-free images or stock photos online for little cost, or even completely free?

Beyond iStockPhoto, Shutterstock and other heavy hitters, here are a few sources for photographs that won't blow up your marketing budget:

[Unsplash](#) doesn't have thousands of images (yet) and it'll take you a good 20 minutes to "scroll" through what's on the front page, but if you go to Archive, you'll see thumbnails of everything that's on the site. Every image at Unsplash falls under the Public Domain Dedication Code, meaning the person who created the work has dedicated it to the public domain by waiving all of his or her rights to the work worldwide under copyright law. You can copy, modify, and distribute the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission. You can also subscribe to get 10 new hi-res images sent to your inbox every 10 days, absolutely free.



[Death to the Stock Photo](#) - they have no archive, just free monthly photos sent to your inbox, to use any way you want. When you sign up, they give you a free pack to download right away.



[Gratisography](#) – Get free high-res pictures you can use on your personal or business projects. New pictures are added weekly and they are all free of copyright restrictions.



[Pixabay](#) – A vault full of stunning public domain pictures. Get free vectors, drawings and photos on this site. You can freely use any of the images in digital and/or printed format, for personal and/or commercial use, without attributing credit to the original creator of the work.



If you're more creative, try graphic composers like [PicMonkey](#) and [Canva](#). Each lets you put together text, patterns and elements to create an image that is uniquely you. Canva offers many elements for free, while others are only \$1 each. PicMonkey is just \$4.99 per month or \$33 per year (just \$2.75 per month) to use ALL their premium features. But you can whip up some wicked cool stuff using a free account as well.

Finally, there are more cost-effective stock image sites than the big names. [123RF.com](#), [CanStockPhoto.com](#), and [DepositPhotos.com](#) are all excellent choices. Remember too when buying an image that for most Web applications, like for use on your website or in social media or e-mail marketing, you can get away with a smaller version of the image.

[Bonny Clayton](#), aka [Your Web Chick](#), is an award-winning professional specializing in Web design, social media and e-mail marketing.

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