



Did I capture your attention? (via iStockPhoto)

The Complete Guide To Using Photos In Your Online Content

Great blog content can be as diverse as the bloggers themselves but there appears to be a few “tricks” that continually crop up and one of them is the use of images in their posts.

It really is true: *A picture is worth 1,000 words*, and in the context of an online generation where “skimming” and “scanning” is the general practice of reading web copy the importance of these “1,000 words” is even greater. Shoot, why not have more than one picture just to make sure!

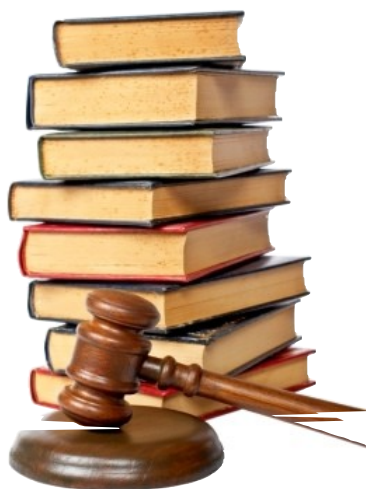
Here are some of the reasons you should highly consider using images in your blog posts (or some other rich media):

1. Catches the reader’s eye and helps them to commit to reading the content.
2. Differentiates the content from a lot of other similar blog posts.
3. Helps craft a visually-memorable experience.
4. “Strengthens” the blog posts specific content with images.
5. Adds valuable SEO traffic related to the images within your blog post. This cannot be underestimated!

Personally I think the first and last point are the most important. The point is that adding an image to your blog post, even if it requires a little more of your time per post, is worth the effort and cost that may be associated with the effort.

The Legal Issues of Using Images

Like many things you want to make sure that you’re completely above the law in terms of using images in your blog posts. Most likely you have, and will be, using images that you yourself did not create.



Stay above the law!

That is, you’re not going out shooting photos with your iPhone or digital camera for every single blog post that you write and publish! If you are that’s pretty intense and also very cool.

Essentially you want to make sure that you are not using protected images that are violating copyright laws. Stanford has [a good writeup](#) about copyright laws and fair use as it relates to websites that every blogger should be at least familiar with.

In short it covers 5 elements:

1. Assume that the images you are using *are* protected.
2. Read the fine print when it comes to sites that say their images are “Royalty-Free” or

“Copyright-Free” – better to err on the side of caution.

3. If anyone complains about an image on your blog remove it *immediately* – you can actually avoid liability by removing it quickly according to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA).
4. If someone complains investigate promptly and quickly. Ask for proof of copyright.
5. When in doubt you should simply seek permission if you can.

Of course, you can read more if you’d like but it’s best to be aware of these highly-suggested elements of fair use and copyright!

What Does ‘Royalty Free’ or ‘Stock’ Really Mean?

This is something that often trips up newer bloggers who see these words thrown around a lot without really knowing what it means or how it impacts what they do and the images that they use. Here’s one definition:

Royalty-Free, or RF, refers to the right to use copyrighted material or intellectual property **without the need to pay royalties** for each use or per volume sold, or some time period of use or sales.

I’ve **bolded** the part that will make the most sense to you, the blogger – if you purchase a RF image you pay only once and not every single time it’s used or is viewed by your visitors. You can also use it in multiple projects and blogs as well!

Here are some bullet point items for the person who wants a bit more info:



- Pay a one-time fee to use the image multiple times for multiple purposes (with possible limits).
- No time limit on when the buyer can use an image.
- No one can have exclusive rights of a Royalty-free image (the photographer can sell the image as many times as he or she wants).
- A Royalty-free image usually has a limit to how many times the buyer can reproduce it. For example, a license might allow the buyer to print 500,000 brochures with the purchased image. The amount of copies made is called the print run. The buyer is required to pay a fee per brochure, usually 1 to 3 cents, for additional prints. Magazines with a large print run cannot use a standard Royalty-free license and therefore they either purchase images with a Rights-managed license or have in-house photographers.

