

# Plagiarism Fact Sheet

## What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the act of taking another person's written work and presenting it as your own. Many students are already familiar with the most blatant acts of plagiarism, which include:

1. Buying or trading a paper via a web site and turning it in as your own work.
2. Copying text off a web page and pasting it into the body of a paper that you turn in as your own work.
3. Taking a paper that was written by another student and turning it in as your own work.
4. Revising a paper that was written by another student and turning it in as your own work.

However, plagiarism is much more than stealing, trading, or buying other people's written work. More subtle forms of plagiarism, which students often commit accidentally, include:

5. Changing a few individual words of someone else's written work by substituting synonyms, but failing to restructure the sentences. (Examples are underlined in the *Plagiarized paragraph* of the table below.)
6. Paraphrasing someone else's ideas or information but failing to correctly cite their source. (A citation example is bolded at the end of the *Acceptable paraphrase* of the table below.)

| Original passage  | Plagiarized paragraph  | Acceptable paraphrase  |
|---|--|--|
| Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. Source:<br>Lester, J. D. (1976). <i>Writing Research Papers</i> (2nd ed.). pp. 46-47. | Students <u>often use too many</u> direct quotations <u>when they take</u> notes, <u>resulting in too many of</u> <u>them</u> in the final research paper. <u>In fact</u> , probably only about 10% of <u>the final copy</u> should <u>consist of</u> directly quoted <u>material</u> . <u>So it is important to</u> limit the amount of source material <u>copied</u> while taking notes. | In research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim ( <b>Lester, 1976</b> ). |
| Source: Purdue University Online Writing Lab, <i>Paraphrase: Write it in Your Own Words</i> , located at: <a href="http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_paraphr.html">http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_paraphr.html</a>   |  |  |

Anything you have written that uses ideas, opinions, or data that are not solely your own, including facts that are not considered "common knowledge," must be paraphrased and cited or it is considered plagiarized. We will be working on paraphrasing and citing sources later this semester.

## What are the penalties if I get caught plagiarizing?

Penalties for plagiarism are usually quite severe. Blatant acts of plagiarism, such as those listed in items 1-4 above, will result in you failing the course. If you are caught blatantly plagiarizing any assignment in this class, you will receive an "F" in the class and a referral to your academic counselor detailing the offense, which will be permanently placed in your student file. Repeat offenses can lead to suspension or even expulsion from the college.

Accidental acts of plagiarism, such as those listed in items 5 and 6 above, will be handled at my discretion. Penalties can range from a failing grade on the assignment to a mandatory revision of the assignments for a lower (but passing) grade (most often no more than 80%).

## How do I know if I have paraphrased and cited correctly?

You may not always know if you have committed plagiarism if you are just learning how to paraphrase and cite sources. However, you should know how to ask for help, and I expect you to ask me when you are not sure whether something is paraphrased or cited correctly. The first half of this course contains assignments that do not require you to use outside sources, so this should not be an issue for the first 7 weeks. We will learn about paraphrasing and citing sources in class before you are asked to use outside sources for any assignments.

## How do I avoid plagiarism?

The internet probably makes it more tempting than ever to use others' material to write your papers. It has never been easier to plagiarize. Resisting the urge to copy others' work is important to improving your writing skills and earning a passing grade in this course. The following tips can help you avoid plagiarism:

1. **Know what plagiarism is.** If you are not sure, ask me.
2. **Don't put assignments off until the last minute.** If you are a procrastinator, "lie" to yourself about upcoming deadlines by writing them down a day or two earlier in your date book. For example, if a paper is due on Friday, August 25, write down in your date book that it is due on Wednesday, August 23.
3. **Learn how to paraphrase and how to cite sources.** We'll work on these skills toward the middle of the semester. Be sure to ask for help when you need it.
4. **Take notes that are paraphrased, not quoted.** Taking notes that copy your original sources word-for-word increases the likelihood that you will either improperly paraphrase your notes or accidentally change the meaning of your information. It is far better to paraphrase external sources right away while you are first taking notes.
5. **Write down precisely where you get all of your information.** Make an electronic or paper copy of every source you use (articles, chapters, etc.) so you can double check your reference information (author, page numbers, etc.) and make sure your notes are accurate and properly paraphrased.
6. **Cite your sources.** If you are not sure whether you should cite something you have written, go ahead and cite it. If you are not sure how to cite something, just write down all of the source information at the end of the paragraph and look up how to format it later.
7. **When in doubt, ASK AN INSTRUCTOR.** That is, after all, the reason we are here. If you don't ask, we can't help.

## Where can I find additional information about plagiarism?

Most students plagiarize accidentally. Knowing what plagiarism is and how to avoid it are crucial in making sure you don't do it. This handout gives you a basic overview of what you need to know in order to avoid plagiarizing. Here are some additional resources you can use:

How Not to Plagiarize <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Avoiding Plagiarism: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_plagiar.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html)

Acknowledging Your Sources: <http://web.uvic.ca/wguide/Pages/CitationsTOC.html>