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Frequently Asked Questions

Contents of the FAQ

Freesound

What is this site anyway?

Freesound aims to create a huge collaborative database of audio snippets, samples, recordings, bleeps, ... released under Creative Commons licenses that allow their reuse. Freesound provides new and interesting ways of accessing these samples, allowing users to:

- browse the sounds in new ways using keywords, a "sounds-like" type of browsing and more
- upload and download sounds to and from the database, under the same creative commons license
- interact with fellow sound-artists!

We also aim to create an open database of sounds that can also be used for scientific research. Many audio research institutions have trouble finding correctly licensed audio to test their algorithms. Many have voiced this problem, but so far there hasn't been a solution.

Licenses

What do I need to do to legally use the files on freesound?

Well, it depends on what you want to do and what files you want to use. First of all, freesound lets the user select 3 one of three licenses for his sounds. And, we used to have a 4th license, which complicates matters. Depending on the license there are things you can and can't do with the files. Let's start with the licenses. Creative commons has a really nice page explaining them:

- zero (cc0): http://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/
- attribution (by): http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/
- attribution noncommercial (by-nc): http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/

We aren't lawyers so this isn't legal advice, but here's our summary: for "zero" you can do pretty much what you want with the sound. You could even sell

the sound, ... but you can't claim you are the author! For attribution you should always mention the original creators of the sounds when you use them. Noncommercial works like attribution, but you can't earn any money with the piece of work you create! As with all licenses the original creator can give you permission to use the sound outside of the original license.

An important note: the content of the Freesound website is uploaded by the users of the site. As per our terms of service our users are required to follow the rules and not upload any copyrighted material. However, like all content on the internet, there might be cases where the users of our site are knowingly or unknowingly uploading illegal content. If you find such content, make sure that you click the "Flag it!" link on the page which contains the sound.

In freesound "1" we had an additional license called Sampling+:

- sampling plus: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/sampling+/1.0/

Our interpretation: you can do pretty much what you could do with the attribution noncommercial license, but additionally you can't make commercial adds with the sound. You can't make a track with Sampling+ samples to sell a car, for example. Sampling+ is being removed by creative commons because it's a difficult license to interpret, see below for more on that.

Now I can already hear you saying, "attribution", how should I do that, so see the next section!

How do I credit/attribute?

Crediting people is easy, just say something like this:

```
This [video/theatre piece/...] uses these sounds from freesound:
sound1 by user1 ( http://freesound.org/people/user1/ )
sound2, sound3 by user2 ( http://freesound.org/people/user2/ )
etc..
```

If you want to know which files you have downloaded since you joined freesound, you can see this in the attribution list attribution list.

If you have a particularly long list of files or very little space to attribute sounds you can always do:

```
This [video/theatre piece/...] uses many sounds from freesound,
for the full list see here: http://www.mysite.com/work-credits.html
```

If you want to see a practical example from the movie Children of Men.

License restrictions when publishing new sounds that include/modify/remix other sounds

In the event of using sounds in Freesound to create new sounds, the following table helps you understanding how you can mix them, what can the resulting license/s be, and what the attribution obligations are. Lets say that a user B adds a new sound of her own that includes/modifies/remixes a sound from another user A, then:

License of sound of A	B wants to distribute the new sound under	Can B do this?
cc0	cc0	Yes
cc0	by	Yes (*)
cc0	by-nc	Yes (*)
by	cc0	No
by	by	Yes (**)
by	by-nc	Yes (**)
by-nc	cc0	No
by-nc	by	No
by-nc	by-nc	Yes (**)

(*) If a third user C uses the sound from B, she must attribute to B.

(**) B must attribute the sound to A. If a third user C uses the sound from B, she must attribute both A and B.

Creative Commons says Sampling+ is "retired", why do you still use it?

Retired just means that Creative Commons is no longer recommending this particular license. If you want to read in detail why, have a look at their blog post which explains it all in detail.

We would love to remove all Sampling+ licenses from our site, but the sounds on freesound are not our sounds, they are the sounds of our users. So, we can't simply change the licenses for the users, we have to ask them to change the license. This is exactly what happens when an old freesounder signs into his old account: we ask them to upgrade all their samples to a new license. Again, you can see how we do that in the creative commons blog post. Until all old users have signed into freesound once, there will always be Sampling+ sounds on freesound…

Account

For all the sections below, please make sure you check your spam folder for the emails we send you.

I can't log in! Help!

Most of the time when people can't log in it is because they haven't activated their account yet or because they have forgotten their password. Please see below for solutions to these problems.

