

Plagiarism  
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By Lauren Shore and Emily Anderson

**Purpose**

The purpose of this presentation is to teach you what plagiarism is, the causes of it, when to recognize it, and how to avoid it. Plagiarism has become a major concern among teachers and administrators because of the limitless access to other people's written work via Internet. Student's work that does not represent their own efforts affects their development of reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. In order to understand plagiarism, you must understand that all knowledge comes from other knowledge. We share and create ideas and build upon other people's ideas. When you are putting your ideas onto paper, teachers want to distinguish between the building blocks borrowed from other people and your own ideas. Giving credit for ideas and writing is an imperative rule used in school and the professional world.

Plagiarism is most likely not topic you are unfamiliar with; however, this presentation is intended to further your knowledge on the importance of avoiding plagiarism.

**Defining Plagiarism**

The definition of plagiarism is complex and multifaceted. You may have heard many definitions of plagiarism and are somewhat confused or unsure what plagiarizing entails. The current definition, taken from the WPA Statement on Best Practices is the following:

***Definition:** In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.*

This definition, however, fails to include two ideas:

1. Inadequately citing words and ideas from another source
2. Presenting someone else's work as one's own or distorting the line between your ideas and someone else's ideas

Honest writers attempt to fully and appropriately cite any works they have taken quotes or ideas from. However, if a student clumsily and inappropriately uses quotation marks or does not use citation formatting properly, this is not considered plagiarism, but rather the student has failed to cite properly.

**Causes of Plagiarism**

Some students deliberately and are fully aware they are plagiarizing. For example, students who copy and paste directly from a published source, or take another student's work and pass it off as their own, are deliberately plagiarizing. Students who plagiarize in such a manner will be held accountable, no matter the excuse. Understanding some of the reasons why students plagiarize can help you recognize and avoid situations as such. The following are reasons why some students decide to plagiarize:

1. Students may have poor time management skills, and may be incapable of putting forth the time and effort needed to create a research paper
2. Students believe their work is inadequate and fear failure
3. Students may view the consequences of cheating as unimportant
4. Teachers and administrators may fail to report cheating when it does occur, and thus the student believe they will not follow through with adequate punishment

On the other hand, some students attempt to appropriately acknowledge and cite sources in good faith, but fail to do so correctly. This does not constitute plagiarism, but rather incorrectly citing. Students may lack the prior teaching and learning that enables them to appropriately cite. The following are situations that may be falsely equated with plagiarizing:

1. Students may not understand how to take detailed and documented notes
2. Students may be unable to properly incorporate other people's ideas into their own
3. Instructors may assume students know how to incorporate other people's ideas into their own work and cite properly

### **What about "common knowledge"?**

There are professionals in every field who regard some of their knowledge as "common knowledge". However, as students we are still learning. So, what constitutes our common knowledge then? Ask yourself two questions in order to determine if your ideas constitute your common knowledge:

1. Did I know this information prior to taking this course?
2. Did these ideas come straight from my previous knowledge or new ideas?

If you answered "yes" to both of these questions, then the information in question can be considered common knowledge. However, if you responded "no" to these questions, then you must indicate where the information came from. Ask yourself these questions anytime you are unsure if your ideas are common knowledge to avoid any instances of plagiarism.

### **Paraphrasing**

Paraphrasing is putting the ideas and concepts from another source into your own words. To do this you need to have a complete understanding of the topic, especially if it is difficult material. Paraphrasing does not mean changing a few words and rearranging the sentence structure. It is recommended that when paraphrasing you close the book you are reading; this will make you put the ideas into your own words.

### **Avoiding Plagiarism**

- 1) Students need to realize that using citations is a good thing, and your teachers will not penalize you for having more than necessary; in fact the general rule is "When in doubt cite it."
- 2) Taking good notes is a good way to guard against plagiarism. It may help to think of your notes as a "transition stage between what you are reading and what you are going to write. Another suggestion is to use quotation marks so that you do not need to guess what is in your own words and what isn't.
- 3) There are many types of citations and it can be confusing when you're trying to determine which types are appropriate for your situation. The most common citation

styles are APA, MLA, Chicago, and CSE, and your teacher should be able to tell you which style you need to use. After you determine which style to use it is important to find a good source to consult. There are guide books you can buy or find on the internet to help you with this problem.

**You must cite even if:**

- 1) You put all direct quotes in quotation marks.
- 2) You changed the words used by the author into synonyms.
- 3) You completely paraphrased the ideas to which you referred.
- 4) Your sentence is mostly made up of your own thoughts, but contains a reference to the author's ideas.
- 5) You mention the author's name in the sentence.