

EBSCO Publishing Student Success Tools

How to Avoid Plagiarism

He liked those literary cooks Who skim the cream of others' books; And ruin half an author's graces By plucking bon-mots from their places.
~Hannah More

Merriam Webster Online notes that to plagiarize is to “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source”. The dictionary source also defines it as “literary theft”⁽¹⁾.

Essentially, plagiarism is taking someone else's ideas or words, intentionally or not, and presenting them as your own. This could be a quote or passage that you forgot to cite, or even an entire paper. Ideas can be plagiarized? Yes, ideas. If you read an article and take that stance as your own without crediting the article, *that is also considered plagiarism*. You are stealing someone else's position and ideas instead of creating your own. You cannot grow as a student, thinker, and person if you steal from someone else.

Many high schools and colleges have strict rules regarding plagiarism. If a student plagiarizes, the integrity of the school is called into question. Once broken, trust between the student and the professor is difficult to rebuild. The College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts states in the “Academic Honesty Policy” section of its handbook that if a professor believes a student is plagiarizing, and can prove it, then the student receives a failing grade for that work. The professor then writes to the chair of the department and the Class Dean (advisor) and an academic trial is held with the student, dean, and professors present. If the student is found guilty, a letter about the incident is placed on record until graduation. If there is only one offense, the letter is destroyed upon student graduation, but if this happens twice, it could follow the student into the workforce...

the first instance of plagiarism will result in academic probation for two semesters, the second suspension for two semesters, and the third results in expulsion⁽²⁾.

High schools are also serious and strict about plagiarism. What seemed a whim or a quick fix to get out of an assignment could become a long, difficult hassle if you are caught. A plagiarism blunder can affect your whole life, both academic and professional (see Nuts and Bolt's to College Writing: Plagiarism, in the Resources section below).

The easiest way to avoid the question of plagiarism is to cite quotes and information correctly. Not everything has to be cited. Generally known information or generally accepted judgments - *George Washington was the first U.S. president, Dr. Seuss is a well known children's author* - and your own opinions or experiences *In my opinion, global warming is a threat to our rainforests, my week helping Habitat for Humanity was grueling but also very rewarding* are exempt. If you are unsure whether or not to cite, look at your sources; are they citing this information? If you read five sources and none of are citing the same fact, then it's a safe bet that you don't need to either. The safest way to avoid plagiarism is to know what you need to cite, and cite correctly.

Resources - Other articles about plagiarism and how to avoid it:

The Nuts and Bolts to College Writing: Plagiarism

<http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/plagiarism.html>: Explains various kinds of plagiarism and how to avoid them; refers to U.S. Senator Joe Biden, whose campaign for the Democratic nomination for president was ruined by a history of plagiarism.

Plagiarism.org

<http://www.plagiarism.org/>: A website that offers resources on how to catch plagiarism, along with facts and quotes about this growing epidemic.

Online Writing Lab (OWL): Plagiarism

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html: Features tips how to avoid plagiarism.

Virtual Salt: Anti-Plagiarism Strategies for Research Papers

<http://www.virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm>:

- (1) Merriam Webster online
- (2) The College of the Holy Cross handbook, Worcester, MA