

What is Plagiarism?

The following excerpt on plagiarism comes from the University of Washington's Faculty Resource Guide. It gives some excellent examples for you to note and avoid.

One of the most common forms of cheating is *plagiarism*, using another's words or ideas without proper citation. When students plagiarize, they usually do so in one of the following six ways:

1. *Using another writer's words without proper citation.* If you use another writer's words, you must place quotation marks around the quoted material and include a footnote or other indication of the source of the quotation.
2. *Using another writer's ideas without proper citation.* When you use another author's ideas, you must indicate with footnotes or other means where this information can be found. Your instructors want to know which ideas and judgments are yours and which you arrived at by consulting other sources. Even if you arrived at the same judgment on your own, you need to acknowledge that the writer you consulted also came up with the idea.
3. *Citing your source but reproducing the exact words of a printed source without quotation marks.* This makes it appear that you have paraphrased rather than borrowed the author's exact words.
4. *Borrowing the structure of another author's phrases or sentences without crediting the author from whom it came.* This kind of plagiarism usually occurs out of laziness: it is easier to replicate another writer's style than to think about what you have read and then put it in your own words. The following example is from *A Writer's Reference* by Diana Hacker (New York, 1989, p. 171).
 - **Original:** *If the existence of a signing ape was unsettling for linguists, it was also startling news for animal behaviorists.*
 - **Unacceptable borrowing of words:** *An ape who knew sign language unsettled linguists and startled animal behaviorists.*
 - **Unacceptable borrowing of sentence structure:** *If the presence of a sign-language-using chimp was disturbing for scientists studying language, it was also surprising to scientists studying animal behavior.*
 - **Acceptable paraphrase:** *When they learned of an ape's ability to use sign language, both linguists and animal behaviorists were taken by surprise.*
5. *Borrowing all or part of another student's paper or using someone else's outline to write your own paper.*
6. *Using a paper writing "service" or having a friend write the paper for you.* Regardless of whether you pay a stranger or have a friend do it, it is a breach of academic honesty to hand in work that is not your own or to use parts of another student's paper.
7. *In computer programming classes, borrowing computer code from another student and presenting it as your own.* When original computer code is a

requirement for a class, it is a violation of the University's policy if students submit work they themselves did not create.

Note: The guidelines that define plagiarism also apply to information secured on internet websites. Internet references must specify precisely where the information was obtained and where it can be found.

You may think that citing another author's work will lower your grade. In some unusual cases this may be true, if your instructor has indicated that you must write your paper without reading additional material. But in fact, as you progress in your studies, you will be expected to show that you are familiar with important work in your field and can use this work to further your own thinking. Your professors write this kind of paper all the time. The key to avoiding plagiarism is that you show clearly where your own thinking ends and someone else's begins.

Tips to avoid plagiarism and compose a quality paper
by
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- 1.) **Take notes rather than photocopying a page.** When using a resource book, take notes that clearly convey the meaning of the sentence, without using the specific language.
- 2.) **Seek a variety of sources.** Some information may be available in multiple books, magazines, or internet sites. Using a wide array of information sources will prevent you from following one source too closely for large chunks of your paper.
- 3.) **Using the internet.** The internet is one of the best and worst tools for education. Use it to get some general information on your topic and then visit the library for print sources. You can come back to the internet later for additional info that may be more recent.
- 4.) **Find quality online sources.** When you go to an internet site, evaluate whether this is a reputable source. Is the author's name present? If so, what are his/her qualifications for discussing this topic? (*Make sure it isn't just another student's thought or interests.*) Is there a date of publication or revision? Is the article part of a reputable journal's or educational website?
- 5.) **Outline and then write your paper.** When you begin to write your paper, prepare an outline form and organize your notes. This will help the flow of the paper and keep you from copying directly from the sources.