



## Using Christmas charols in commercials and film

### Description



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We are heading heavily towards Christmas and so our [platform](#) is receiving a growing number of requests looking for famous Christmas charols to be used in a commercial or feature films. Rather than a profound legal advice (which this text isnâ??t) this article shall give an introduction to the rights situation which shall be a useful starting point for artists seeking to do a cover version of a famous carol

and film producers, creatives and directors alike who want to synch license a Christmas tune in their production.

Generally, to use a song in a commercial or film you need to obtain a license from all parties who have rights to the composition and the recording (master and copyright). When doing a cover version the respective artist owns the right to the recording. If the copyright to the song has expired as well, you are ready to go for a synch license. Determining whether copyrights have expired and the respective composition is public domain depends mainly on two things:

1. the date of the first publishment
2. the death year of all parties involved in the copyright (composer, publisher, editor)
3. the country you want to license the song for, as there are different regulations on the expiration

If the composition was first published before 1923:

- it is public domain in the US (however with some extreme rare exceptions)
- it is public domain in Canada, if all copyright parties have passed away at least 50 years ago
- it is public domain in EU, if all copyright parties have passed away at least 70 years ago

If the composition was first published after 1923:

- it is copyrighted in the USA
- it is public domain in Canada, if all copyright parties have passed away at least 50 years ago
- it is public domain in EU, if all copyright parties have passed away at least 70 years ago

Beware that this needs to include editors who changed the arrangement or the lyrics (like e.g. translations of lyrics), if you are using an edited version.

If you want to check the copyright lengths for specific countries I recommend checking the individual copyright regulations. A first overview with useful links can be found on this [Wikipedia page](#).

Here are some examples of songs that are public domain (in their original versions!):

## Silent night

- composed by Franz Gruber â? 1863
- German lyrics by Joseph Mohr â? 1848, English translation by John Freeman Young (â? 1885)

## Deck the halls

- melody dates back to 16th century, as part of the Welsh Christmas carol â??Nos Galanâ?•
- Welsh lyrics by John Jones (â? 1869), English lyrics by Thomas Oliphant (â? 1873)

## Jingle bells

(original title: One horse open sleigh)

- composed by James Lord Pierpont (â? 1893)

- lyrics by James Lord Pierpont (â? 1893)

## Joy to the world

- composed by Lowell Mason (â? 1872) as an adaption of a melody originated from HÃ¶ndel
- lyrics by Isaac Watts (â? 1748), based on the Psalm 98 in the bible

## We wish you a merry Christmas

- composition and lyrics originated in the 16th century

To complete the view, I will also mention some popular charols which are not public domain today:

Santa Claus is coming to town

White Christmas

Winter Wonderland

Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!

The little drummer boy

For these you need to acquire a respective license for the composition.

Thanks to IMSLP, The Hymns and Charols of Christmas, PD Info and Wikipedia.

If you need any help on licensing songs, just [get in touch](#) !

Best

Your T&F Team