



# Avoid PLAGIARISM

## Accidental or Not, It's Trouble

*Definition:* "the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind and presenting it as one's own" (Lindey, 1952, p. 2).

According to the *APA Publication Manual* (1994), "... an author does not present the work of another as if it were his or her own work. This can extend to ideas as well as written words" (p. 294). Gibaldi, in the *MLA Handbook*, states, "common sense as well as ethics should determine what you document" (1994, p. 29).

This means that in writing a research paper, you must document exact quotes, paraphrases, facts, and ideas. However, some things don't require documentation: well-known sayings (e.g., "A stitch in time saves nine"), famous quotations ("I have a dream"), or commonly known facts ("During World War II, the Manhattan Project was charged with developing a super-bomb").

Here are some examples that illustrate appropriate and inappropriate citation styles:

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**The original from p. 60 of Michael Agar's *Language Shock*:**

Everyone uses the word language and everybody these days talks about culture....  
"Languaculture" is a reminder, I hope, of the necessary connection between its two parts....

**Plagiarized version:**

At the intersection of language and culture lies a concept that we might call "languaculture."

**Acceptably paraphrased version:**

At the intersection of language and culture lies a concept that Michael Agar has called "languaculture" (1994, p. 60).

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**The original from p. 10 of Alvin Toffler's *The Third Wave*:**

Humanity faces a quantum leap forward. It faces the deepest social upheaval and creative restructuring of all time. Without clearly recognizing it, we are engaged in building a remarkable civilization from the ground up. This is the meaning of the Third Wave.

Until now the human race has undergone two great waves of change, each one largely obliterating earlier cultures or civilizations and replacing them with ways of life inconceivable to those who came before. The First Wave of change—the agricultural revolution—took thousands of years to play itself out. The Second Wave—the rise of

the industrial civilization—took a mere hundred years. Today history is even more accelerative, and it is likely that the Third Wave will sweep across history and complete itself in a few decades.

**Plagiarized version:**

There have been two revolutionary periods of change in history: the agricultural revolution and the industrial revolution. The agricultural revolution determined the course of history for thousands of years; the industrial civilization lasted about a century. We are now on the threshold of a new period of revolutionary change, but this one may last for only a few decades.

**Acceptably cited version:**

According to Alvin Toffler, there have been two revolutionary periods of change in history: the agricultural revolution and the industrial revolution. The agricultural revolution determined the course of history for thousands of years; the industrial civilization lasted about a century. We are now on the threshold of a new period of revolutionary change, but this one may last for only a few decades (1981, p. 10).

Two further issues are related to plagiarism: using a paper done for another course as the paper for a current course, and writing collaboratively. In the first case, ask the instructor for permission to rework a prior paper for the current course; not doing so is a form of cheating. In the second case, if the work is truly collaborative and the effort about equally distributed, give credit to all contributors. If the roles of the collaborators were clearly demarcated or unequal, state exactly who did what.

In any of these cases, if in doubt, ask the instructor. If you are in doubt about whether or not to document the work of other authors, and the instructor is unavailable, cite.

References

- Agar, M. (1994). *Language shock: Understanding the culture of conversation*. New York: Morrow.
- American Psychological Association. (1994). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. (4th ed.) Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Gibaldi, J. (1995). *MLA handbook for writers of research papers*. (4th ed.) New York: Modern Language Association.
- Lindey, A. (1952). *Plagiarism and originality*. New York: Harper.
- Toffler, A. (1981). *The third wave*. New York: Bantam.

Note that we're using the APA style of referencing here.

Note also that normally the References list begins on a new page.