

Plagiarism & You

This guide will show you how to use information correctly without plagiarizing. You will learn how to recognize plagiarism, and how to tell the difference between plagiarism and appropriate use of information in research papers.

Using someone else's words or ideas without properly giving credit is plagiarism.

To avoid plagiarism, there are three important things to keep in mind: citing your sources, using quotation marks, and paraphrasing.

Citing Your Sources

Any time you use words from another source, such as a Web site, book, journal article, or even a friend's English paper, you must give proper credit to the source.

Even if you don't use someone else's words, but you refer to an idea or concept from another source, you must also give credit.

"Citing your sources" means giving all of the information about your source, such as author, title, and date of publication, so someone else can find that source again.

Plagiarism

- Copying sentences, phrases or paragraphs exactly as they appear in the original source
- Copying sentences and putting them in a different order
- Copying sentences and replacing a few words with synonyms
- Copying sentences and adding a few of your own

Using quotation marks

If you use someone else's exact words, you need to put those words in quotation marks. Changing a few words here and there is not enough to avoid plagiarism. Either put the exact phrase you are quoting in quotation marks, or rewrite it entirely in your own words.

Quoting extensively from another source, even if you do it properly, is not appropriate for a research paper. Use quotations to support your arguments or clarify important points, but create your own argument using your own words.

Paraphrasing

In a paraphrase, you rewrite what someone else has said in your own way. Just as you have a personality that is different from everyone else's, you as a writer have your own voice and style. When you write, even when you are paraphrasing, your writing should sound like it came from you, not from someone else.

Paraphrasing

- Re-stating the author's idea in your own words, using your own voice
- Summarizing the author's main points in your own words

Plagiarism Examples

The following examples show correct and incorrect ways of citing sources, using quotation marks, and paraphrasing.

Citing Sources

Following are examples of correct and incorrect ways to cite sources in research papers.

Research Topic: Truth in Advertising

Original Text

Corporate mud-slinging tends to be concentrated in a handful of highly competitive sectors: utilities, telecoms (especially the broadband market), and airlines. These sectors are united by being highly price-competitive and inclined toward ads that rely heavily on 'knocking copy' - content that brags about the brand's superiority over a rival on the basis of specific criteria.

Source: Murphy, Claire. "The Art of Complaining." *Marketing*. 27 Sept. 2006: 18.

Incorrect Use

One way corporations try to get ahead of the competition is by complaining about their rivals' advertisements. Highly competitive sectors, such as utilities, telecoms, and airlines, have the highest incidence of this kind of corporate mud-slinging.

Explanation: The author of this paragraph did not cite the original source. Although the words in this paragraph are not copied directly from the original, the source still needs to be cited because the information being discussed came from the original source.

Correct Use

One way corporations try to get ahead of the competition is by complaining about their rivals' advertisements. Highly competitive sectors, such as utilities, telecoms, and airlines, have the highest incidence of this kind of "corporate mud-slinging" (Murphy 18).

Murphy, Claire. "The Art of Complaining." *Marketing*. 27 Sept. 2006: 18.

Explanation: In this paragraph the author cites the original source in the text, and includes the complete reference in MLA style at the end of the paper. "Corporate mud-slinging" is in quotation marks because it is an exact phrase taken from the original text.

Using Quotation Marks

Following are examples of correct and incorrect ways to use quotation marks in research papers.

Research Topic: Domestic Violence against Affluent Women

Original Text

Cases where the alleged abusers are affluent create specific obstacles for their victims, experts say. The batterer— typically a man, though not always — is often someone well-known in the community. He has the financial means to hire pricey attorneys and private investigators. And his lawyers are well-versed in the intricacies of the judicial system and can easily win continuances and drag cases on for years.

Source: Treadway, Joan. “Violence Hits Rich Women Hard Too.” Times-Picayune 19 Aug. 2002: 1.

Incorrect Use

Affluent women who are victims of domestic violence face particular difficulties when seeking legal recourse against their attackers. The batterer can afford to hire expensive lawyers who are well-versed in the intricacies of the judicial system.

Explanation: The author of this paragraph used an exact phrase from the original text, “well-versed in the intricacies of the judicial system,” but didn’t put the phrase in quotation marks, and didn’t cite the original source.

Correct Use

Affluent women who are victims of domestic violence face particular difficulties when seeking legal recourse against their attackers. As Treadway (2002) points out, the batterer can afford to hire expensive lawyers who are “well-versed in the intricacies of the judicial system.”

Treadway, J. (2002, August 19). Violence hits rich women hard too. Times-Picayune, p. 1.

