

Pattern and tutorial writing is tedious and hard work. By the time I am done with all the steps it takes it is freaking likely that I will not want to see that project again for a good long time, but it does not mean I am not totally vested in my ownership of the rights.

How Not to be an Accidental



I know I am not the only one in this boat. Designers and bloggers put a lot of effort and money into the patterns and content they create no matter if they are for sale or offered free on their website as a way to attract web based traffic. The fact that it is offered free of charge in no means indicates that the creator does

not hold the copyright and all decisions about how the pattern can and cannot be distributed.

So when a social media group owner takes content offered on a blog, reformats it, and creates it as a new PDF stripping off the name of the blog and the author that is what we call STEALING. Worse yet, the majority of those group members have no idea where this content was gleaned and when they take it and print it out they now too are complicit in stealing from the pattern/content author.- Theft by accident.

How Not to Be an Accidental Pattern Thief..... and how to talk about it without people thinking you have a stick up your ass.

Unless expressly noted, no print pattern may be copied and given to another for use. This includes magazines, print patterns and purchased PDF patterns/ tutorials. COPYING IS STEALING. (Do note that you may make a working copy for your own use but when done with it must be destroyed or archived with the original pattern.)

SITUATION EXAMPLE – You see that Sue has a great new quilt pattern while at guild and compliment her on it, next time you see Sue she hands you a copy of that pattern fresh off her printer. Sue has now stolen a copy of this pattern from the creator just as sure as if she had slipped on her Keds and tip-toed into that designer's studio during the dark of night and taken a copy from her desk. Worse yet, she has given YOU the stolen goods, YIKES. ..what to do..what to do!

This is a ticklish situation indeed! You have two choices – say nothing, take it and then destroy it in your shredder- otherwise known as the chicken-shit way or do the thing that makes your stomach twist. You need to tell Sue that you are not comfortable stealing from the designer (sure you can say violating the designers copyright, but let's be honest..this is theft) and that while you appreciate her trying to hook you up with the pattern

you will buy a copy from your LQS or online when you are ready.

SITUATION EXAMPLE – You get to your monthly private quilt group and the member teaching the class has made copies of a single pattern she bought and is teaching the class from it. again...STICKY and time to ask some questions.

Perhaps the member bought additional rights to copy the pattern, this can happen and if so she should be able to show you this paperwork. If copied from the web, we can search of attribution or release to be used in a class setting. We can ask and be clear that we value those who create for us and we need to be on the right side of the law as well as the right side of our fabric. We need to be clear both privately and publicly that we are willing to pay for patterns and/or obtain them in the proper way.

SITUATION EXAMPLE – You are part of an online group and patterns you know that are sold at your LQS are being scanned and uploaded into the files section of the group page for free download by any member. Or perhaps complete online instructions with no attribution. Or patterns copied from leading magazines. Oh dear, oh dear...little figure-eight black masks and black and white striped shirts for everyone!

What to do!... This is hard and each person has to check in with their own moral compass on this. For those of us made of less than stern stuff and yet are made sick by the idea that they are being made complicit in theft can just leave the group. For those made of an iron-will and the desire to land on the right side of justice.. well you might capture some screen shots, and contact the pattern makers where able to let them know their content is being stolen.

You can also bring it up in the group and to the group owner but do know this is a fast flume ride to being kicked out the group...which while not the worst thing, you were going to leave anyway, it does help alert other group members that there is an issue.

Pro-Active Responses

It is always easier to deal with a situation when it is still in the abstract so becoming educated about content theft (active and passive) and sharing that knowledge when you are able is a great way to avoid these sticky situations.

Volunteer to do a session about it at your next guild meeting.

Share articles (like this one!) about it in your online groups.

Speak up when you hear people suggest “sharing” a pattern while at the quilt store. Speak of the value that designers and their work bring to your life. Put a face and family to each and every pattern maker and blogger out there who brings you content that inspires.

While not always easy I am pretty sure that you would speak up and step in if you saw someone breaking into your neighbor’s car or saw someone reach into someone else’s purse and extract their wallet. Content theft is no different and it takes quilters of integrity to put a stop to those who have fallen or thrown themselves down this slippery slope and are stealing the livelihood from the hardworking members of our industry. So slap on that badge, there is a new sheriff in town.... and it is you!

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