Remember, at the end of the day you want to make sure that you read the fine print as some sites may have different and particular stipulations that you must abide by. Licenses vary by each provider so you need to read any and all agreements before you get in trouble.

For example the image of the girl with the camera on the cover of this report is a RF image that I got from [iStockPhoto](#) – I purchased it once and now get to use it as many times as I’d like! Great systems like [iStockPhoto](#) will even have a history of your purchases so you can use them later:

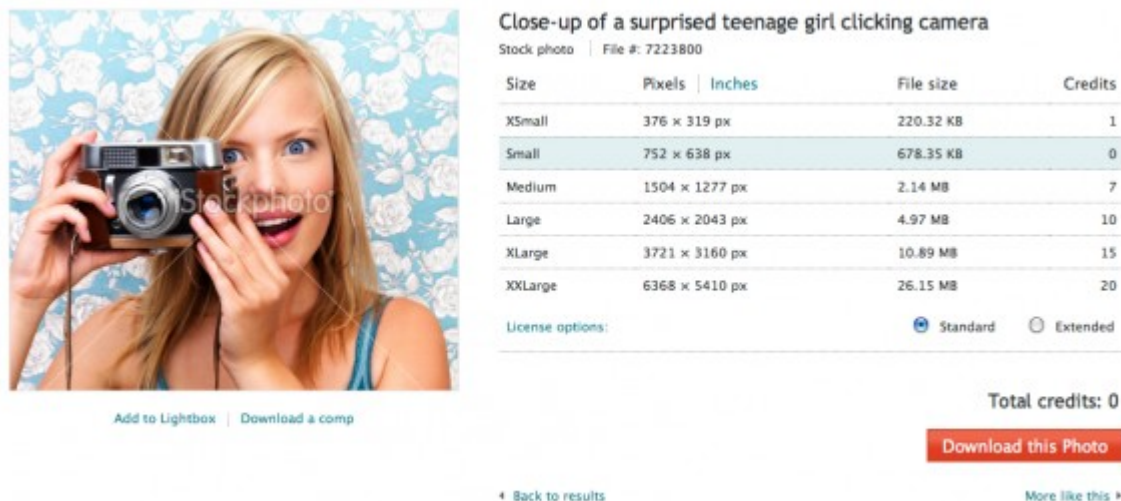
1 search results: Pay-As-You-Go Downloads

Displaying 1 to 1 of 1 matches.

File	ID	Vetta	Agency	Date	Size	Credits	Type
	 7223800			Thursday May 05, 2011, 05:28:40 PM	Small	3	Regular

Simple view of my download history.

And as you can see here, even when I jump to the actual image I can see that I can download at no cost (no credits):



Close-up of a surprised teenage girl clicking camera

Stock photo | File #: 7223800

Size	Pixels	Inches	File size	Credits
XSmall	376 x 319 px		220.32 KB	1
Small	752 x 638 px		678.35 KB	0
Medium	1504 x 1277 px		2.14 MB	7
Large	2406 x 2043 px		4.97 MB	10
XLarge	3721 x 3160 px		10.89 MB	15
XXLarge	6368 x 5410 px		26.15 MB	20

License options: ☒ Standard ☐ Extended

Total credits: 0

[Download this Photo](#)

[Add to Lightbox](#) | [Download a comp](#)

[Back to results](#) | [More like this](#)

