

Computers – What Constitutes Misuse?

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In this age of modern technology, most of us would be lost without our computers. We use them at home, in class, and beyond. More importantly, within them, we keep all our most important stuff. Music, movies, papers, and pictures are just a few examples. Do you really want to share all that information with whoever wants to look for it?

Everyone is aware that there are both legal and illegal programs out there for downloading music and videos. You can find a song you like on iTunes, Napster, or Rhapsody, pay \$0.99 for it and it's yours. There are other file sharing programs out there, like Limewire, where you can search for a song or movie you like, and download it for free from someone else's collection. Sounds like a great plan, right? Not so much. This download of files is illegal under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998. No matter how much better it seems to download it that way, just don't do it.

But one thing you may not know is that the penalties for sharing copyrighted materials without permission can be intense. When you use a program like Limewire it opens up the files you have on your computer for other people to view and then take. And if a person is savvy, they can not only find your music and movies, but also your confidential files you don't want people seeing. While there are steps you can take to block this material from others' view, the default setting makes it open to everyone. Even if you don't set out to share files, it can happen. And the fines you could get hit with aren't pretty.

My advice? Just pay the \$0.99 per download. It's a lot cheaper in the long run than the \$8000 (okay- that is just an estimate, but it can cost that much) lawsuit you could get hit with down the line.

Until next time, "For the Glory" - Know the Code.