

Plagiarism: Examples and Guidelines to Avoid Plagiarism

The University of Washington and the College of Engineering have zero tolerance for plagiarism.

from the College of Engineering WEB Site

(<http://www.engr.washington.edu/org/processes/miscpolicy.htm>)

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is taking someone else's work from any source, i.e., someone's ideas, writings, or inventions, and using it **WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGMENT**. As long as you give credit to the originator of the material, you are not guilty of plagiarism. Merely enclosing statements or sentences in quotation marks is not sufficient; you must cite the source.

Examples of Plagiarism:

- Copying phrases, sentences, sections, paragraphs, or graphics from a source and not giving credit by citing the source.
- Turning in a paper from a previous class.
- Having another person write an assignment (for pay or for free) and putting your name on it.
- Modifying or paraphrasing another's ideas or writings and submitting them as your own.
- Having someone make substantial editorial changes to your paper and submitting the final version as your own.
- Turning in someone else's solution to an exam or a question on an exam as your own.
- Sharing computer code in assignments for individual students; use of someone else's computer code without acknowledgement; use of someone else's computer code when it is prohibited by the instructor.

Examples that are not Plagiarism:

- Asking someone to read your assignment and suggest possible improvements, unless specifically forbidden by the instructor.
- Getting together with other students to discuss an assignment, unless specifically forbidden by the instructor.
- Asking your instructor for help with an assignment.
- Quoting extensively from another's work but giving credit.
- Not citing sources for information that are in dictionaries or your course textbook.

Why is it so important?

Copying (or plagiarizing) someone's work, without giving due recognition, is regarded as the equivalent of STEALING AND FRAUD, especially in the Western world (USA, Canada, and Europe). It is highly probable that it will be detected, so do not do it under any circumstances. It could ruin your career.

How can I avoid Plagiarism?

ALWAYS make very clear reference to the source of the material you use and put the material taken in "quotation marks," no matter where you find it. This is perfectly acceptable and legitimate. DO NOT try to rewrite or change another person's work and pass it off as your own - this is very difficult to do and is easily detected.

When can I use other people's work?

You can always use published writings as long as you give a formal reference and acknowledgment of the source. If the information comes from a conversation with a professor or another student, give their name and recognition that it is their thought.

Again, NEVER take another person's writing or speech or message or Internet data and put it in your work without acknowledgment. It is important to always make sure in your career that everyone who makes a contribution gets credit, no matter how small their part has been!

If you have questions, please check with your instructor or TA.

**this description below was taken from, or modified from:
<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html#original>)**

Here's an ORIGINAL block of text, from page 1 of *Lizzie Borden: A Case Book of Family and Crime in the 1890s* by Joyce Williams, *et al.*:

The rise of industry, the growth of cities, and the expansion of the population were the three great developments of late nineteenth century American history. As new, larger, steam-powered factories became a feature of the American landscape in the East, they transformed farm hands into industrial laborers, and provided jobs for a rising tide of immigrants. With industry came urbanization the growth of large cities (like Fall River, Massachusetts, where the Bordens lived) which became the centers of production as well as of commerce and trade.

Now, this, below, is an UNACCEPTABLE paraphrase, clearly plagiarism:

The increase of industry, the growth of cities, and the explosion of the population were three substantial developments of nineteenth century America. As steam-driven production facilities became more visible in along the Eastern seaboard, they changed farm hands into factory workers and provided jobs for the swell of immigrants. With industry came the growth of large

cities like Fall River where the Bordens lived that turned into centers of commerce and trade as well as production.

What makes this passage plagiarism?

The preceding passage is considered plagiarism for two reasons:

1. The writer has only changed around a few words and phrases, or changed the order of the original's sentences.
2. The writer has failed to cite sources for any of the ideas or facts.

This is a reasonable paraphrase of the original paragraph:

The Nineteenth century propelled America into a time of change. Populations, cities and industry grew rapidly. A rural, agrarian economy shifted to a manufacturing economy and with this change, farmers became factory workers. To provide jobs for immigrants, towns like Fall River, the Bordens' home town, transformed to industrial and trading centers.

Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism

1. Put in quotations everything that comes directly from the text, especially when taking notes.
2. Paraphrase, but be sure you are not just rearranging or replacing a few words.

Instead, read over what you want to paraphrase carefully. Cover up the text with your hand, or close the book so you can't see any of it (and so aren't tempted to use the original as a "guide"). Write out the idea in your own words without peeking.

3. 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.

Terms You Need to Know (or What is Common Knowledge?)

Common knowledge: facts that can be found in numerous places and are likely to be known by a lot of people.

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

This is generally known information. You do not need to document this fact.

However, you must document facts that are not generally known and ideas that interpret facts.

Example: 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).

The idea that "Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation" is not a fact but an interpretation; consequently, you need to cite your source.

Quotation: using someone's words. When you quote, place the passage you are using in quotation marks (“ ”), and document the source according to a standard documentation style.

The following example uses the Modern Language Association's style:

Example: 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.

Some things are beautifully written or wonderfully expressed. Though it might be impossibly challenging to rewrite it better, paraphrasing using incorrect English and poor expression is not satisfactory.