

# **AVOIDING PLAGIARISM: GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS**

## **WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?**

The term *plagiarism* comes from the Latin word for kidnapper, *plagiarius*. It means taking credit for ideas or words that aren't your own. It's a form of stealing. A person who plagiarizes another's work is committing theft of intellectual property.

Plagiarizing in college assignments is cheating, and many instructors automatically fail students who are found guilty of it. These are some examples of plagiarism:

- Buying, stealing or borrowing a paper
- Hiring someone to write your paper
- Copying from another source without citing (on purpose or by accident)
- Cutting and pasting text or graphics from Internet sources into your paper
- Building on someone else's ideas without citation
- Using the source too closely when paraphrasing.

Your college research projects will be a combination of information you borrowed from others' work and your own ideas. Even though you make use of other people's work, the writing tone and style should "sound" like you—your own analysis, explanation, or conclusions, in your own words.

## **WHEN TO DOCUMENT SOURCES**

You can incorporate information from your research into your paper in these ways:

- Briefly restate the main idea of an entire work in your own words (summarize)
- Restate a source's idea or ideas in detail (paraphrase)
- Include a word-for-word quotation from the source

Whenever you use words or ideas borrowed from other sources (books, magazines, newspapers, songs, movies, Web pages, etc.) you must acknowledge the original author's work by including appropriate documentation.

Sometimes documentation isn't necessary. The table below shows examples of different types of information and whether you need to provide documentation.

Documentation IS required:

- Summaries, paraphrases or direct quotations from a source
- Reprints of diagrams, illustrations, charts or pictures
- Little-known facts
- Other people's opinions
- Results of other people's research (opinion polls, case studies, statistics)
- Quotations or paraphrases from people you interview

Documentation is NOT required:

- Common knowledge (facts that can be found in many places and are likely to be known by a lot of people)
- Your own ideas, opinions or conclusions
- Your own research (surveys or observations)

Documentation in research papers involves three basic parts:

- In the text of your paper, you must refer to the source used and the page number (if available) of the specific information you are citing.
- You must provide an alphabetized list of all the sources you used, with complete publication information for each. This list is included at the end of your paper. It may be called a bibliography, a list of works cited or a reference list.
- Depending on the documentation style preferred by your instructor, the format of your in-text citations and your list of sources will vary slightly. Whatever style you use, the goal is the same: to give credit to your sources and to enable your reader to identify and locate them.

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE PLAGIARISM

Here is the original text from an article in the March 2004 issue of *Scientific American*:

**Original:** Over the past few million years the earth's climate has swung repeatedly between ice ages and warm interglacial periods. A 400,000-year record of temperature is preserved in the Antarctic ice sheet, which, except for coastal fringes, escaped melting even in the warmest interglacial periods. This record suggests that the present interglacial period (the Holocene), now about 12,000 years old, is already long of tooth. (Hansen, James. "Defusing the Global Warming Time Bomb." *Scientific American* March 2004: 70)

**Plagiarism Example 1:** According to Hansen, the record suggests that the present interglacial period (the Holocene), now about 12,000 years old, is already long of tooth (70).

**Why is it plagiarism?** Even though the information source is documented, this is plagiarism because the writer didn't indicate that a phrase was borrowed word-for-word. To correct the problem, enclose the borrowed words in quotation marks.

**Acceptable:** According to Hansen, the "record suggests that the present interglacial period (the Holocene), now about 12,000 years old, is already long of tooth" (70).

**Plagiarism Example 2:** Over the past few millennia, the climate of the earth has swung back and forth between ice ages and warm periods. The record of temperature preserved in the Antarctic ice sheet suggests that our current warm period is already long in the tooth.

**Why is it plagiarism?** This is plagiarism because the writer has only changed a few words or phrases, and the writer has also failed to cite a source for any of the ideas or facts. Two acceptable texts, one using a paraphrase and the other using a combination of paraphrase and direct quotation, are shown below.

**Acceptable:** Studies of the Antarctic ice sheet show that earth's climate has cycled between ice ages and warm periods and back again over time, and that our current warm period has already lasted longer than usual (Hansen 70).

**Acceptable:** By studying the Antarctic ice sheet, scientists have determined that "the earth's climate has swung repeatedly between ice ages and warm interglacial periods" and that our current warm period has already lasted longer than usual (Hansen 70).

## TECHNIQUES FOR AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

When you are researching, taking notes, and interviewing, record the relevant documentation information in your notes accurately and completely.

Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources and which are your own thoughts or insights. Be sure to keep this distinction clear in your paper.

Put all words borrowed from sources inside quotation marks. In your notes, you might want to circle the quotation marks so you'll be sure to include them in your paper.

When paraphrasing or summarizing information from a source, use different words and sentence structures than the original text.

Tip: Reread your source until you understand it. Write your paraphrase or summary without looking at the original text, using your own words and phrasing. Next, check your version with the original. Make corrections for clarity, accuracy, and mistakenly borrowed phrases.

Keep the source's name near quotations and paraphrases in your notes and in your paper. Mention the person's name either at the beginning or the end of the passage.

Document all quoted material, paraphrases and summaries of your sources. Full publication information should be included in your list of sources at the end of your paper.

Document any facts that are disputed or not common knowledge.

Document all opinions, conclusions, statistics, pictures, charts or graphs taken from your sources.

## **Sites to Help Students Understand What Plagiarism Is and How to Avoid It:**

*Academic Integrity Research Guide* <http://www2.morainevalley.edu/default.asp?SiteId=10&PageId=249>

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

*Don't Do This: A Quiz on Academic Integrity* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/aiquiz.html>

*Exercise on Citation and Paraphrase* <http://web.grinnell.edu/writinglab/CitationGuides/Indivex.html>

*How Not to Plagiarize* <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html>

*How to Recognize Plagiarism* <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>

*Oops! I Plagiarized!* <http://unitproj.library.ucla.edu/col/b Bruinsuccess/03/01.cfm>

*Plagiarism: A Guide for Rutgers Students*  
[http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib/robeson\\_lib/flash\\_presents/text\\_plag.html](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib/robeson_lib/flash_presents/text_plag.html)

*Sources* <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/contents.html>

*VAIL Tutor (Virtual Academic Integrity Laboratory)* <http://www-apps.umuc.edu/vailtutor/>

*What Is Plagiarism?* <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/hc/plagiarism.html>

*You Quote It, You Note It!* <http://library.acadiau.ca/tutorials/plagiarism/>

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