Illegal downloading reading and discussion
legal English/ arts and media/ opinions/ looking at both sides
In the table below, brainstorm arguments for and against serious punishments like big fines and cutting off internet access for people who download movies etc illegally.

Arguments for large punishments for illegally downloading music	Arguments against large punishments for illegally downloading music

Compare with another group.

Say which side of the argument you think is stronger and why.

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Before reading a text on a change in the law on illegal downloads, try to predict the answers to these questions:

What is the punishment for downloading illegally according to Japanese law?

Why did the government increase the punishments?

How much illegal downloading do you need to do to be punished?

Who supported the increased punishments?

Who was against the increased punishments?

What did those people who were opposed do to protest?

Who do the protesters think should be punished (instead of punishing the downloaders)?

What punishments for illegal downloading have happened outside Japan?

Are there countries which have rejected stronger punishments for illegal downloads?

Read the text and check your answers: http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-19767970

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Illegal downloads discussion questions

1. Is the punishment for downloading illegally in Japanese law fair? How about after only one illegal download? If not, what other punishments could there be and after how many downloads?

2. Was the government right to increase the punishments?

3. What do you think about the protests against the increased punishments? Can you think of any other ways of protesting?

4. Are the recording industry right to be worried about illegal downloads? Is there anything positive about it for them? Are there any different ways that they could react?

5. What are your own experiences of downloading music online? How do you feel about those downloads now?

6. How would you feel and what would you do if you were one of these people?

- A record company executive
- A musician whose copyrighted music was being illegally downloaded
- An internet user who had been warned not to do more illegal downloading by their government
- An internet user who had been warned not to do more illegal downloading by their internet company
- An internet user whose internet had been cut off by the internet company due to illegal downloads
- An internet user who had been arrested for a single illegal download
- A police officer who is in charge of catching and charging illegal downloaders
- A businessman who wants to solve the illegal downloading problem and make money out of the solution

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What punishments, if any, should there be for breaking copyright in these ways? (All of them are illegal in at least one country).

- ✧ Buying pirate DVDs
- ✧ Creating file sharing software which could be used to share illegal copies of music etc
- ✧ Downloading file sharing software which could be used to share illegal copies of music etc
- ✧ Emailing a copyrighted music track to a friend
- ✧ Illegally downloading copies of books (PDFs or e-books)
- ✧ Linking from your website or blog to illegal downloads on another site
- ✧ Make a CD copy of mp3s on your computer for a friend
- ✧ Performing a copyrighted song without permission
- ✧ Photocopying pages of books for use in class
- ✧ Photocopying whole books
- ✧ Playing a recording of a song in your café or restaurant without permission
- ✧ Performing a song in your café or restaurant without permission
- ✧ Posting a copyrighted video on YouTube etc without permission
- ✧ Publishing and selling fan fiction (e.g. your own novel including the characters from Harry Potter)
- ✧ Publishing photos of people without their permission
- ✧ Putting the lyrics of a copyrighted song on your blog or website
- ✧ Reading a whole book (cover to cover) in a bookshop
- ✧ Recording from the radio
- ✧ Republishing a newspaper article on your website or blog without permission
- ✧ Sampling from a copyrighted song in your song without permission
- ✧ Selling pirate DVDs
- ✧ Staging a play without permission to use the script
- ✧ Using other people's photos in your book, website, blog or magazine article without permission
- ✧ Watching some video on an illegal streaming site
- ✧ Videoing a movie in the cinema

Rank the things above by how serious they are.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the views below? Choose one and discuss it with your partner.

- If people are illegally downloading, it is the fault of the companies which own the copyright, who should be more innovative in how they deliver it to consumers
- The punishment for illegally downloading an album should be the same as for stealing it from a music shop
- Illegal downloads are actually a good thing for musicians

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How many different ways are there of getting access to these things?
Books (and parts of them)

Newspapers and magazines (and articles from them)

Music

Lyrics of songs

Movies

TV programmes

Software (including operating systems and computer games)

Pictures (photos etc, e.g. to use in your PowerPoint presentation)

Which of those things are illegal?

Which things should also be illegal?

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