



LICENSING MUSIC FOR SCHOOL DANCES AND DJ'S

PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

A public performance of music as defined by the US Copyright Law is any music played outside of a close circle of associates (under 10) including friends and family that occurs in any public place.

Music like any other property is owned by the copyright owner. They have the right, under the law, to be compensated for the use of their property. When music is played outside of certain educational exemptions (17 U.S.C. §110(1)) a public performance license is needed. There are currently four (4) US-based Performing Rights Organizations (PROs) and all of them have affordable and easy to get blanket licenses that cover their entire catalogue. It is important to purchase all PRO licenses as many songs may have artists, writers, and performers in different PROs.

PERFORMING RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS (PROs):

AllTrack – [School-Based License](#)

ASCAP

BMI – [School-Based License](#)

GMR – [School-Based License](#)

SESAC

The process of getting permissions involves contacting the copyright holder, which in the case of most music played by DJs, means reaching out to the PROs which manage the public performance rights for nearly any piece of music you'd want to be performed.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

Playing a song at a public event like a school dance, whether it's through a DJ or any other medium, is considered a public performance and necessitates a public performance license. This is true regardless of whether the music is played by a live band, CD, DJ, or even a smartphone.

DOESN'T MY HIRED DJ HAVE THESE PERMISSIONS ALREADY?

DJs will typically have the licensing needed to gather the music and have it played at a particular function. However, public performance licensing is venue specific and thus requires the host to secure proper licensing. The fee paid to the DJ is primarily for their services and talents as a DJ.

To ensure you are fully compliant with copyright laws, it's advisable to consult with legal counsel or directly with the rights organizations to understand all the specifics for your particular event, as there might be additional considerations depending on the location, nature of the event, and the specific music being played.