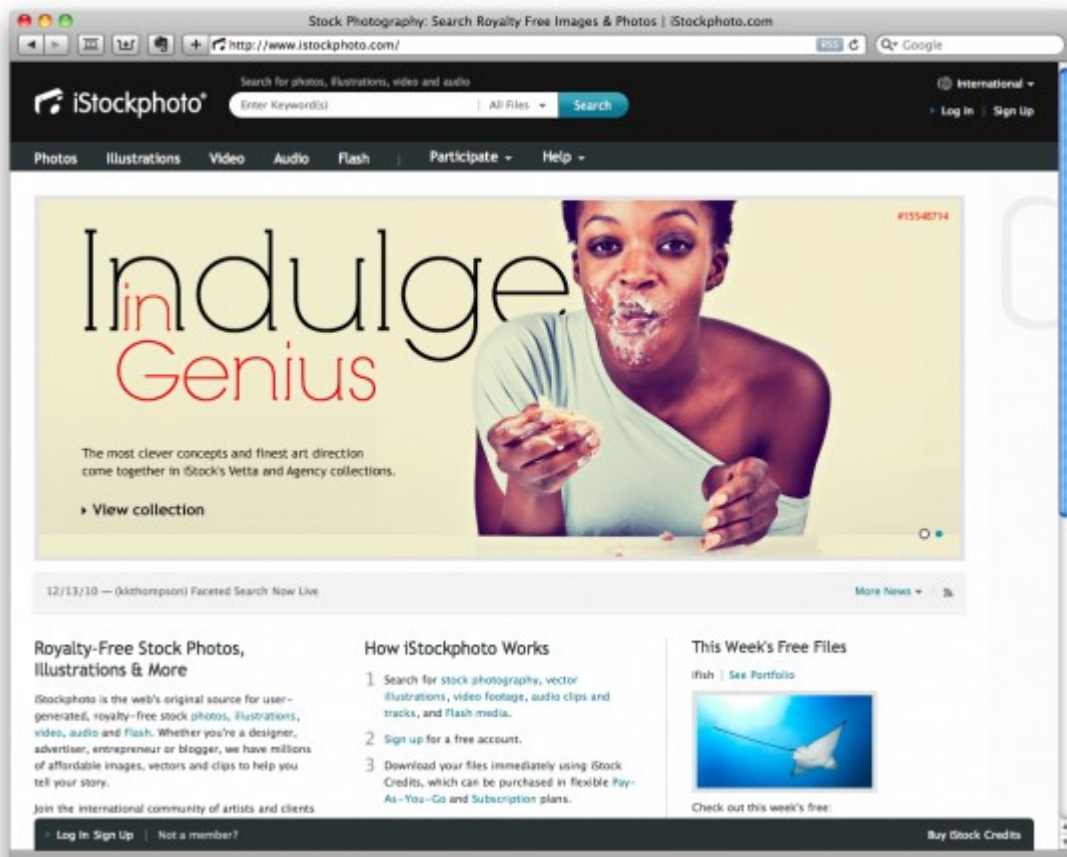
A very sleek and intuitive interface to boot!

I highly suggest going the Royalty Free route if you can afford a few dollars to spot for a good post or two. In fact, here are some suggestions to get the most **bang for your buck**, so to speak:

