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Plagiarism

What is it, anyway?

Deliberate plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own. Whether you get text (in part or in full) from a published essay, encyclopedia article, web site, or your roommate's files, you are plagiarizing.

Accidental plagiarism happens when writers fail to write complete, correct citations. You can prevent this by taking careful notes and understanding the rules for quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing sources.

Common forms of plagiarism:

- Leaving out quotation marks when quoting a source text, even if you supply documentation.
- Paraphrasing materials from a source text without appropriate documentation.
- Copying a paper from a source text without proper acknowledgment.
- Buying a paper from a research service, term paper mill, or classmate.

Definitions

Common knowledge: facts that can be found in numerous places and are likely to be known by a lot of people. You don't need to document sources for these facts.

Because the following is a commonly known fact, it *doesn't* need to be cited:

John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.

In the following, you *do* need to cite your source because the idea that "Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation" is an interpretation of facts:

According the American Family Leave Coalition's new book, *Family Issues and Congress*, President Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation (6).

Quotation: using someone's exact words. When you quote, place the passage you are using in quotation marks, and document the source according to a standard documentation style (MLA, APA, etc). The following is a correctly cited quotation:

According to Peter S. Pritchard in *USA Today*, "Public schools need reform but they're irreplaceable in teaching all the nation's young" (14).

Paraphrase: using someone's ideas, but putting them in your own words. This is probably the skill you will use most when incorporating sources into your writing. Although you use your own words to paraphrase, you must still acknowledge the source of the information.

If Pritchard says "Public schools need reform but they're irreplaceable in teaching all the nation's young" you *are* plagiarizing if you write:

Public schools need to be reformed, but we can't replace public schools' roles of teaching youth in the United States.

Credit Pritchard and use new words and a new sentence structure, and you can avoid plagiarizing. This is *correct* paraphrasing:

Pritchard admits that public schools are the best approach to educating children in America, despite his demand to improve the system (14).

A paraphrase should contain all of the author's information and none of your own commentary. Even if you have avoided using the author's words, sentence structure, or style, *an unattributed paraphrase is plagiarism because it presents another person's ideas as your own.*

How do you avoid plagiarizing?

To avoid plagiarism, *you must give credit* whenever you use:

- another person's idea, opinion, or theory
- any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings -- any pieces of information -- that are not common knowledge
- quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words
- a paraphrase of another person's spoken or written words

More tips for avoiding plagiarism:

- Put in quotations everything that comes directly from the text, especially when taking notes, and be sure to write down the words exactly as they're written.
- Paraphrase, but be sure you are not just rearranging or replacing a few words.
- Check your paraphrase against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words, and that the information is accurate.
- Cite every piece of information that is not a) the result of your own applied research, or b) common knowledge. This includes opinions, arguments, and speculations as well as facts, details, figures, and statistics.
- At the beginning of the first sentence in which you quote, paraphrase, or summarize, make it clear that what comes next is someone else's idea:
 - According to Smith...
 - Jones says...
 - In his 1987 study, Robinson proved...
- At the end of the last sentence containing quoted, paraphrased, or summarized material, insert a parenthetical citation to show where the material came from (notice the use of brackets to mark a change in the wording of the original):

Example: The *St. Martin's Handbook* defines plagiarism as "the use of someone else's words or ideas as [the writer's] own without crediting the other person" (Lunsford and Connors 602).

Want more information?

If you want more information about avoiding plagiarism, including detailed examples, take a look at some of these web sites:

- "Examples of Plagiarism" from the Academic Integrity web site at Princeton University: <<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/pages/plagiarism.html>>
- "Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It" from the Writing Tutorial Services of Indiana University: <<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>>
- "Academic Honesty and Intellectual Ownership" from University of Puget Sound's Collins Library: <<http://library.ups.edu/research/guides/acadhon.htm>>
- Much of the information and examples presented here come from The Writing Place at Northwestern University and can be accessed online at <http://www.writing.nwu.edu/avoiding_plagiarism.html>.

Centralia College Writing Center

The Writing Center is located in Kemp 105. Fall 2004 hours are M-Th, 9-3 & F, 9-12.