I want to reset my password! Where should I go?

Please go here: http://www.freesound.org/home/resetpassword/

When I log in, it says my account is inactive. How do I activate it?

This should help: http://www.freesound.org/home/reactivate/

Hey, I forgot my username. Can you help?

Sure! Go here… http://www.freesound.org/home/username/

How do I delete myself from your site?

You can find the option to delete yourself in your settings page.

Sounds

How do I delete a sound?

On the "edit" page of a sound you will find a sound deletion link, at the very bottom of the page… You can find the edit page by looking for the link called "Edit sound information" on the single sound view page.

This file has a weird format (flac?? ogg??), how can I play/open/convert it on my computer?

We support 4 formats at freesound:

- mp3 is mpeg 2, layer III. We don't really need to explain this :-)

- FLAC (.flac or .fla) is the Free Lossless Audio Codec, an open-source compression scheme that can cut the size of an audio file in half (on average) while not losing any quality in the process. It's basically ZIP for audio files. Using FLAC is good for Freesound because it saves on disk space and bandwidth usage, reduces download times, but doesn't degrade the quality of the sample like mp3 or another lossy codec would.

- Ogg Vorbis (.ogg) is an open-source lossy audio codec comparable to modern AAC Audio (as used in the iTunes store, etc.). It does degrade the quality of the sample somewhat in order to save on space, but it is much more efficient at this than an older format like mp3. An Ogg file can have the same quality as an mp3 file using less space, or better quality using the same space.

- AIFF/WAV (.aiff or .aif/.wav) are both uncompressed audio formats. Files in this format are considered by some to be easier to work with because there is no extra conversion step in most cases. However, this comes at the price of a much larger file.

All file types can be opened with the audio editor Audacity. If you want to save files as mp3 files in audacity you will need to follow this audacity faq

Other recommendations for sound conversion software are:

- Mac:
  - Max
  - MacFlac
  - OggDrop
  - VLC

- Windows:
  - dBpowerAmp + Flac plugin
  - VLC

Hey, I got this "bad description" moderated file, can you help me create a better description?

It is important to have a description of a sound, it can help you find specific sounds through the search for example. What use is our major sound library going to have if you are not able to find a specific sound when you need it. The purpose of description is, at one hand to provide information (preferently deep) about the sound, from where it comes, it's peculiarities and the tools used to create/record it ... and at the other hand to be used when doing a search.

However, this is a problem that all sound libraries have. So perhaps its best to have a look at how they solve this problem and then turn to our specific situation here at freesound and see if we can adapt their model to ours. In sampling, especially the big part of sampling that contains field recordings, there are several layers in which we can describe sounds.

- Macro
- Meso
- Micro
- Technical

We will take a simple example *"car crash sound"* and improve its description.

Macro

First of all, there is the macro description. This describes the whole event of a sound. For example "this is a recording of a car crash". For somebody looking for a sound of a car crash this description is perfect.

Meso

However, what if your looking for the sound of metal and glass breaking? This car crash could be very usefull, but perhaps if you hadnt come up with that you might not have located this source. So in order for this to work you need to break up the sample in smaller events.

Our description: *"Car Crash: breaking of glass, crushing metal on metal, burning rubber."*

Micro

This is the level in which you use the same kind of language usually found in modular synthesis. The Envelope of a sound, the timbral aspects etc.

Our description: *"Car Crash: breaking of glass, crushing metal on metal, burning rubber. Hard impact sounds, glass shards falling to the floor."*

Technical Description

Another important factor is the technology used to create the sample. Make sure you list:

- Recorder: MD, DAT, HDD, (if pc, what kind of soundcard)
- Microphone: model & type: Shure SM57 dynamic mike
- Processing: If so, what kind.

Our description: *"Car Crash: breaking of glass, crushing metal on metal, burning rubber. Hard impact sounds, glass shards falling to the floor. Recorded with a SoundDevices recorder and stereo microphone (rode NT4). The sound was postprocessed to make the impacts more dramatic (compression with waves C4)."*

Another way to attack the problem is to try to answer these questions:

- from where: the source of the sound.
- what: what do I hear, try to describe the sound.
- where: if you sampled or recorded this sound, where did you do it?
- method: what gear did you use to sample the sound?
- purpose: why did you record this sound? what purpose can it fill?

