

# Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Whether it is intentional or accidental, plagiarism is an act of fraud. Learning how to avoid plagiarism is a key component of the research process.



## WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

- According to the *Merriam Webster online dictionary*, to “plagiarize” means
  1. to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own
  2. to use (another’s production) without crediting the source
  3. to commit literary theft
  4. to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source
- All of the following are considered plagiarism
  - Turning in someone else’s work as your own
  - Copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
  - Failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
  - Giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
  - Changing words, but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
  - Copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not

→ **Changing the words of an original source is NOT sufficient to prevent plagiarism.** If you have kept the essential idea of an original source, but have not cited it, then no matter how drastically you may have altered its context or presentation, **you have still plagiarized.**

## HOW TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

- In a research paper, you have to come up with your own original ideas and make reference to work that has already been done by others. It can be difficult to determine how and when to include research in your paper. Confusion about how to integrate what you know with the testimony of experts often leads to plagiarism. The following chart explains some helpful ways that you can make sure to avoid plagiarism. Use it as a checklist before you begin writing your research paper.

<b>Consult with your instructor</b>	The bottom line is, if you have questions about research, you should ask your instructor or your librarian. If you follow the guidelines for citing sources correctly, you should have no problems with plagiarism.
<b>Plan Your Paper</b>	Take some time before you write your paper to plan how you will effectively blend the research with your own ideas. Writing an outline and coming up with a thesis statement in which you formulate an argument about the information you find will help establish the boundaries between your ideas and those of your sources.
<b>Take Effective Notes</b>	One of the best ways to prepare to write a research paper is to take effective notes from all of your sources, so you will have the information researched before you begin writing. Poor note-taking can lead to improper citations and misquoting, which are both forms of plagiarism. To avoid confusion, try to use different fonts or different colored pens for each source, making sure that you use them to distinguish your ideas from those of your source. Also, get in the habit of marking page numbers, and make sure that you record all bibliographic information right away – finding your sources later when you are trying to finish your paper can be a nightmare!
<b>When in doubt, cite sources</b>	Of course you want to get credit for your ideas and you don't want your instructor to think that you got all of your information from somewhere else. If it is unclear whether you got it from another author, <b>you should always cite your source!</b> Instead of weakening your paper and making it seem like you have fewer original ideas, this will actually strengthen your paper by 1) showing that you are not just copying ideas, but processing and adding to them, 2) lending outside support to ideas that are completely yours and 3) highlighting the originality of your ideas by showing a clear distinction between them and ideas you have gotten somewhere else.

<p><b>Make it clear WHO said WHAT</b></p>	<p>Even if you cite sources, ambiguity in your phrasing can often disguise the real source of any idea, causing accidental plagiarism. When you mix your ideas with those of your sources, make sure you clearly distinguish between them. One way that you can do this is to watch out for misused pronouns. For example, if imagine if you are talking about Harold Bloom’s discussion of James Joyce’s opinion of Shakespeare, and you write, “He brilliantly portrayed the situation of a writer in society at that time.” Who is the “He” in this sentence? Bloom, Joyce, or Shakespeare? Who is the “writer”: Joyce, Shakespeare, or one of their characters? Always make sure to distinguish WHO said WHAT, and give credit to the right person.</p>
<p><b>Know how to paraphrase</b></p>	<p>A paraphrase is a statement IN YOUR OWN WORDS of someone else’s ideas. It is helpful because it can make the ideas of your source fit seamlessly into your paper. However, paraphrasing incorrectly is one of the most common ways that plagiarism can occur. Changing a few words does not make your writing a legitimate paraphrase. <u>You must change both the words and the sentence structure of the original, without changing the content.</u> Also, keep in mind that paraphrased content still requires a citation.</p>
<p><b>Evaluate your sources</b></p>	<p>Not all sources on the internet are worth citing. Be sure that you have carefully evaluated your web site for authority, objectivity, design, and currency before you decide to use it as a source.</p>