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Using Stock Photos in Your Online Advertising Campaign

Who to buy from, and what NOT to do

From [Kari Rule](#), for About.com

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In online advertising, getting an idea across to the audience is the primary goal. This is often done through visual. Stock images offer advertisers a collection of photographs that may be exactly what they are looking for, but before you choose to use them you need to know a few things.

Stock images are photographs that can be licensed or purchased for specific needs. The images are managed by an agency that negotiates fees on behalf of the photographers for a certain percentage. Price is determined by the audience, length of use, the region and other factors.

There are quite a few companies in the stock photography business, but key players include Getty Images, iStockPhoto and Corbis.

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[Getty Images](#) is the leading online stock image supplier with over 70 million images to choose from. The company strives to target not only creative professionals such as advertising and graphic design, but the media and corporations as well. If you are looking for the most variety and unlimited choices of photos, then use Getty Images.

In 2006, Getty Images bought their competitor [iStockPhoto](#), an online photography provider. iStockPhoto sources all their images exclusively online, has a wide range of photographers of all skills and sells royalty-free images at an incredibly low rate of anywhere from 96 cents to \$1.20. If you need photos quick and reasonably priced, iStockPhoto is the right choice.

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Another provider is [Corbis](#), privately owned by Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft. Corbis sells high-quality photography including entertainment and historic photos. Corbis prides itself on selling images from an

extensive list of elite assignment photographers. If you are looking for iconic or cutting edge photos, look no further than Corbis.

After you choose an image company, you need to understand the rights associated with the images. This is very important because many stock image companies offer different things.

Know your rights: Royalty-free stock photos

Royalty-free images are becoming more and more common. Royalty-free meaning there is a one-time fee to use the image multiple times, although such deals can come with limitations. There is no time limit when you can use a royalty-free image.

Rights-managed, or "licensed images," require a buyer to pay each time an image is used. There is usually a time limit as well, allowing the photographer to continue selling to others. If you are looking for exclusive rights to an image, insuring sole usage, then you must choose a rights-managed license. However, not all rights-managed licenses are exclusive, so be sure to check with the agreement.

Brian Brooker, CEO and Chief Creative Officer for Barkley, a Kansas City-based advertising agency, believes using stock photos can be a great option for creative teams.

"Personally I really like stock images, depending on the project. At Barkley we do have access to stock images and you can find incredible images that would be hard to duplicate," Brooker said.

He also stressed that budget and time can sometimes make stock images the only option for a certain project.

"Stock images are great for time and budget limits. When choosing to use stock images, think if the image is right for the idea. Lead with the idea. If it makes the idea better, it's the right choice."

The Everywhere Girl

However, be cautious before using an image.

Beginning in 2004, stock images of a young girl on a college campus began to appear throughout the world of online advertising. She was nicknamed the "The Everywhere Girl" because of her appearances in many advertisements – and most embarrassingly – in ads from competing technology companies.

Both Dell and Gateway used the exact same image of the Everywhere Girl for both of their 'Back To School' campaigns.

The photo shoot of the Everywhere Girl was for stock images and royalty-free. They were and still are available on Getty Images. The images have been used over 10 times, reported by The Inquirer, an online British technology tabloid.

"The Everywhere Girl," whose real name is Jennifer Anderson, had no idea that one photo shoot would have gotten this much attention. [Anderson maintains a blog](#) where she continues to track the appearances of her photos.

"It was such a shock to keep seeing my pictures everywhere and then find out I was this "everywhere girl" that people were talking about." Anderson said.

Anderson believes it makes sense for companies to use stock photos, but that they also need to consider exclusive rights.

"If a company does not have money or time, I understand using stock photos. Exclusive rights can be important to have depending on the photos and what are they being used for," Anderson said. "They are also nice for the subject of the photos."

When deciding to use a stock image, Brooker suggests choosing more unusual and original stock photos, than generic ones to try to avoid another "Everywhere Girl" incident. He also says that you can take a stock image and make it your own by smalls change to the image.

"Stock photos can inspire the thinking. They can trigger a creative idea. You need to start with a photo and work from there."