Our description now finally becomes: *"Car Crash: breaking of glass, crushing metal on metal, burning rubber. Hard impact sounds, glass shards falling to the floor. Recorded with a SoundDevices recorder and stereo microphone (rode NT4). The sound was postprocessed to make the impacts more dramatic (compression with waves C4). Recorded on windy afternoon in Melbourne center for our new movie The Car Crash. THe car we destroyed was a Fiat Panda."*

I don't see any preview players to play back sounds!

First of all, make sure you have flash installed. You can test this on this adobe page: if you have flash installed it will tell you what version, if not it will have a "get flash" button.

It might not be completely aparent, but we use soundmanager2 for playing back sounds. Soundmanager2 uses both html5 and flash to play back sounds. If you already have flash installed, you might be running something like flashblock or noscript, both of which will break our players. Make sure you whitelist freesound in these extensions.

Last but not least if all of these fail, try another browser. We recommend alternate browsers like Google Chrome (our personal favorite) and Mozilla Firefox.

What sounds are legal to put on freesound?

First off, we're not copyright lawyers, so these guidelines should not be seen as legal advice ;-)

- **You recorded the sound yourself**: If you recorded the sound yourself, consider the source(s). If you recorded a part of a commercial song, chances are very high that you derived (that's a fancy way of saying sampled) your work from a "copyright" or "all rights reserved" source. This is not legal, so we can't allow these sounds on freesound. If you recorded the radio or television, the same applies, the broadcast you recorded is copyrighted by the entity broadcasting... All of these are not legal. What is legal, you ask? Well, you could record street noise, birds, an overhead airplane, a fauccet running, a door slamming, a siren, a car alarm, ... So many sounds are not from a source which has copyright on the sound. Most of the time only human-made sounds can be copyrighted! And even when they are human made (say, protesters in the street, or a street vendor) you can get away with uploading them to freesound. If you record a single person, always ask their permission to upload the sounds!
- **You created the sound yourself**: The same applies as for recording - consider the sources! If you cut a piece from a song by Madonna, guess what, you shouldn't put it on freesound! There are limits to this of course: if you cut a piece of sound from a song and then process it untill it's completely unrecognizable, that's fine!
- **You downloaded the sound from somewhere**: this one is really tricky! There are a lot of sites out there that have sounds that are "free". However, "free" is a tricky concept! Free to do what exactly? Free to sell? Free to use...? If you don't know very well what you are doing, don't upload random sounds you found on the internet, it's probably not legal. One exception to this are sounds that are already licenses under a clear license that is compatible with the licenses we use, for example a creative commons one.
- **You took the sound from a game/application/...**: this is not legal in 99.9% of cases! The creators of the game probably have copyright on all the sounds in the game!
- **You sampled a synthesiser**: aah, another tricky one. If the synthesiser is an analog one (think "old moog") you're probably fine, however if the synth you sampled from is a digital "ROM" synth, you might actually recording the samples stored in the memory of the synth. And this is illegal! Some examples: PCM drum machines like the TR-707, TR-909 (cymbals and hi-hats), Linn Drum, Boss DR 550 etc... are all digital synths you should not sample. ROM samples like the Korg Wavestation internal ROM samples are also not legal to post on freesound. To make matter more crazy, if you have a digital "virtual" analog and you created some patches on it, those are fine to sample too, but if you buy a pack of presets from someone, those might not be legal.

If you have any doubts about your sound being legal or not to post try asking in the legal questions forum, but don't forget we aren't lawyers.

Hey, do you have this sound: ...?

Why don't you try searching for the sound you want: Try http://www.freesound.org/search/. All the sounds on freesound are made by our users, Freesound itself does not create or record the sounds!

Other questions

I created a song, where can I upload it?

Freesound isn't meant to upload songs, it's for sounds! We know this distinction is sometimes difficult (soundscapes come to mind), but if you made it you probably know in your heart if it's a song or a sound... For songs there are a lot of great already existing sites like:

- ccMixter
- soundcloud
- archive.org
- bandcamp.com

I have Cyberlink Director and it doesn't let me log into freesound!

We know: when we rebuilt freesound from scratch, resulting in the site you see here we also changed the way that people can log into freesound. Cyberlink never updated their program to use our new API. There's nothing we cna do about that. Cyberlink, if you are listening, have a look at our API documentation!

How do I cite Freesound.org in a research context?

You should reference the ACM MM'13 Freesound Technical Demo article.
Frederic Font, Gerard Roma, and Xavier Serra. "Freesound technical demo."
Proceedings of the 21st ACM international conference on Multimedia. ACM, 2013.

I have a question not answered here...

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