Avoiding Plagiarism Tutorial

How much do you already know about plagiarism? Take this true or false quiz; answers are at the end of this tutorial. Check your answers after you read through this material.

1. Ideas that are common knowledge (such as “Independence Day in the United States falls on July 4”) do not need a citation.

\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_False

1. You don’t have to put quotation marks around an author’s exact words if you cite your source at the end of the paragraph.

\_\_\_True \_\_\_False

1. It is acceptable to cut and paste material from the Internet without citing a source, since this is not print.

\_\_\_True \_\_\_False

1. Paraphrasing text from another source does not require a citation because you are using your own words.

\_\_\_True \_\_False

1. If you borrow ideas but not words from another student’s paper (from a different course or semester), that is not plagiarism.

\_\_\_True \_\_\_False

1. If you turn in a paper that you wrote in a previous semester, that is not plagiarism, since this is your own work.

\_\_\_True \_\_\_False

1. Material summarized from another source must be cited.

\_\_\_True \_\_\_False

1. Your top ten list of reasons for enrolling in college need not be cited in a paper.

\_\_\_True \_\_\_False

1. As long as you cite sources in your text, there is no need for a Works Cited page or bibliography at the end of a paper.

\_\_\_True \_\_\_False

1. Song lyrics, photos and other graphics, need no citation.

\_\_\_True \_\_\_False

What Is Plagiarism?

Bloomfield College defines plagiarism as “the copying of a passage or idea from a book, article, notebook, laboratory report, video, Internet, or other source, published or unpublished, without acknowledging the source of the passage or idea.” (*Bloomfield College Catalog, 2012-2013*, 266). Specifically, follow these guidelines to avoid plagiarizing:

1. Use quotation marks around the exact words you have taken from a source, and cite the source.
2. When you paraphrase someone else’s words or ideas, cite your source.
3. Use proper citation methods; see your instructors to make sure that you are using the required format for each of your classes.
4. You may not replicate another student’s work.
5. You should not replicate your own work from other courses you have taken without prior approval from your instructor.

Plagiarism is cheating; it is stealing someone else’s ideas or words by presenting them as your own. The consequences for plagiarism include a warning, redoing the assignment, receiving a failing grade for the assignment, and possibly failing the course. Because this type of cheating is a serious academic offense, students may also face suspension or expulsion, if necessary, administered by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty/designee.

Why Is Plagiarism Considered a Serious Form of Cheating?

When you write for academic purposes, your instructors must be able to see clearly which ideas are your own and which you have borrowed and are using to support your points. Without quotation marks and citations, your instructor can’t distinguish between what originated from your own analyses and what you have found in your research. It appears that another’s ideas or words are yours, and your instructor will be unable to evaluate the content of your work fairly or accurately.

What Is NOT Plagiarism?

Any new ideas, originating from your own thinking and analysis, need not be cited. Also, you do not need to cite sources for common knowledge (facts and dates widely known by everyone). For example, you need not cite a source for a commonly known fact such as, “Barack Obama is the 44th President of the United States.” However, if you have any doubt whether or not an idea is common knowledge, it is best to cite your source.

Introducing the Source in Your Paper

We cite sources to back up a point we are making in a paper. Always introduce your source in the text of your paper. The first time you cite a source, give the author’s full name and the title of the book/article.

*Example: Witnesses to actual executions often reject the practice of capital punishment. For instance, in his essay “A Hanging,” George Orwell writes, “When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide” (168).*

The next time you cite the same source, you must again introduce the speaker (last name only) but not the title:

*Example: According to Orwell, “one of us would be gone--- one mind less, one world less” (168).*

What Is Quoting?

A quote is a word for word repetition of the original source. A quote must have quotation marks around it, unless it is a longer quote (3 lines or 40 words depending on the format), and then it must be written in block format. Brackets or ellipses need to be used if a quote is going to be changed. A quote should be used when the information is specific, such as definitions, dates, or detailed events, which may be hard to put in your own words, or if you want to use somebody else’s words for effect. This kind of citation should not be frequently used, with some variation based on the topic and class.

*Example: Freud’s theory of personality states that the “Id is the most primitive part of our personality which controls our basic urges” (Smith 44).*

What Is Summarizing?

A summary is a brief recap, in your own words, of a source’s main idea and main supporting details. It is never more than half as long as the source. When writing a summary, express that main idea and the key details in as few words as possible without leaving out any important information. Keep these points in mind when summarizing:

1. Fully understand the source. Re-read more than once, as many times as necessary, before attempting to summarize.
2. Underline the main idea and key supporting points in the source.
3. Wait; come back to it later with fresh eyes so that you are ready to use your own, fresh, original words.
4. Write the summary, using your own words. If you find that you are unable to do so, re-read the source.
5. Cut unnecessary details and repetition of words and ideas. Avoid quotations in summaries.
6. Cite your source.

