



Plagiarism: What is it--and how do I avoid it?

More Honor Code violations have been reported this year than ever before. Don't be a statistic; avoid plagiarism!

Plagiarism involves using information that does not belong to you without giving proper credit to the source of that information. According to the McDaniel College Student Handbook, "the use of another person's work, facts, or ideas without proper acknowledgment is dishonest."

Sometimes, plagiarism is obvious, such as when a student buys a paper from someone on the Internet or copies an entire section of a reference book. Not only is it easy for professors and administrators to catch these intentional types of plagiarism, but they are easy for you to avoid.

More commonly, students accidentally commit plagiarism. The best way to prevent this is to always document and cite your sources. In other words, if anything you turn in includes, references, or contains concepts from work that is not your own, you must indicate that fact.

WHAT REQUIRES CITATION

When we write essays, there are several things we need to cite:

1. Quotations
2. Paraphrased information
3. Sources that you did not use in the paper itself, but that you considered while writing the paper

The first two are fairly straightforward. The third, however, requires a little bit of a different approach than the other two.

When you make note of texts that you did not directly use in your paper, this is called the **Works Referenced**. In addition to a Works Cited page, it is also standard to have a Works Referenced page that lists these works. Because the referenced works are not directly used in the paper, you do not need in-text citations.

PARAPHRASING: is when you put the thoughts of others into your own words.

Here's how:

1. Read the original.
2. Think about it. Make sure you understand it!
3. Put the original away.
4. Write about it in *your own words*.

Paraphrasing is a good way to avoid plagiarism, but be careful! **You still need to cite any ideas that are not your own, even if they are paraphrased!** This means including any and all sources you consider. You also need to include in-text citations for each paraphrased idea.

You can still use small pieces of the actual text as quotations, but any phrases or sentences you take directly from the text **must** be placed in quotation marks, and they must also be accompanied by an in-text citation (most common citation forms are MLA, APA, and Chicago).

BLOCK QUOTING

Sometimes, it is necessary to quote longer passages of text. If you need to use more than four lines of quotations, this is called block quoting. Block quotes should only be used when absolutely necessary, which is to say, infrequently.

Here is the format for a block quote:

We have all the text in this paragraph of our essay. It will probably be setting up the quote in some way. This should be the writer's own work. We then say something like, according to the researcher Adam Smith:

Here we have the block quote. Notice how it does not need quotation marks, but all of the lines do need to be indented twice. One of the interesting things about block quotes is that the punctuation does not go on the outside of the in-text citation, as is the case with other quotes; rather, it goes at the end of the sentence, before the citation. (in-text citation here)

And then we would go back to typing our essay. Simple, right?

PLAGIARISM: CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The concept of plagiarism is defined differently across cultures. According to the Washington State University website, "Cultural Perspectives on Plagiarism," some cultures (primarily in Asia and the Middle East) do not require that students cite well-known works, because it is assumed that everyone knows the reference. It may actually be a "serious insult to the teacher" if a student cites a well-known religious or political text.

However, in America, we are required to cite any and all outside sources we use, in order to give credit to the person who created and owns the piece. This means citing quotes, ideas, and even pieces that were not directly cited in the essay, but that helped you write your paper.

"Cultural Perspectives on Plagiarism." WSU Libraries. Washington State University, n.d. Web. 28 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/content/cultural-perspectives>>.

See what we did there? Citations!

EXAMPLES:

Here is the original text we want to cite in APA style:

“Technology has significantly transformed education at several major turning points in our history. In the broadest sense, the first technology was the primitive modes of communication used by prehistoric people before the development of spoken language. Mime, gestures, grunts, and drawing of figures in the sand with a stick were methods used to communicate -- yes, even to educate. Even without speech, these prehistoric people were able to teach their young how to catch animals for food, what animals to avoid, which vegetation was good to eat and which was poisonous.”

Frick, T. (1991). *Restructuring education through technology*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

GOOD CITATION:

In examining technology, we have to remember that computers are not the first technology people have had to deal with. Frick (1991) believes that "... the first technology was the primitive modes of communication used by prehistoric people before the development of spoken language" (p. 10).

And on the references page:

Frick, T. (1991). *Restructuring education through technology*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

This is an example of correct citation of a **direct quote**. The student cites the author's name, uses quotation marks to surround the entire quoted passage, and provides an in-text citation at the end of the quote.

GOOD CITATION:

Frick (1991) explains that technology began in its most primitive form with the prehistoric people. They had their own versions of language that they used to communicate and even educate. Frick states that this was a huge transformation point for technology in education (p. 10).

This is an example of correct citation using **paraphrasing**. The author of the outside source is given credit for the idea within the writing and as in in-text citation. Additionally, the text is not merely copied, but put into the student's own words, while still being tied back to the author of the outside source.

PLAGIARISM:

In examining technology, we have to remember that computers are not the first technology people have had to deal with. The first technology was the primitive modes of communication used by prehistoric people before the development of spoken language.

This is an example of **word-for-word plagiarism**. The student has copied and pasted the exact words from the text and used them without using quotes or an in-text citation.

PLAGIARISM:

Technology has changed education a lot throughout history. In the broadest sense, the first technology was the early types of communication, like grunts and drawings. These were used to communicate and educate. Even without speech, they were able to convey things to each other anyway.

This is an example of **plagiaristic paraphrasing**. The text being referenced is not cited, there are chunks of the text that have been copied directly and are not quoted, and the student has only moved around and altered a few words of the text. **Even though the words are slightly different, this is still plagiarism!**

PLAGIARISM:

According to one source, “technology has significantly transformed education at several major turning points in our history.”

This is an example of plagiarism due to improper in-text citation. Not only has the source not been clearly identified, but also there is no parenthetical citation (i.e. a page number in parentheses). **The reader should be able to look at the citation and match it to a citation on the works cited page.**