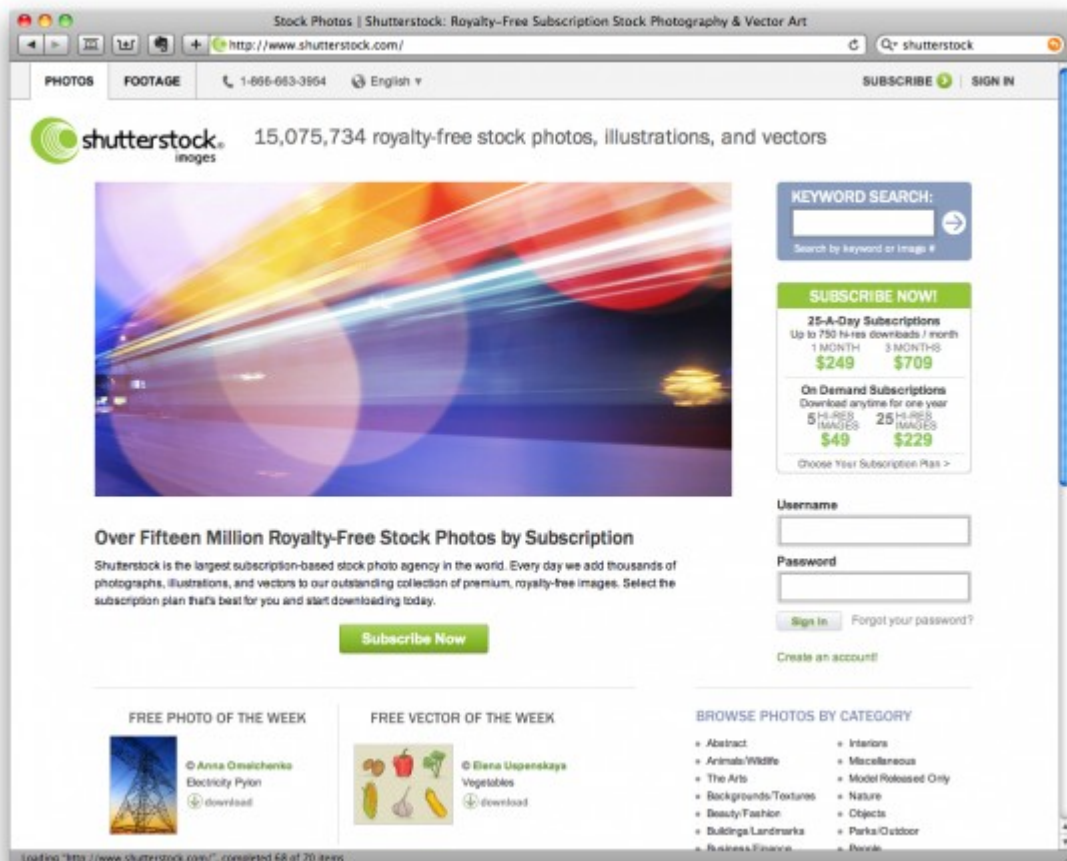
1. Use RF images on your most highly trafficked (potential or actual) blog posts. For example, a landing post or static page for your [killer series post](#) might be a good place to spend a dollar or two!
2. Organize your images by category so that you can re-use them strategically and quickly!
3. If you have multiple blogs then organize your RF images in such a way where you can re-use them at no cost!

It's well worth the spend if you can swing it.

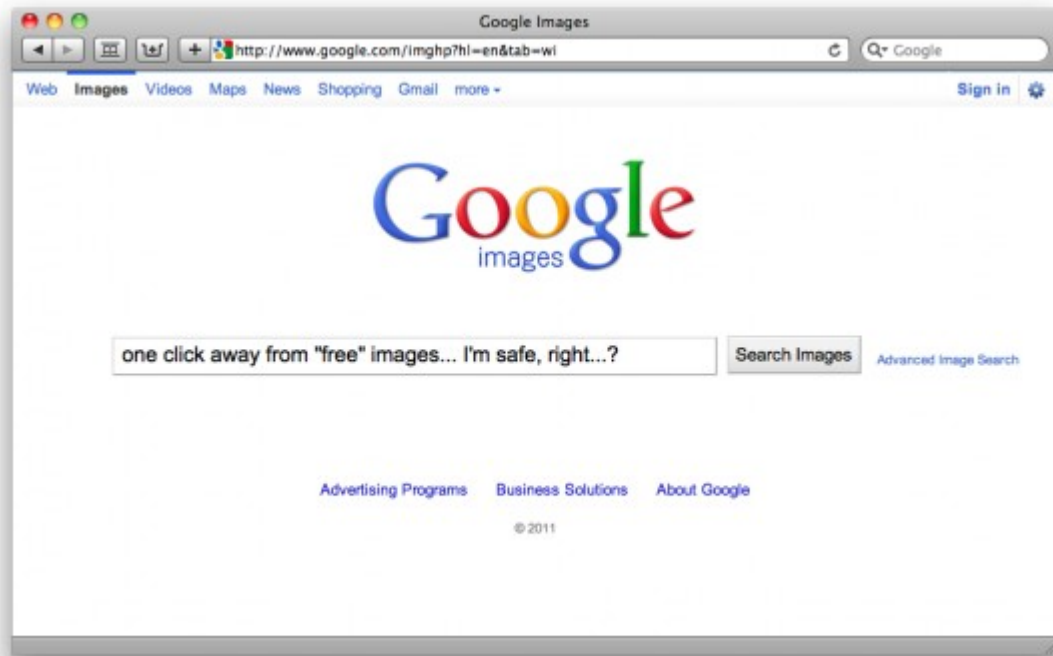
Here are a few sites that I recommend to check out for RF images:



