

## Plagiarism

A simple explanation from the University of Colorado, Boulder, website explains plagiarism as “The act of appropriating the literary composition of another author, or excerpts, ideas, or passages therefrom, and passing the material off as one's own creation.”

<http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/about/glossary.htm>

This use of the University of Colorado definition is not plagiarism because 1) the source of the quotation was provided, 2) it is set it off in “quotation marks,” and 3) there is a citation provided for any reader to visit the source. Quotations and source information work quite well in written documentation, but they are often clumsy and intrusive in oral communication.

A much less clumsy option for the oral communication student who wishes to avoid plagiarism when it is necessary to use “excerpts, ideas, or passages” of another author is to *paraphrase*, collapsing or condensing the material from your author. First the original from the Victoria University of Wellington:

*Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not.  
'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea, even if it is presented in your own*

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*style. It includes material from books, journals or any other printed source, the work of other students or staff, information from the Internet, software programs and other electronic material, designs and ideas. It also includes the organization or structuring of any such material.*

*<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/glossary/#p>*

The paraphrase might be:

*According to the Victoria University of Wellington website, rephrasing someone else's ideas or work is plagiarism even if you re-write those ideas in your own words and didn't mean to make them sound like your own thoughts.*

*<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/glossary/#p>*

Paraphrasing allows you to 1) condense the ideas presented by the author, 2) provide a source citation, but 3) avoid the clumsiness of trying to convey “quote” within the presentation. It also allows the speaker to present more information in less time. The paraphrase (above) is not plagiarism because all source information is included. Finally, how do you use several sources that may not quite agree without having to list all of them in your presentation or paper just to get past some small definition? And where does your own work come into play?

Here is an example of original material interlaced with paraphrased material:

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*Because plagiarism is an issue that UAM takes seriously, and because many undergraduate students don't seem to have a solid understanding of the problem, this syllabus is designed to include definitions of the term and examples of avoiding plagiarism. Not all sources agree on a definition, but common terms provided on the websites hosted at several academic institutions include the words cheating, appropriating, and passing off as one's own any written or other work done by someone else. From Indiana-Purdue at Fort Wayne to the University of Wellington in Victoria and back to the University of Colorado at Boulder, the exact definitions may differ but they all center around the concept that plagiarism is the theft of someone else's work. The Kiwis in New Zealand also warn that plagiarism doesn't have to be deliberate – even if a student doesn't mean to present work or ideas from someone else as though the work were their own, it's still cheating. It's theft of intellectual property. In other words, you are letting someone else do your work for you – stealing their thoughts, words, ideas.*

Notice that there is a source cited for all paraphrased and borrowed information. But remember to do so in a narrative manner rather than simply announcing that the speaker went to the Indiana-Purdue University, Fort Wayne website at

<http://www.ipfw.edu/academics/regulations/definitions.shtml>

where one can find the following quote:

*A form of cheating in which the work of someone else is offered as one's own. The language or ideas thus taken from another may range from isolated*

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*formulae, sentences, or paragraphs, to entire articles copied from printed sources, speeches, software, or the work of other students.*

Ethics refers to public behavior that is based on a code of morals. Ethical speaking would mean adhering to rules and expectations that are imposed by our culture. While morals refer to our individual codes of appropriate or preferred interactions with others based on established religious beliefs, ethics are often defined through sets of rules that can change as society changes. It is important for the public speaker to be aware that any information or conclusions shared with an audience must be ethically defensible.

Quintilian:

[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio\\_Oratoria/home.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/home.html)