

HOW TO AVOID PLAGIARISM?

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Abstract: Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty and can have serious consequences such as failure in a subject or even expulsion from a course. While there are cases of deliberate plagiarism or cheating, most cases of student plagiarism are the result of ignorance, carelessness or a lack of advanced writing skills. That's where this thesis can help. It will help to understand what plagiarism is and to recognise examples. More importantly, the thesis focuses on strategies for avoiding plagiarism and provides valuable techniques to ensure acknowledge sources and integrate quotations appropriately in writing.

Key words: plagiarism, original, text, ownership

A key aim of university education is for students to acquire expertise and knowledge in their chosen field. To do this, students are expected to read research literature and present their own ideas and the ideas of others in their field following formal academic conventions. In academic writing, for example, students are expected not only to present original work and to demonstrate wide reading but also to appropriately reference and incorporate the views of experts in the field of study into their essays. In order to do this correctly, you need to adhere to the academic

conventions for referencing and acknowledging sources. By not following these conventions, a student may be found guilty of plagiarism – or being seen to claim as his/her own, the words, ideas or research of other people.

The first step in avoiding plagiarism is knowing exactly what it is. Plagiarism is defined by the University of Melbourne as ‘the act of representing as one’s own original work the creative works of another, without appropriate acknowledgment of the author or source’. It is important to note that this definition extends beyond words printed in text and refers to all the elements in someone else’s work including: ideas and arguments; images such as diagrams, charts and pictures; compositions; and organisational structures. In short, plagiarism is a form of intellectual dishonesty or theft. Appropriately, the word plagiarism is derived from the Latin words for ‘kidnapper’. When a person plagiarises, he/she is ‘kidnapping’ or stealing someone else’s words or ideas and passing them off as his/her own. Although the definition of plagiarism may seem simple, the subject can be quite confusing for students as plagiarism comes in various forms. Some examples of plagiarism listed on the University’s Academic Honesty and Plagiarism webpage include:

3. Copying or allowing to be copied text, ideas, concepts, research results, statistical tables, computer programs, designs, images or sounds, or any combination of these

4. Paraphrasing another person’s work with minor changes, but keeping the meaning, form and/or progression of ideas of the original

5. Piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole Submitting part or all of an assignment twice for separate subjects or marks Presenting an assignment as independent work when it has been produced in whole or part in collusion with other people, for example another student or a tutor.

Students, often without realising, may be guilty of plagiarism. Copying another person’s work, or colluding with other people to produce an assignment that is submitted as independent work, are clear examples of intentional plagiarism. However, most cases of student plagiarism are unintentional. Some examples include incorrect

or inappropriate use of sources. In order to avoid plagiarism, must be able to acknowledge and reference sources well. A major aim of this thesis, furthermore, is to help recognise the difference between acceptable and unacceptable use of sources.

The Oxford English Dictionary says it means ‘..to take and use as one’s own the thoughts, writings, or inventions of another.’ Universities often define plagiarism in their regulations to prevent any misunderstanding among staff and students. Here is how it is defined by The University of Hong Kong: Plagiarism is defined as the unacknowledged use, as one’s own, of work of another person, whether or not such work has been published. In other words, we are talking about copying. It is clear that it doesn’t matter whether the work which is copied has already been published or not. The significant points are that it was copied from someone else and that no acknowledgement has been made.

According to Merriam Webster, the word plagiarism means “to steal or pass off as one’s own,” and comes from the Latin word *plagiarius*, which means “kidnapper.” Based on this definition, one might think that plagiarism only occurs when you claim ownership over someone else’s creation. Things are actually a bit more complex. Indeed, experts agree that such reprehensible behavior can occur in a variety of situations. Bowdoin.edu, for example, classified them into these four most common types of plagiarism:

- Direct plagiarism: Claiming someone else’s work as your own, or copying without quotation marks and/or citation.
- Mosaic plagiarism: Also known as “patchwriting,” this occurs when borrowing phrases from a source without quotation marks, changing only a few words here and there.
- Accidental plagiarism: Giving credit to the wrong author(s) or misquoting.
- Self-plagiarism: Reusing your own published or submitted work - even just some parts - for a new assignment.

Of course, you can’t be expected to cite every bit of information. Just like the air that you breathe, certain data cannot be attributed to anyone or are so well known that

the average, educated reader wouldn't have to look it up to accept it. A great example of this are historical dates, such as major wars and sporting events. In these cases, you don't need to worry about attributing the information to anyone. With that said, if you're ever unsure, it's always best to cite your sources and be as transparent as possible.

There are several proven ways to protect yourself and ensure you don't inadvertently copy someone else's work. Continue reading to learn how to avoid plagiarism in writing:

- 1- Organize your research
- 2- Evaluate your sources
- 3- Use quotes
- 4- Paraphrase
- 5- Cite your sources
- 6- Quote your own work
- 7- Use a plagiarism checker
- 8- Proofread your work
- 9- Get a second set of eyes
- 10- Try to be original

Paraphrasing is the best way to copy and paste without triggering plagiarism. Basically, paraphrasing is when you copy text and rework it into something unique. Because writing tasks often feel daunting to students, there is the temptation of plagiarizing written work. Written resources have become more easily available on the internet, and students may not have a clear understanding of what constitutes plagiarism in each of their courses either because of lack of knowledge or because of mismatches relative to their previous experience.

Clearly define plagiarism: At the beginning of the semester – in the syllabus and verbally – give students a clear definition of what constitutes plagiarism and what is considered appropriate collaboration. Note that these definitions may differ from one

faculty member to another and from one course to another, so it is especially important to make our expectations clear to students in each course we teach.

Committing plagiarism: Your good ideas become better when you test them against others’ ideas. For this course, feel free to discuss your ideas about the assignments with other students. However, using someone else’s words, ideas, or concepts without citing your source is plagiarism. So is presenting part or all of another student’s work as your own. In the world of writing – especially academic writing – this is a serious crime and is treated as such. Anyone who commits plagiarism may receive a failing grade for the entire course and be referred to the appropriate dean’s office for further disciplinary action.

Provide examples of proper citation: Give students examples of how and when they should credit the work of others in their writing. This way, they will have concrete cases to which they can refer when questions arise.

Create original assignments: The more unusual an assignment (e.g., taking a different perspective on a problem, question, or reading), the less likely students will be able to find something (from the internet or their peers) to submit as their own work. In addition, an assignment that has multiple parts may reduce the likelihood of plagiarism.

To put in a nutshell, on the one hand, I don’t want to just repeat what has already been said. On the other hand, I don’t want to reinvent the wheel and ignore everything else that has been written on a particular subject. I try to balance this and whenever I’m using something that already exists, I give it proper respect by attributing it to the most original source I can find. By doing this, I am sure I am avoiding plagiarism.

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