iStockPhoto is one of the “big guys” that’s out there and for many of your needs you might as well just start there. I’ve used them for years but I just started a new account under TentBlogger so I can silo my use (personal preference, of course).

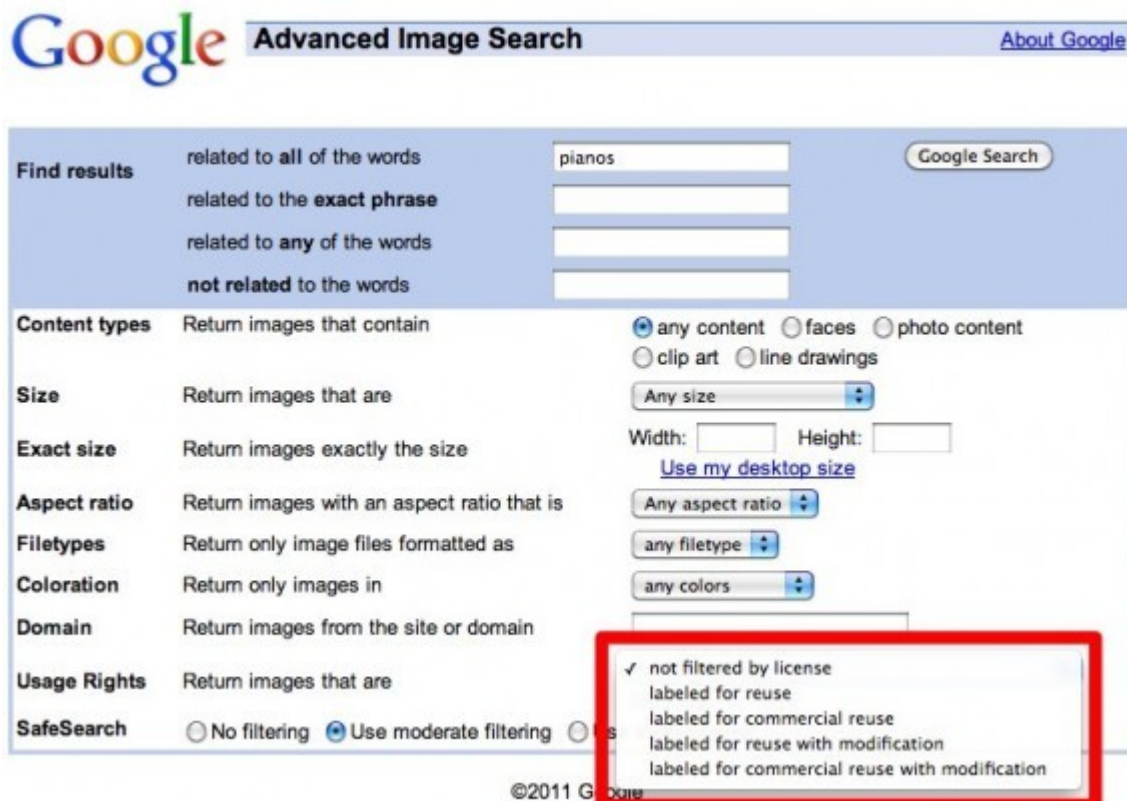


[Shutterstock](http://www.shutterstock.com/) is another great resource that many opt for instead of [iStockPhoto](http://www.iStockPhoto.com/). Very popular resource.



