

How to Auto Update the Copyright Year

How Do I Update the Copyright Date on my Website Automatically?

One way to tell if a website hasn't been updated in a while is by looking at the copyright date at the bottom of the website. If it says something like 2008, then you kind of wonder if the website has been updated since then.

The way we set up websites, we have the **copyright date update automatically**.

Whatever the current year is will show up at the bottom of every page on the website next to the copyright information.

Should I Update the Copyright Date on my Website?

Short answer: Yes, you should.

Updating the copyright date on your website shows visitors—and search engines—that your site is actively maintained. It tells website visitors that your site and the data on it is current and that your business is still operating. It's a general indicator that you're paying attention to the details. So... definitely do it.

While it's not a major SEO ranking factor, keeping your site's copyright year up to date can improve trust and reduce bounce rates. People notice when a site looks abandoned, and a date stuck in 2021 can give the wrong impression.

I did some research and found a good explanation of how copyright dates on websites should work:

[Do copyright dates need to be updated? \(stackoverflow.com\)](#)

The copyright notice on a work establishes a claim to copyright. The date on the notice establishes how far back the claim is made. This means if you update the date, you are no longer claiming the copyright for the original date and that means if somebody has copied the work in the meantime and they claim its theirs on the ground that their publishing the copy was before your claim, then it will be difficult to establish who is the originator of the work.

Therefore, if the claim is based on common law copyright (not formally registered), then the date should be the date of first publication. If the claim is a registered copyright, then the date should be the date claimed in the registration. In cases where the work was

substantially revised you may establish a new copyright claim to the revised work by adding another copyright notice with a newer date or by adding an additional date to the existing notice as in “(C) 2000, 2010”. Again, the added date establishes how far back the claim is made on the revision.

The correct way / best way to post a copyright on your website is listing the date your website was originally posted and the current year, like this:

Copy

© 2001-2025 Your Site Name - All Rights Reserved.

If you're not doing it this way, there are other ways to prove that your website was up on a certain date in the past but doing it this way makes it more clear to people when your copyright started.

How to Update the Copyright Date

It will depend on how your website is set up but you'll either need to change it:

- in your site's theme options
- in your site's theme files (the footer.php file)
- manually on each page (if your website uses static HTML)

Those are the places you should look.

To access some files, you may need to FTP in to your website and edit some files manually. To some people, doing that sounds scary. If that's how you feel, then it's probably best to pass this task on to someone that knows what they're doing so that you don't mess up your website.

Use Some PHP

If your website is written in PHP, then here's how to make sure the copyright date is updated automatically – just use this code in your website's template file or WordPress theme:

Copy

```
&copy; <?php echo date( "Y" ) ?>
```

Or if you need it to start at a certain date, just do it like this:

Need Your Copyright Date Updated? Get the Work Done for You!

If your website isn't set up this way, please let us know and we'll see how we can help you. This way, you won't ever have to worry about updating it (on every page of your website) every year. It'll always look current!

My website maintenance team at Webstix can help you with this.

Do I Need to *Legally* Copyright my Website?



There are two kinds of copyright – common law and federal registration. It's up to you – talk to your lawyer as I am not a lawyer.

You can do what is known as "Poor Man's Copyright" which is also common-law. It's simple to do. You simply print out a copy of your home page, your logo or company name and then mail it to yourself. The date stamp on the envelope (as stamped by the U.S. Government) is supposed to stand up in court – as long as you don't open that envelope, of course. The judge should open it.

From what I've learned, anything affixed to a medium has an automatic copyright (common law) because you're using it.

Federal trademark registration gives you legal presumption of ownership of the name along with exclusive rights to use it nationwide for what you say it's for (products, services, website, etc.) You also get trademark protection, which allows you to file suit in federal court against anyone in infringes on your trademark.

With a federal trademark, you also get to use the ® symbol, which is nice.

Registering a federal trademark is an important part of protecting your business and brand.

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