*Example: Sigmund Freud, considered the father of modern technology, created the theory of psychosexual development. Freud also divided the human psyche into three parts: the Id, the Ego, and the Superego. He believed that understanding the unconscious was important to understanding a person’s behavior (Smith 10, 44, 54).*

What Is Paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is putting another writer’s ideas into your own words and citing the original source. We paraphrase to support an original idea in papers. Be cautious: If you merely switch words around, replace some words with synonyms, cut out a word here and there, change grammatical structures, you are “patchwriting”--- and plagiarizing. A true paraphrase is expressing another writer’s ideas in a completely different way. In order to paraphrase well, you must:

1. Fully understand the source.
2. Identify the key terminology that you have to keep.
3. Wait; come back to it later with fresh eyes so that you are ready to use your own, fresh, original words.
4. Later, write the paraphrase.
5. Be sure that your paraphrase really expresses the idea of the source but does not copy the exact wording. Rewrite as needed, or put exact wording from the source in quotation marks.
6. Cite the source.

*Example: Freud thought that dreams could be interpreted and that unlocking their meaning could help a person function better (Smith 55).*

When to Quote, Paraphrase, or Summarize

These guidelines will help you decide when it is best to use direct quotes, to paraphrase, or to summarize source material:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **USE DIRECT QUOTATIONS WHEN:** | **PARAPHRASE WHEN:** | **SUMMARIZE WHEN:** |
| 1. You must. Don’t overuse quotes, since they don’t demonstrate your understanding of the material. 2. The author’s words are so outstanding, dramatic, and perfect that they are the best way to emphasize your idea. 3. Summarizing and paraphrasing will be too long. 4. The exact words of an expert lend the strongest authority to your point. 5. You are having difficulty putting the idea into your own words and staying true to the source’s meaning. | 1. You need to demonstrate your own understanding of the material. 2. You wish to make the source’s ideas more direct or understandable to your target audience. 3. You want to stress those ideas in the source that clearly support your thesis/points. | 1. Keeping it short is most important. 2. You don’t want to include details that are not completely relevant to your thesis/points. |

Note-Taking for Research Papers--Tips

1. Notes for research papers should be in a separate section of a notebook or in a different notebook, so that they are not confused with class notes.
2. When taking notes from a book, the title of the book, author, copyright date, publisher, and the city in which the book was published should be documented on the top. If the source is an article, include author, the title of the magazine/journal, title of the article, the date, the volume number and the issue number, and the pages on which the article appears. If the source is a website, include the author, publisher, the date the information was retrieved, the date the information was put on the website, and the url.
3. The page number of where you are getting the information should be documented on the left margin.
4. Read the source one time without taking notes.
5. The second time you read the source, take notes. Do not highlight or underline; this can lead to plagiarism.
6. Notes should be in your own words. If you cannot put something into your own words, and it is not an important specific detail, then it is most likely a sign that you do not understand what you are reading. Read the section again; if you continue to struggle, ask for help.
7. If you decide to quote, make sure you mark it with quotation marks in your notes so you know it is a quote.
8. Different ideas should be on different lines of the paper and should have a space between them.
9. Read the source a third time to make sure you are not changing the meaning of any information in your paraphrases or summaries, and to make sure you are quoting correctly.

*Example: Author, Title, Copyright Date, Publisher, City of Publication*

*Pg 1 First idea*

*Second idea*

*Third idea*

*Pg 2 First idea*

*Second Idea*

Works Cited, References, and Bibliographies

In addition to citing your source in the body of your paper, you must always include a Works Cited, bibliography, or references page. These are separate pages, found at the end of your paper, that give a complete listing of all the sources you cited. Be sure to use the type of list required by your instructor (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). Ask your instructor if you are uncertain which to use.

Avoiding Plagiarism

1. Start with your own original thesis (argument, main idea, or controlling point), using quotations, summaries, and paraphrases as evidence to support it.
2. Request feedback from a tutor or another writer, who should check to make sure that you have provided enough support for your thesis. Are there gaps in your arguments? Where would an expert, outside source be useful to back up a point you have made?
3. Be certain that you cited every source in the paper. Forgetting to cite sources is not a valid excuse; it is plagiarism.
4. Take careful notes on all bibliographic information (see above for more information on note-taking for research writing).
5. Double check to make sure that you have put quotation marks around any words you have taken directly from a source.
6. If you are not sure if you need to cite a source, **cite it**.
7. Be sure to use the style required by your instructor (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). Ask your instructor if you are uncertain which to use. An excellent resource for citing is Purdue University’s On Line Writing Lab (OWL):

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Sources Consulted for This Tutorial

Howard, Rebecca Moore. *Writing Matters*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010. Print.

*The OWL at Purdue*. 2013. Purdue University. Web. 3 July 2013.

*The Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill.* 2012. The University of North Carolina at Chapel

Hill. Web. 3 July 2013.

**QUIZ ANSWERS**

1. **True**
2. **False**
3. **False**
4. **False**
5. **False**
6. **False**
7. **True**
8. **True**
9. **False**
10. **False**