People do this all the time and you simply have to be just as cautious – you never know what Google is actually indexing and the images that they are serving up to you. In fact, Google is notorious for jumping into /images folders on servers and indexing their entire file library! Of course, you can stop Google's bots by doing editing your robots.txt file.

But, did you know that you can actually filter your results so that you grab images that are protected?



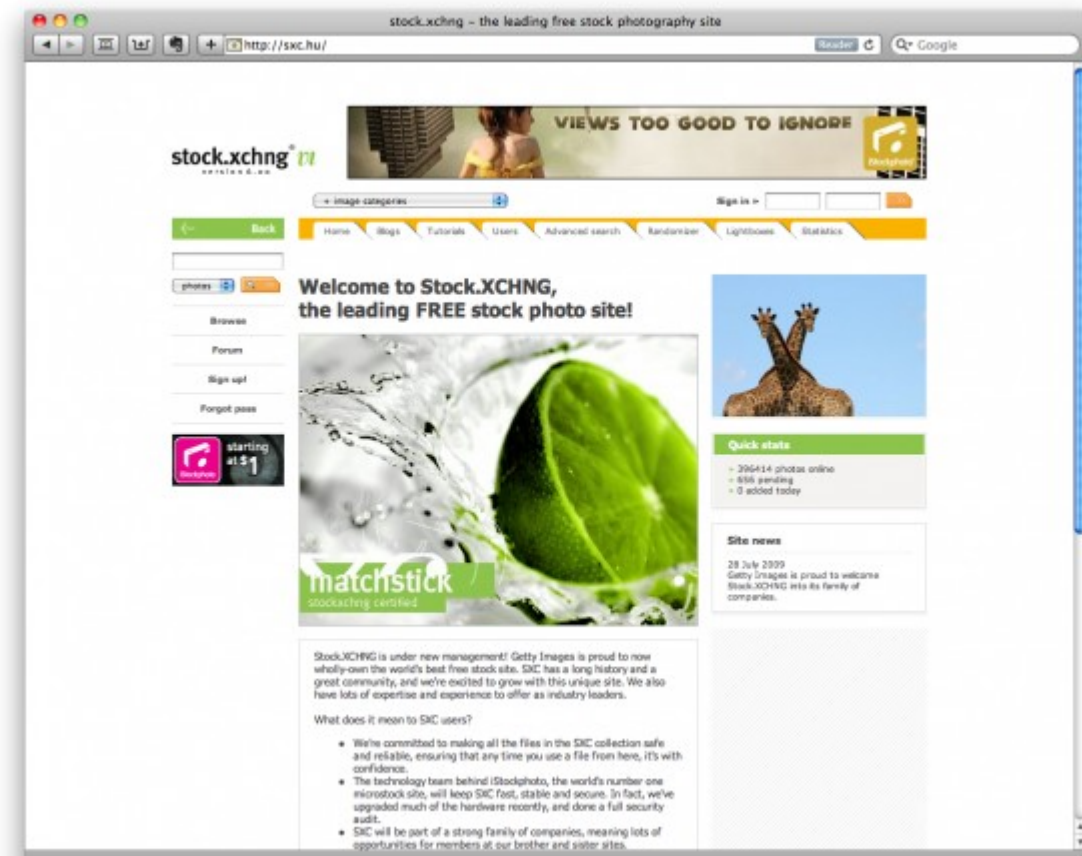
Click on Advanced Settings.

