

# Plagiarism

## Types of Plagiarism

1. **Direct Plagiarism:** This is copying a source word for word without indicating that it is a quotation and crediting the author.
2. **Borrowing work from other students:** There is nothing wrong with students helping each other or sharing information, but you must write your own essays. This includes having another student dictate to you as you write his or her words down. Turning in a paper that someone else has written is an especially severe case of direct plagiarism.
3. **Vague or Incorrect Citation:** A writer should clearly indicate where borrowing begins and ends because not to do so, though it seems innocent, is plagiarism. *This is why it is so important to learn a citation style such as MLA style.* (See MLA Style section for more information.) Sometimes, a writer cites a source once, and the reader assumes that the previous sentence or paragraph has been paraphrased, when most of the essay is a paraphrase of this one source. The writer has failed to indicate his borrowings clearly. Paraphrases and summaries should be indicated as such by surrounding them with citation—at the beginning with the author's name, at the end with a parenthetical reference. The writer must always clearly indicate when a paraphrase, summary, or quotation begins, ends, or is interrupted.
4. **Auto-plagiarism:** This happens when an author plagiarizes his or her own writing. Students' best work usually occurs through revisions of previous drafts. But auto-plagiarism takes place when a student presents any prior writing, usually from another course or school, as entirely fresh work for course credit. A previous assignment, whether in whole or part, may not be offered as if it were a fresh submission to a course instructor.
5. **Mosaic Plagiarism:** This is the most common type of plagiarism. The writer does not copy the source directly, but changes a few words in each sentence or slightly reworks a paragraph, without giving credit to the original author. Those sentences or paragraphs are not quotations, but they are so close to quotations that they should be quoted directly or, if they have been changed enough to qualify as a paraphrase, the source should be cited.

## A Case of Plagiarism

Richard Marius, in his statement on plagiarism for Harvard University, cites a case of mosaic plagiarism. G. R. V Barratt, in the introduction to *The Decembrist Memoirs*, plagiarized from several works, including *The Decembrists* by Marc Raeff. In one passage, Raeff had written:

December 14, 1825, was the day set for taking the oath of allegiance to the new Emperor, Nicholas I. Only a few days earlier, on November 27, when news of the death of Alexander I had reached the capital, an oath of allegiance had been taken to Nicholas's older brother, Grand Duke Constantine, Viceroy of Poland. But in accordance with the act of renunciation he had made in 1819, Constantine had refused the crown. The virtual interregnum stirred society and produced uneasiness among the troops, and the government was apprehensive of disorders and disturbances. Police agents reported the existence of secret societies and

rumors of a coup to be staged by regiments of the Guards. The new Emperor was anxious to have the oath taken as quickly and quietly as possible. The members of the central government institutions—Council of State, Senate, Ministries—took the oath without incident, early in the morning. In most regiments of the garrison the oath was also taken peaceably.

Barratt presented the same paragraph with only a few words and details changed:

December 14, 1825, was the day on which the Guards' regiments in Petersburg were to swear solemn allegiance to Nicholas I, the new Emperor. Less than three weeks before, when news of the death of Alexander I had reached the capital from Taganrog on the sea of Azov, an oath, no less solemn and binding, had been taken to Nicholas's elder brother, the Grand Duke Constantine, viceroy of Poland. Constantine, however, had declined to be emperor, in accordance with two separate acts of renunciation made in 1819 and, secretly, in 1822. The effective interregnum caused uneasiness both in society and in the army. The government feared undefined disorders—with some reason, since police agents reported the existence of various clandestine groups and rumours of a coup to be effected by guardsmen. Nicholas was anxious that the oath be sworn to him promptly and quietly. At first it would seem that he would have his way; senators, ministers, and members of the Council of State took the oath by 9 A. M. In most regiments of the garrison the oath was also taken peaceably.

To see why this is mosaic plagiarism, compare these two versions line by line. What changes has Barratt made? Place brackets around the text that was not changed. Why do you think he made these changes? Why is this a case of plagiarism even though Barratt has made changes?

