

What is Plagiarism¹

According to the *Merriam-Webster OnLine Dictionary*, to “plagiarize” means

- 1) to commit literary theft
- 2) to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

“To steal or purloin and pass off as one’s own the ideas, word, artistic productions of another; to use without due credit the ideas expressions or productions of another.”²

“Plagiarism includes the copying of the language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and passing off the same as one’s own original work, or attempts thereof. Such acts include, but are not limited to, having a parent or another person write an essay (including the purchase of works on-line) or do a project which is then submitted as one’s own work; failing to use proper documentation and bibliography.”³

Examples:

- Handing in as one’s own a previously submitted document or project.⁴
- Having a parent or another person write an essay or do a project which is then submitted as one’s own work⁴
- Borrowing of the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of materials, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgment⁴
- Failure to provide a bibliography⁵
- Internet – using information found on the internet and misrepresenting that info as ones own is considered computer fraud and is plagiarism.⁶
- Copying a computer file or other online info is the same as copying someone else’s work or having someone complete a paper, essay, report, or assignment for one’s own use.⁶

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else’s work and lying about it afterward.

The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not

Changing the words of an original source is not sufficient to prevent plagiarism. If you have retained the essential idea of an original source, and have not cited it, then no matter how drastically you may have altered its context or presentation, you have still plagiarized.

To resist plagiarism, some schools such as Langley High School employ a plagiarism detection service through www.Turnitin.com³

¹ What Is Plagiarism? – www.plagiarism.org, used with permission – Plagiarism.org Home Page. Ed. iParadigms, LLC. 2008

² Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language

³ Langley High School, McLean, VA – Public – <http://www.fcps.edu/LangleyHS/honorcode.html>

⁴ Mainland Regional High School, Linwood, NJ – Public – <http://www.mainlandregional.net/>

⁵ Maury High School, Norfolk, VA – Public – <http://ww2.nps.k12.va.us/education/school/school.php?sectionid=28>

⁶ Monsignor Donovan Catholic High School, Athens, GA – Private Religious – <http://www.mdchs.org/main/>

Examples of School Consequences:

- Schools note different levels of consequences that range from an intervention without suspension to a recommendation for expulsion³
- Teacher enforces consequences by reporting all honor code violations – three tiered consequence levels⁶
- Teachers will notify parents
- Teachers will submit a disciplinary referral to the appropriate administrator. The administrator will determine the appropriate disciplinary consequence based on the nature of the offense.
- 1st minor offense (i.e. copying homework) — the parent may be given the option of the student going before the Honor Council in lieu of a referral.
- Students will receive no credit for the assignment. They will not be given an opportunity for alternate assignment completion.⁷

Tiered Consequences at Langley High School, McLean, VA³

First Offense: The assignment receives a grade of zero. Student will be excused from any honor societies that he/she is a current member of and may be excused from class office. Student may not apply to any honor societies or run for any SGA/class office for 12 months after the first offense. The violation is kept on file by the chair of the council but is not placed in the discipline or academic record.

Second Offense: The assignment receives a grade of zero. The student will be assigned community service hours. The student's guidance counselor will be notified that a second offense has occurred. Student will be excused from any honor society that he/she is a current member of and will be asked to resign any SGA/class office. Student is ineligible to apply for any honor societies or run for any student offices for the remainder of his/her high school career. The violation is kept on file by the chair of the council but is not placed in the discipline or academic record.

Third Offense: The assignment receives a grade of zero. The student will be assigned community service hours and a discipline referral, for Saturday School detention, will be given to the grade-level administrator. Violations become a part of the student's discipline and academic record.

Fourth Offense: The assignment receives a grade of zero. The student is assigned community service hours and a discipline referral, for a one-day out-of-school suspension, will be given to the grade-level administrator.

Quoting Material⁸

Taking the exact words from an original source is called quoting. If you want to borrow an idea from an author, but do not need his or her exact words, you should try paraphrasing instead of quoting.

- Quote as infrequently as possible. You never want your essay to become a series of connected quotations, because that leaves little room for your own ideas.
- If you think it's important to quote something, an excellent rule of thumb is that for every line you quote, you should have at least two lines analyzing it.
- Sometimes, however, you will need to modify the words or format of the quotation in order to fit in your paper. Whenever you change the original words of your source, you must indicate that you have done so.
- But be careful not to change too many words! You could accidentally change the meaning of the quotation, and falsely claim the author said something they did not.
- With quotations, you generally want to be as concise as possible. Keep only the material that is strictly relevant to your own ideas.

