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Identifying Pirated Items Guide

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Introduction

Books, videos, sound recordings, and items of any other format that have been illegally created, copied, distributed, or sold violate copyright law. These items are considered “pirated.” Due to the legal liability for both the library and RSA, these items shall not be cataloged, circulated, or interlibrary loaned in the RSA database according to the [Prohibited Items Policy](#).

Many pirated items encountered in the RSA database are television shows and movies on Blu-Ray or DVD that are only available through streaming services such as Netflix, Apple TV, Amazon Prime, or Disney+ (among others). Television shows and movies that are broadcast on streaming services are often not released on physical disc. Pirated copies of television shows and movies on Blu-ray and DVD are increasingly being sold by third-party vendors on Amazon, Walmart, eBay, and other websites.

A pirated item may have a bibliographic record in OCLC WorldCat that describes it. Do not assume that an item is a legitimate copy simply because there is an OCLC record for it.

This guide discusses what you can do to avoid buying pirated items, provides characteristics of pirated materials to look for once you have the item in-hand, next steps if you encounter a pirated item in the RSA database, and screenshots of example pirated items.

Tips to avoid buying a pirated item

Look for these characteristics before buying an item, which may indicate the item is pirated:

- Spelling or grammar errors on the item, the product description, or the vendor page.
- Stock photos are used rather than high-quality photos of the actual item.
- The price is suspiciously low, often too good to be true.
- Pressure to buy quickly to take advantage of a limited time deal.
- Check for negative reviews about the item and the seller.
- No sales tax is charged at checkout.
- The item is only sold by third-party vendors.
- Very few or no other libraries have copies in the RSA database, despite the item’s popularity.
- Search for the movie or television show on the websites below *before* purchasing to determine if it has been released on disc. If these sites do not mention a release date, there is a good chance it has not been released on disc and may only be available via a streaming service.

- DVD Release Dates: <https://www.dvdsreleasedates.com/>
- Blu-ray.com: <https://www.blu-ray.com/>
- If the movie is still in the theater, or the television show is currently on the air, it has likely not been released on disc.

Characteristics that indicate a book may be pirated

Identifying pirated items can be challenging as technology continues to improve, but below are characteristics to look for when you have a book in-hand.

- Poor quality cover art that is pixelated or blurry
- Blurry, faded, or inconsistently colored text
- Blurry or poorly colored images
- Off-center, crooked, or unevenly aligned text
- Thin, flimsy, grayish, or poorly cut paper
- Low-quality binding, such as an uneven, discolored spine
- Strong chemical smell
- Missing copyright or publisher information
- Blurry, fuzzy, or slightly colored barcode
- Pages that are missing, repeated, or out of order
- Content may be plagiarized from outside sources, such as websites.
- Enter the ISBN into [ISBNdb](https://www.isbndb.com/) to confirm that the ISBN matches the book in-hand.

Please note these characteristics, as well as those listed in the next section for DVDs and Blu-rays, are not an absolute guarantee the item is pirated. Reach out to the RSA Help Desk for assistance if you are unsure if the item is pirated.

Characteristics that indicate a DVD or Blu-ray may be pirated

- A disc with a purple, gold, or blue tint on the underside, though consider this characteristic in combination with others in this list
- You see a well-known manufacturer's name, such as Maxell, when you hold the disc up to the light and tilt it.
- Small scratches or irregularities on the underside of the disc
- Paper labels, a rough printed texture, or a blank surface on the disc