### Guidelines For Proper Use of Sources

1. Enclose direct quotations in quotation marks. If the quotation is longer than four lines, indent it in block format. In both cases, cite the source by using MLA in-text parenthetical style and by entering the source in the Works Cited page.
2. Use in-text parenthetical citation to cite paraphrases or summaries. Any key phrases that you borrow word-for-word should go in quotation marks.
3. Cite opinions, interpretations, and results of original research.
4. In general, do not cite statements of widely accepted fact; but when following a source closely, cite it even if the material is widely accepted fact. If you are unsure if something is a “widely accepted fact,” then you should probably cite it. See your instructor if you have any questions about facts.

### Ways to Avoid Plagiarism

1. When in doubt, CITE! It can never hurt to over-cite or cite when you do not need to.
2. Give yourself plenty of time to research and write your essay, so that you do not feel pressured because a topic proves unworkable at the last minute. When writing a paper that uses sources, give yourself time to digest the research and synthesize your findings.
3. Take careful research notes that include full bibliographic citations. If you forget to write down the bibliographic data, you may be tempted not to bother with the citation.
4. Make it a habit to put parenthetical citations for all the sources you borrow from in each draft you write.
5. Keep a good documentation guide handy (i.e., *your* handbook) when you are doing your research and writing your paper.
6. Have confidence in yourself. Even the best writers are often unaware of their good ideas and think they have nothing to say when their writing says a lot. Original ideas come from working closely with the ideas of others, not from flashes of inspiration.

7. Know where to get help. Start with your instructor and ask questions about citations about which you are not sure. Besides your instructor, you can consult a tutor in the Writing Center for help with your writing. The reference librarians can help you with your research.

### Why Students Plagiarize

Some students are tempted to plagiarize because they find writing college-level essays difficult or intimidating. Such students sometimes become frustrated when an essay on which they have worked long and hard is returned with many corrections and a low grade. Frustrated and afraid of failure, they may resort to copying an essay word for word or making only a few slight changes in the wording.

Rather than plagiarizing, these students should seek assistance from their instructor, from the Writing Center, from a special tutor, or from the Counseling Center, which can provide assistance in dealing not only with a learning disability, but also with frustration, fear, and stress. The Writing Center offers intensive tutorial courses in writing.

Other students write well enough but find plagiarism tempting because they fear earning a grade lower than they or their parents expect, have fallen behind in their coursework and feel that they lack the time to write a competent essay, or feel that they cannot handle the assigned task or generate good ideas on the subject.

Start writing, even if the writing begins as a summary of some other piece of writing, and you will usually discover that you have something to say. If you fall behind, talk with your instructor. He or she may penalize you for submitting work late, but late work is preferable to plagiarized work. If you feel overwhelmed by your course work and unable to keep up, arrange to visit a counselor at the Counseling Center. He or she can help you learn to manage your time and the stress of university life better.

Plagiarizing an essay is never an acceptable solution.

### Conclusion

Learning how to use sources is one of the most important things you will learn in college. By using sources well and by clearly indicating your debts to these sources, your writing gains authority, clarity, and precision. Writers who plagiarize lose the advantages of belonging to an intellectual discourse community. If plagiarizers are professionals, they may be barred from practicing their profession, or their work may not be taken seriously. If they are students, they will carry the stigma of having plagiarized. Instructors will be suspicious of their work and will be unwilling to support any of their future efforts, write recommendations for them, or even work with them at all. Plagiarism is one of the worst mistakes anyone can make. The best way to avoid it is to be scrupulous about indicating quotation, paraphrase, and summary.

## Plagiarism Contract

I have read and understand the University's plagiarism information statement. I know that intentional plagiarism is a punishable offense with penalties ranging from a zero on the assignment to expulsion from the university. I also know that unintended plagiarism can occur through improper citation and/or borrowing but is still punishable. To avoid unintentional plagiarism, I will consult with my instructor when I have questions.

Student's Name: (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Course: \_\_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester and Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_