Here's what these options mean:

- **Labeled for Reuse** – Your results will only include images labeled with a license that allows you to copy and/or modify the image in ways specified in the license.
- **Labeled for Commercial Reuse** – Your results will only include images labeled with a license that allows you to copy the image for commercial purposes, in ways specified in the license.
- **Labeled for Reuse with Modification** – Your results will only include images labeled with a license that allows you to copy and modify the image in ways specified in the license.
- **Labeled for Commercial Reuse with Modification** – Your results will only include images labeled with a license that allows you to copy the image for commercial purposes *and* modify it in ways specified in the license.

Make sure to choose the right one so that if you do, in fact, use Google to search for images that you stay above board legally.

Here are a few great spots to get free images. Enjoy!



stock.xchng is a class-act and is a great site with free images galore with tons of categories.



The [morgueFile](http://www.morguefile.com/) is a place where you can easily download images with very little supervision or requirements. In fact, you don't need to cite original authorship or anything – use them for commercial use at will!

What about “Creative Commons”? What’s That?

[Creative Commons](http://creativecommons.org/) is most simply understood as an alternative to Full Copyright laws and stipulations. It allows the creators to specify different licensing for their work that fits their needs and their goals.

Here's some long-form verbiage about CC:

Creative Commons is a non-profit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative work available for others to build upon and share. Current copyright laws are generally extremely restrictive.

Creative Commons has done the hard legal figuring to enable you to simply and easily express your preferences with respect to what people can do with your work.

Very quickly there are generally 4 particular parts to the license:

1. **Attribution** – You let others copy, distribute, display, and perform your copyrighted work – and derivative works based upon it – but only if they give you credit.
2. **Noncommercial** - You let others copy, distribute, display, and perform your work – and derivative works based upon it – but for noncommercial purposes only.
3. **No Derivative Works** – You let others copy, distribute, display, and perform only verbatim copies of your work, not derivative works based upon it.

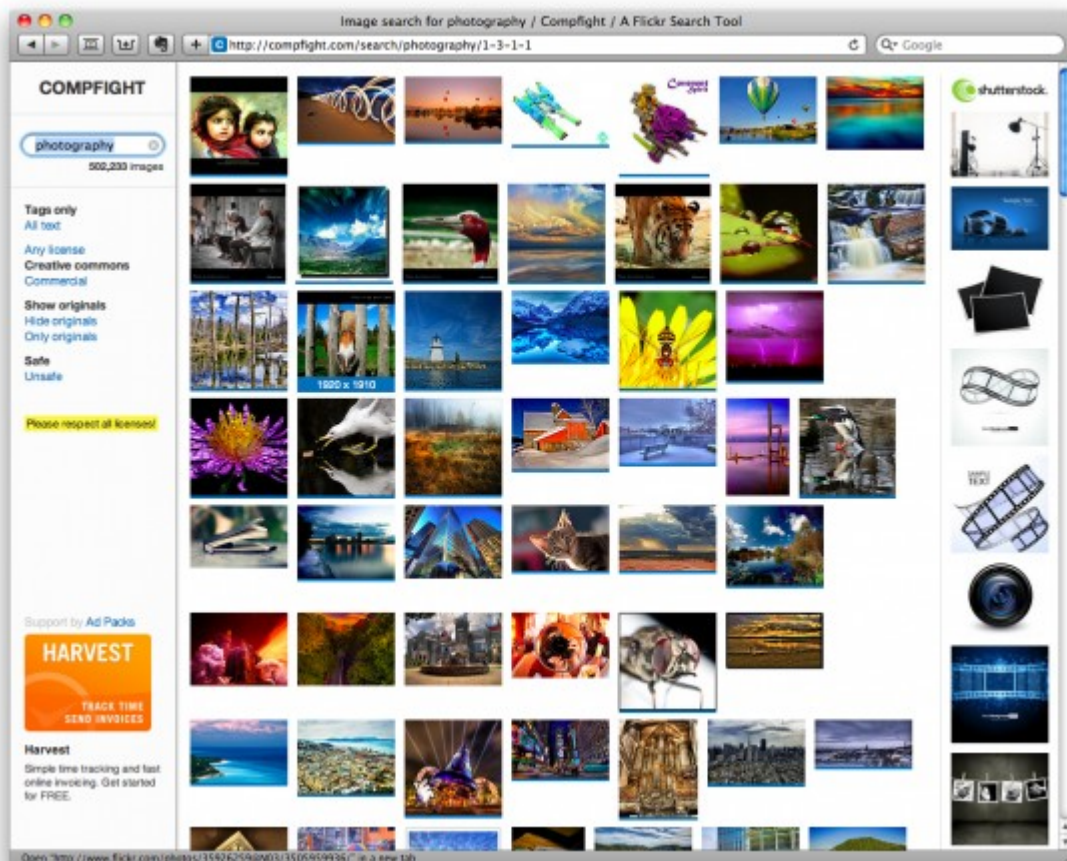
4. **Share Alike** - You allow others to distribute derivative works only under a license identical to the license that governs your work