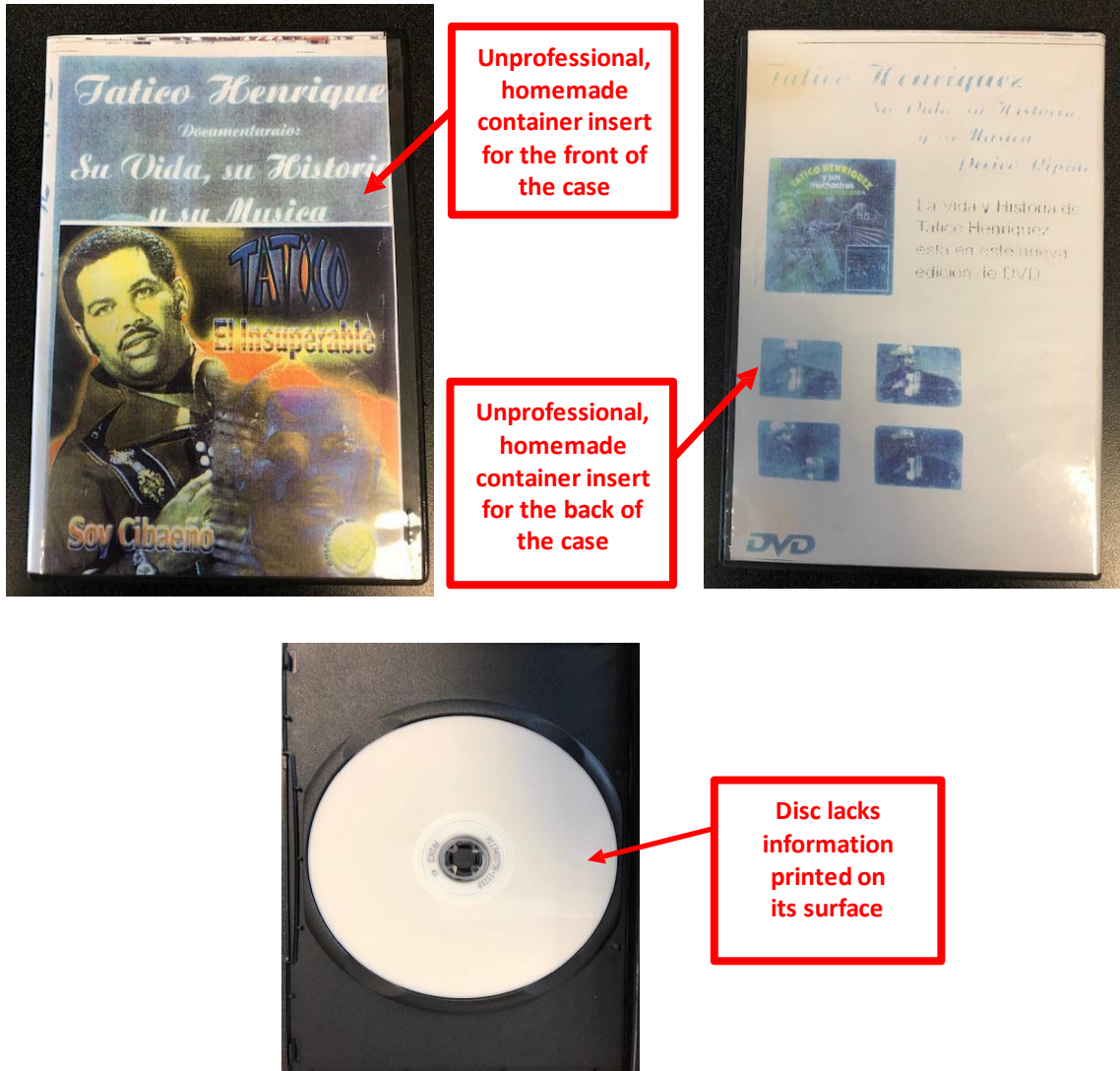
- Blurry, pixelated, typos, or poor-quality artwork on the disc case
 - This tip does not apply to the items listed below, which may have “homemade” looking artwork:
 - DVD/Blu-ray combination packages split into separate cases with photocopied cover art in order to circulate each disc separately.
 - Local history, genealogy, and other special collection items that are eligible for the [Cataloging Maintenance Center](#).
- Flimsy or cheap disc cases
- Missing or incorrect studio logos, copyright information, or country of origin
- Spelling or grammar errors on the disc or the case
- “Playable in all regions,” “Region 1 compatible,” or lacking a region code
- Poor quality sound and video playback, particularly distorted images or sounds
- DVD menu items are in a language other than English.
- Out-of-sync soundtracks
- Text near the spindle hole does not mention Blu-ray Disc or DVD
- Additional ink colors besides black in the UPC barcode on the back of the disc case
- Searching online by the UPC retrieves different titles or no results.

Next steps if you encounter a pirated item in the RSA database

If you encounter an item owned by either your library or another RSA library that may be pirated, follow the procedure [here](#).

Example pirated items

Below are screen shots of a pirated DVD and a pirated Blu-ray. Please note these screenshots are only intended to be examples. A pirated item may not have these exact characteristics.



This television show was never released on disc according to [Blu-ray.com](https://www.blu-ray.com).

