

# Plagiarism

## Introduction

This section is about plagiarism and cheating. It will help you to avoid plagiarism in its different forms. It will explain why plagiarism is counter-productive when constructing your dissertation and be a reminder that academic staff are usually very good at spotting what is and what isn't your work. **Plagiarism is an academic crime and can carry severe penalties for you and your degree.**

Plagiarism is defined as:

Presenting as one's own work the work of another, including the copying or paraphrasing of another's work without acknowledging it as another person's work through full and accurate referencing. Plagiarism applies to material so presented through written, spoken, electronic, broadcasting, visual, performance or other medium.

In the context of an assignment, plagiarism occurs when information from another source is used without being credited correctly. This source can be a book, a journal article, an image, or a website: anything that was written, designed, or created by someone else.

There are several common mistakes that can lead to plagiarism:

- Copying a series of words without telling the reader where those words came from
- Copying a series of words without putting them inside quotation marks
- Paraphrasing (rephrasing) another source, but only changing a few words
- Using the facts or ideas from another source without telling the reader where they came from
- Copying images, in whole or part, without including captions or telling the reader where they came from

Plagiarism fits under the broader category of Academic Integrity (AI).

There can be significant academic penalties for plagiarising in an assignment. Because of this, many new students are understandably anxious about accidentally plagiarising.

## Avoiding plagiarism


Plagiarism is easy to avoid, by applying two simple rules:

- If you copy more than about three consecutive words from a source, put the words in quotation marks
- If you use any words, ideas, opinions, information, or images from a source, cite and reference the source


## Examples of plagiarism

The following sentences are taken from Lazar (2006, p. 81):


There are many advantages to using electronic surveys. It's possible that targeted users will respond more quickly to electronic surveys than to paper surveys (because they do not have to worry about finding a stamp and a mailbox).

 Using the wording of a source without including quotation marks or a citation is plagiarism:

Surveys can be conducted in person, by post, or electronically. It's possible that targeted users will respond more quickly to electronic surveys than to paper surveys (because they do not have to worry about finding a stamp and a mailbox).


 If you are quoting directly, and a citation is included but not quotation marks, the result is still plagiarism:

Surveys can be conducted in person, by post, or electronically. However, it's possible that targeted users will respond more quickly to electronic surveys than to paper surveys (because they do not have to worry about finding a stamp and a mailbox) (Lazar, 2006, p. 81).


 If an assignment uses the wording of a source, **both** quotation marks **and** a citation must be included:

Surveys can be conducted in person, by post, or electronically. However, "it's possible that targeted users will respond more quickly to electronic surveys than to paper surveys (because they do not have to worry about finding a stamp and a mailbox)" (Lazar, 2006, p. 81).

Plagiarism doesn't just mean copying words from another source, however.

 Using the ideas of a source you have read, even if you write it in a different way, is still plagiarism:

Paper surveys take longer than those conducted online, because of practical considerations.

 Quotation marks are not necessary if you have changed the wording (paraphrasing), but an in-text citation is still necessary:

Paper surveys take longer than those conducted online, because of practical considerations (Lazar, 2006).

### **Plagiarism anxiety**

Many new students worry about accidentally plagiarising. This is perfectly natural! The rules of referencing are complex and intimidating at first. Academic study involves a lot of reading, and it can be difficult to keep track of the sources of ideas. Most study guides contain stern warnings about the penalties for plagiarism.

It's actually very difficult to plagiarise accidentally.

- If you follow the guidelines on this page, plagiarism is easily avoided
- **Keep clear notes while reading** for an assignment, so that the source for all ideas is easy to recall
- If you are unsure whether to reference something or not, err on the side of caution and reference it
- If you have any doubts, ask your lecturer or tutor

### **Summary**

- Broadly speaking, cheating is the deliberate attempt by a student to gain an unfair advantage or to deceive his or her assessors.
- Plagiarism means that you fail to acknowledge the use of someone else's work or words in your own dissertation.
- Plagiarism can be accidental - that is why it is so dangerous.
- To avoid accusations of plagiarism, ALWAYS credit your sources. Keep a full bibliography and references.
- Use indentations and single line spacing for lengthy excerpts.

- Use quotation marks for phrases or ideas that are credited to others.
- Referencing lends your work authority, by showing off how much reading and research you have conducted.
- IF IN ANY DOUBT ABOUT REFERENCING, CONSULT WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR!!!!

### Key Questions

- Have you footnoted all of your quotations?
- Have you given credit to the originators of the theories you have mentioned?
- Where do the things that you 'just know' actually come from?
- Is it clear when you are citing the work of others and when you are presenting your own views/conclusions?
- Are you over-using one author?

### References and further reading

Gibaldi, J. (2009). *MLA handbook for writers of research papers* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America.

Kennedy, M. L., & Smith, H. M. (2001). *Reading and writing in the academic community* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Summers, J., & Smith, B. (2002). *Communication skills handbook: How to succeed in written and oral communication* (Rev. ed.). Milton, Australia: John Wiley & Sons.

Wallace, A., Schirato, T., & Bright, P. (1999). *Beginning university: Thinking, researching and writing for success*. St Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Here are the Sheffield Hallam Guides relating to cheating and referencing. You should check your own institution's regulations and accepted style.

**ASHWORTH, P.; BANNISTER, P. and THORNE, P. (1997).** *Guilty in Whose Eyes? University students' perceptions of cheating and plagiarism in academic work and assessment.* *Studies in Higher Education*, 22(2), 187-203

**COTTERELL, S. (2003).** *The Study Skills Handbook.* Basingstoke, Palgrave, chapter 6

**PEARS, R. and SHIELDS, G. (2005).** *Cite Them Right: The Essential Guide to Referencing*

JAVED, Fareeha

*and Plagiarism*. 5th ed., Newcastle-Upon Tyne, Pear Tree Books

**REDMAN, P. (2006).** *Good Essay Writing: A Social Sciences Guide*. London, Sage, chapter

9

## **Web Resources**

Avoiding Plagiarism:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>