You can read more about this information directly over at [Creative Commons](https://creativecommons.org/). One of the biggest supporters of CC has been Flickr and the Flickr user can define their CC license for their images directly in their account:



Flickr settings for Creative Commons.

As such, there are a number of sites that you can use to “mine” the directory of images and use the ones that you need for your blog! Here’s one such site that I love and use often:



[CompFight](http://compfight.com) is a Flickr search tool where you can look for images to use on your blog! Just make sure that you choose the right license (Creative Commons) over on the left side of the screen and make sure if you do use the images that you attribute them correctly.

Pretty neat, right?



Love me some Creative Commons!

How to Attribute the Right Way:

You might be thinking “Great, I’ve got the images, now how do I attribute them correctly?” Well, there are a number of ways that you could do it and there’s really no “best” way to do it.

Generally you simply want to cite the original author with a link back to their work. You could do a number of things:

- “HT author-name” (link)

- “via author-name/url” (link)
- “Originally upload by author-name/url” (link)
- “This photo, “title of image” is copyright (c) 2011 author-link and made available under a attribution-type-here” (link)
- A link directly in the post referencing the original creator or site
- Add a description if you’d like with the text and link
- Link to the direct Creative Commons license in use
- Include the Title of the work and then any other derivative works if it is one.

There’s a bit of freedom here but the point is that to give credit where credit is due, unless it’s a completely free image with no requirement for attribution!

Final Tips on Using Images in Your Blog Posts:

Here are some final tips on using images in your blog posts that I’ve come up with over the years that I’ve been blogging:

1. **SEO** – Your images will be indexed by Google. The challenge is to make sure that they are indexed well. Make sure that your images have decent file names and are of the highest quality possible.
2. **File Size, Compression**- Although you want the highest quality possible make sure to minimize too much file size load on your server and your end user. Use an application to “smush” or “compress” the image to it’s lowest level. I use [Image Optim](#) to minimize file size.
3. **Be Consistent** – Try to be consistent with your use of images in your blog posts using left and right justification or full-width of your content area. Whatever you do just maintain that use throughout your blog for a consistent user experience.
4. **Use Your Server** – Linking to external sites can help save you bandwidth but you’re ultimately at the mercy of whether or not they continue to host those images. Also, they might stop you from linking to their site if you use too much of their bandwidth (this is called “hot linking”)! My suggestion is to always host your images on your server and blog so that you can trust that the images will always be there.
5. **Pictures Aren’t Enough** – Remember, real content (words) will be your best weapon to create great content and a thriving blog. Good pictures aren’t enough – you’re going to have to do some writing!
6. **Edit Images** – Sometimes even the slightest edits to a photo can make a world of difference. Spending just those few minutes to add some text on top of an image or mix things together will help you stand out.
7. **Be Creative** – Ultimately you want to be as creative as you can with your use of images so that it represents your blog and brand well.

And remember to have fun!

I hope this guide helps you create amazing and compelling content for your blog. Let me know if you have any questions and/or any other tips!