

Copyright Registration Checklist for Musicians

Your quick-start guide to protecting your original music

What You're Protecting

- ☐ Compositions (PA) – Melody, harmony, lyrics (the song itself)
- ☐ Sound Recordings (SR) – A specific recorded version of the song

Before You Register

- ☐ Final version of your song or recording
- ☐ Creation date + contributor info
- ☐ Publication info (if released)
- ☐ Deposit copy (MP3, WAV, PDF, etc.)
- ☐ Fee payment (usually \$65–\$85)

Key Timing

- ☐ Unpublished: Register before releasing
- ☐ Published: Register within 3 months of release

Collaboration Musts

- ☐ Use a split sheet (names, roles, ownership %, signatures)
- ☐ Agree on authorship and ownership before registering

Don't Confuse This!

- ☐ Copyright ≠ Publishing
 - Copyright = legal ownership
 - Publishing = monetization and royalty collection
- ☐ Register with a PRO (ASCAP, BMI, SESAC) to collect royalties





eCO Application Steps (copyright.gov)

1. Create eCO account
2. Choose type: PA or SR (or both if you wrote/performed)
3. Complete required fields:
 - ☐ Title, author(s), year of completion
 - ☐ Ownership and publication info
 - ☐ Rights & permissions + certification
4. Upload deposit copy
5. Pay fee and submit

Best Practices

- ☐ Register early—even for demos
- ☐ Use consistent file names/metadata
- ☐ Keep dated records of your work
- ☐ Register each version if used commercially
- ☐ Consult an attorney for complex or high-stakes situations

Avoid These Mistakes

-  Wrong registration type (e.g., PA vs. SR)
-  Missing co-writer info
-  Relying on “poor man’s copyright” (mailing to yourself)
-  Assuming distribution platforms handle registration

Need Help?

U.S. Copyright Office Helpline: 1-877-476-0778

[Copyright.gov](https://copyright.gov) | CopyrightAlliance.org

ASCAP.com | BMI.com | SoundExchange.com