



What is a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA)?

A Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) is a contract between two or more institutions that governs the rights and responsibilities relative to a piece of tangible research property (e.g., plasmid, reagent, cell line) or hardware (e.g., prototype) that is being given or exchanged. Research thrives on collaboration, but legal complexities can arise when scientists are sharing their materials. An MTA can resolve issues relating to intellectual property ownership rights, academic publication and priority (who gets to publish first), intellectual property (who owns improvements and new inventions relating to materials) and permitted use and liability.

Why do I need an MTA?

In the case of a transfer to a commercial company, an MTA is always required to prevent the company from using your intellectual property in a product for sale without proper compensation to you and your lab. In the case of a transfer to an academic or other non-profit partner, an MTA is always necessary for human-derived, genetically modified, or hazardous materials. Otherwise, you should think carefully about whether an MTA can protect your interests.

Questions to consider