Explanation: The phrase that is an exact quotation from the original text is in quotation marks, and the author has cited the original source in the text and at the end of the paper in APA style.

Paraphrasing

Following are examples of correct and incorrect ways to paraphrase in research papers.

Research Topic: Influence of Genetics on Career Choice

Original Text

Increasingly, researchers have been turning to identical and fraternal twins for answers, with dramatic results. They are finding that genetics, in addition to familial interests, educational, social and other environmental pressures, have a considerable impact on how we choose what we do — and how happy we are with that choice.

Source: Segal, Nancy L. "New Twins Studies Show: The Career of Your Dreams May Be the Career of Your Genes." *Psychology Today*. Sept./Oct. 2006: 54-60.

Incorrect Use

To answer the question of how genetics influence career choices, researchers have turned to identical and fraternal twins, with impressive results. They have found that genetics, in addition to familial interests, educational, social and other environmental pressures, have a major impact on how people choose what they do — and how satisfied they are with that choice.

Explanation: The author copied most of the original text and changed or added a few words, and did not cite the original source. Copying from a text and replacing a few words with synonyms constitutes plagiarism

Correct Use

Recent research on identical and fraternal twins indicates that while external influences such as social pressure have some impact on career choice, genetics also plays a major role in how people decide what to do for a living (Segal 54).

Segal, Nancy L. "New Twins Studies Show: The Career of Your Dreams May Be the Career of Your Genes." *Psychology Today*. Sept./Oct. 2006: 54-60.

Explanation: Here the author paraphrased the original text by restating the ideas in the author's own words, and cited the original source in MLA style.

You be the judge!

Read the following paragraphs and decide if they have been plagiarized, or if they are appropriate for a college research paper.

Original

Adult criminals and youth involved in illegal activities have reported that guns are not difficult to obtain. Illegal or unregulated transactions are the primary sources of guns used in violent acts; stealing, borrowing from friends or acquaintances, and illegal purchasing of guns are the most common. Less than 1 in 5 guns used for illegal activities were purchased from licensed dealers.

Source: Page, Randy M. and Hammermeister, Jon. "Weapon Carrying and Youth Violence." *Adolescence* 32.127 (1997): 505-513

Paragraph from a student paper on gun control:

According to Page and Hammermeister, adults and youth involved in criminal activity have reported that guns are easy to obtain. Illegal transactions are the main source of guns used in violence. Stealing, borrowing from friends, and illegal purchasing are the most common. Less than 1 in 5 guns used for illegal activities were bought from licensed dealers.

Is this paragraph plagiarized?

☐ Plagiarism ☐ Appropriate use

Original

It is not difficult to see tomorrow's sophisticated computers rapidly processing complex data from animals and transmitting it in a useful form to humans via an earpiece, handheld device, or spectacle-lens display. Similarly, computers are likely to be able to translate messages from humans into stimuli that suit the cognitive style of the intended animal recipient.

Source: Lloyd, Bruce and Susan Clayton. "Doctor Dolittle for Real? Raising Questions About Interspecies Communications." *The Futurist* March/April 2004: 40-43.

Paragraph from a student paper on inter-species communication:

In the future, will humans communicate with animals? Lloyd and Clayton theorize that the super computers of tomorrow will be able to transmit comprehensible information from animals to humans through small devices such as ear pieces. According to their theory, not only will animals talk to us, but we will talk back by using computers to translate our speech into "stimuli that suit the cognitive style of the intended animal recipient" (42).

Lloyd, Bruce and Susan Clayton. "Doctor Dolittle for Real? Raising Questions About Interspecies Communications." *The Futurist* March/April 2004: 40-43.

Is this paragraph plagiarized?

☐ Plagiarism ☐ Appropriate use

Original

The phenomenon of extremely violent video games is a dubious leap forward in the ability to mainline violence into the minds and lives of young people. Players of violent video games are not simply passive viewers of realistically depicted violence. They instead become the glorified, gun-in-hand, on-screen perpetrators of murder and other criminal acts.

Source: Worthy, Kym. "Why Violent Video Games May Be Worse Than Other Media Violence." *Michigan Chronicle* 5 Oct. 2005: A1.

Paragraph from a student paper on violence in video games:

Worthy claims that players of violent video games are not simply passive viewers of realistically depicted violence. They instead become the glorified, gun-in-hand, on-screen perpetrators of murder and other criminal acts.

Worthy, Kym. "Why Violent Video Games May Be Worse Than Other Media Violence." *Michigan Chronicle* 5 Oct. 2005: A1.

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☐ Plagiarism ☐ Appropriate use