⁷ Radnor High School, Radnor, PA – Public – <http://radnortsd.schoolwires.com/radnorhs/site/default.asp>

⁸ The following material is copied with permission from Plagiarism.org

- When you have “embedded quotes,” or quotations within quotations, you should switch from the normal quotation marks (“”) to *single* quotation marks (‘’) to show the difference.
- Double indent the quotation – that means adjusting the left and right margins so that they are about one inch smaller than the main body of your paper.

How do I include long quotes in my paper?

The exact formatting requirements for long quotations differ depending on the citation style. In general, however, if you are quoting more than 3 lines of material, you should do the following:

- Change the font to one noticeably smaller (in a document that is mostly 12 point font, you should use a 10 point font, for example)
- Double indent the quotation – that means adjusting the left and right margins so that they are about one inch smaller than the main body of your paper.
- If you have this option in your word-processor, “left-justify” the text. That means make it so that each line begins in the same place, creating a straight line on the left side of the quotation, while the right side is jagged.
- Do NOT use quotation marks for the entire quotation – the graphic changes you have made already (changing the font, double indenting, etc.) are enough to indicate that the material is quoted. For quotations within that quotation, use normal quotation marks, not single ones.
- You might want to skip 1.5 times the line-spacing you are using in the document before you begin the quotation and after it. This is optional and depends on the style preferred by your instructor.

Know how to Paraphrase

A paraphrase is a restatement in your own words of someone else’s ideas. Changing a few words of the original sentences does NOT make your writing a legitimate paraphrase. You must change both the words and the sentence structure of the original, without changing the content. Also, you should keep in mind that paraphrased passages still require citation because the ideas came from another source, even though you are putting them in your own words.

What is Citation?

A “citation” is the way you tell your readers that certain material in your work came from another source. It also gives your readers the information necessary to find that source again, including:

- Information about the author,
- The title of the work,
- The name and location of the company that published your copy of the source,
- The date your copy was published, and
- The page numbers of the material you are borrowing

Citations are extremely helpful to anyone who wants to find out more about your ideas and where they came from. Citing sources shows the amount of research you’ve done. Citing sources strengthens your work by lending outside support to your ideas. Citing sources emphasize the originality of your own work.

The following situations almost always require citation:

- Whenever you use quotes,
- Whenever you paraphrase,
- Whenever you use an idea that someone else has already expressed,
- Whenever you make specific reference to the work of another, and
- Whenever someone else’s work has been critical in developing your own ideas.

Citing Sources

Citation styles differ mostly in the location, order, and syntax of information about references. The number and diversity of citation styles reflect different priorities with respect to concision, readability, dates, authors, publications, and of course, style.

There are also two major divisions within most citation styles: documentary-note style and parenthetical style. Documentary-note style is the standard form of documenting sources. It involves using either footnotes or endnotes so that information about your sources is readily available to your readers but does not interfere with their reading of your work.

In the parenthetical style, sometimes called the “author-date” style or “in-text” style, references to sources are made in the body of the work itself, through parentheses. An example of this would be the following sentence, taken from page 23 of a book written by Professor Scott in 1999:

Professor Scott asserts that “environmental reform in Alaska in the 1970s accelerated rapidly as the result of pipeline expansion.” (Scott 1999, 23)

This is generally considered an abbreviated form of citation, and it does not require footnotes or endnotes, although it does require the equivalent of a “Works Cited” page at the end of the paper. It is easier to write, but might interfere with how smoothly your work reads. See your instructor for information on which form, documentary-note style or parenthetical style, is appropriate for your paper.

What are Footnotes?

Footnotes are notes placed at the bottom of a page. They cite references or comment on a designated part of the text above it. For example, say you want to add an interesting comment to a sentence you have written, but the comment is not directly related to the argument of your paragraph. In this case, you could add the symbol for a footnote. Then, at the bottom of the page you could reprint the symbol and insert your comment. Here is an example:

This is an illustration of a footnote.¹ The number “1” at the end of the sentence corresponds to the note below. See how it fits in the body of the text?

¹ At the bottom of the page you can insert your comments about the sentence preceding the footnote. This document uses footnotes to reference material.

For more information on documenting sources, see Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab⁹ There are many different formats for citations. It is helpful to have a printed or web based reference to learn the citation format of your school.

A great reference for citing properly is the *Writer’s Handbook: MLA Style Documentation*¹⁰ For more detail on plagiarism please visit www.plagiarism.org.

⁹ <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/index.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocMLA.html>