

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words or ideas without giving credit to the original writer or speaker. Use either quotations or paraphrases, correctly cited, to develop and support your ideas.

Quotations

When using source material that you want to quote exactly, place all the words from the original source inside a set of quotation marks. Follow the quotation with parentheses containing the author's last name and the page number. Put the author's name and all necessary publication information on the *Works Cited* list at the end of the paper.

Example:

"Intentional plagiarizers cheat themselves" (Harris 17).

Work Cited

Harris, Robert N. Using Sources Effectively. Los Angeles: Pyrczak, 2002.

Paraphrase

When you use someone else's ideas, it is extremely important to paraphrase those ideas, by putting them completely into your own words and by creating new sentence structures.

Here is a good example of paraphrase:

Original idea:

"In writing your research paper, you should document everything you borrow—not only direct quotations and paraphrases but also information and ideas" (MLA Handbook 33).

Correctly paraphrased version:

The correctly paraphrased version uses new language and new sentence structure:

A good piece of academic writing tells the reader where all words, facts, concepts, and theories come from, even if you put the concepts and theories into your own words (MLA Handbook 33).

Plagiarized paraphrase:

In drafting your research paper, be sure to acknowledge all sources, including direct quotations and ideas (MLA Handbook 33).

Note the use of identical sentence structure and words:

In drafting your research paper, be sure to acknowledge all sources, including direct quotations and ideas (MLA Handbook 33).

Other Resources

Other helpful sources on plagiarism and how to avoid it are listed below:

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. New York: Modern Language Association. 1999.

Harris, Robert N. Using Sources Effectively. Los Angeles: Pyczak, 2002.

[WWW.CalStateLA.edu/centers/write- cn/plagiarism.htm](http://WWW.CalStateLA.edu/centers/write-cn/plagiarism.htm).

Remember, as you acquire a college education, you will learn to engage in research and original thinking. You will also learn to express your thinking in correct, graceful prose. Use the ideas and words of other writers only in order to explain and develop your own, original ideas.

Common Knowledge:

Students may sometimes become confused by the term “common knowledge” because they have been told that facts common to the average reader do not have to be documented. For instance, I may know that John Wilkes Booth shot Abraham Lincoln, but I may not know the actual date or the place so I look up those details in an encyclopedia. Do I have to document where I found the information?

If I say in an essay about the growth of Johnson County, that the population has over tripled in the past twenty years, do I need to document? If I say the total headcount of the enrollment at Johnson County Community College in the fall of 2001 was 17,776, do I need to document this statistic?

The answer to all of these questions is yes. You must document those facts and statistics that you look up in a reference. Guessing does not count, so if the statement about the growth of Johnson County is not authenticated, the reader may not believe your statement. If you are not sure about your information and whether or not it is common knowledge or needs to be documented, ask yourself one question: did I have to look up this information? If the answer is yes, you need to document.