

Plagiarism

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the act of using and passing off the work of another as one's own. The word actually derives from a Latin word meaning kidnapper, *plagiarius*¹. Ideas, as well as the expression of those ideas, are considered to belong to the person who first puts them forward. "Kidnapping" the work and ideas of another is just as unethical as taking their physical property, therefore, you need to indicate your source accurately and completely when you incorporate ideas or phrasing from another writer, even if it is indirectly quoted². Just like thievery, plagiarism is a **serious crime** that will be permanently placed on your academic record, and can lead to being expelled from the University. Serious cases may even lead to legal action. Your best defense is to learn the facts.

¹Plagiarism. (1998). *Oxford Canadian Dictionary*. New York: Oxford University Press Canada.

²Slade, C., Campbell W.G., & Ballou, S.V. (1994). *Form and style*. 9th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Plagiarism includes:

- Submitting the whole, or sections of an essay or creative work from any source (including the World Wide Web) and presenting it as original work.
- Using citations which have been designed to mislead the reader as to the nature or authenticity of the source. Plagiarism can even include being inaccurate in your references, as it suggests that any omitted names were not part of the work. It is possible to accidentally plagiarize! Be careful!
- Failing to provide a citation, suggesting to the reader that the ideas are the original property of the author, rather than those of the source.
- Unless prior written and signed permission is obtained, submitting the same essay, paper or other term work for credit in more than one course constitutes plagiarism. That's right - you can even plagiarize yourself! To help to understand this logic: when a paper is accepted to a research journal, that paper becomes copyrighted by the journal. To submit it again to another journal is like stealing it from the original journal. It might help to consider your academic papers in a similar "one use only" way.

All science is built upon the foundation laid by previous work. Research always involves working with and around the ideas of others. So how do we present the ideas and thoughts of others without accidentally slipping into plagiarism?

How to Lessen the Chances of Plagiarizing

1. When working with friends on a paper of the same topic, be careful to work in your own words. It is easy to collaborate with your friends, then unintentionally write everything down in exactly the same way.
2. Be careful with lending your work to others. If a classmate submits your work as their own without your knowledge, you will **both** be accused of plagiarism.
3. If you would like to use the same term paper for more than one course, you can try to get permission from the instructor, in writing.
4. Be comfortable with one system of documentation. Pick the one most common in your intended field of study (e.g., Psychology uses APA, English uses MLA, and Biology uses CSE). Attempting to master more than one may cause confusion, but fortunately they all have detailed style guides for you to refer to. Try to become familiar with some of the common citation patterns and references, while relying on a manual or handbook for the more complex or unusual ones. It is okay to look things up! Even your most published professors still use their style guides.
5. When taking notes from any source, copy all of the necessary bibliographic information. (You can see why it is handy to know the most common style requirements.) Be detailed with your notes. There are few things worse than having the absolutely perfect quote, and not remembering where you found it!
6. When you write a quotation in your notes, make sure that it has quotation marks around it, even if it only consists of a few words. When you paraphrase in your notes, do it properly the first time. Do not copy an author's words and phrases thinking that you can just improve it later, because if you forget or rush, you will have plagiarized. Copying is especially dangerous with copy/paste from electronic sources. Keep your personal ideas and your reference ideas separate, and well-marked. One trick could be to use brackets [] to enclose your comments.
7. Your ideas should control the paper, supported by your sources. Not the other way around. A string of quotations from other people does not make a research paper, and writing in your own words will help you keep your thoughts separate from your sources. If you are having trouble with ideas, try writing a short version of your paper in 30 minutes using no notes. This exercise will help you take ownership of the topic rather than relying on the words of others.
8. Whenever you want to insert other people's ideas, leave a blank or a parenthesis with the source's name. It can help to use the highlight function in Word to make these areas bright yellow, so you don't miss them during proofreading!