



# Avoiding Plagiarism

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**Definition of plagiarism** (taken from *The Brief New Century Handbook, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* by Christine A. Hult and Thomas N. Huckin):

- ♣ “Plagiarism is defined as the unauthorized or misleading use of language and text of another author.”
  - Simply put, this means that as writers we must always acknowledge any ideas, illustrations, and thoughts that are not our own.

## You're plagiarizing if you...

- ♣ Buy a paper from an Internet site, another student or writer, or any other source and pass it off as your own.
- ♣ Turn in a paper that someone else has written, whether the person has given it to you, you've downloaded it from the Internet, or you've copied it from any other source.
- ♣ Changed selected parts of an existing paper and claim the paper as your own.

## What you must document

- ♣ Words or ideas that appear in books, magazines, newspapers, songs, computer programs, TV programs, movies, web pages, letters, advertisements or any similar medium
- ♣ Information you gain through interviews or conversing with another person (via the phone, face to face, or in writing)
- ♣ When you copy exact words or a unique phrases
- ♣ When you reprint existing diagrams, charts, graphs, pictures, or other visual materials
- ♣ When you repost or reuse any electronically-available media including images, audio, and video

## What you do not need to document

- ♣ You don't have to document common knowledge or your own thinking.
- ♣ But what does 'common knowledge' mean? Here's some examples:
  - Chicago is the third largest city in the U.S.
  - There are many different species of fish found in the world's oceans.
  - Neptune is the farthest planet from the sun.
- ♣ Remember: Your own thinking consists of your analysis, synthesis, and interpretation of a topic.

## There are 2 ways we can avoid plagiarism:

- ♣ When researching, be extremely careful and methodical in how you take notes on content and when you paraphrase, quote, or summarize.
- ♣ Practice using documentation and become comfortable with citing the sources you use (this includes MLA, APA, Chicago, and Turabian documentation styles).

## Tips

- ♣ As you go along, develop a regular system for taking content notes. Make sure to maintain a distinction between your own thinking and the information/ideas coming from your source.
- ♣ You might use different colors of ink or a similar system to keep the three uses of sources separate:
  - Quotations from a source
  - Material paraphrased or summarized from a source
  - Thoughts of your own, which were triggered by the material you read

## Quotations from a source (documentation always required)

- ♣ Integrating quotes into your paper adds credibility to your writing.
- ♣ When you want to include a quotation in your text, it must match the original source document word for word and must be properly documented.

## Paraphrasing: Taking the Idea

- ♣ Paraphrasing involves taking information from a source and putting into your own words.
- ♣ Paraphrased material is generally more condensed than quoted material because you are taking the idea out of the passage, not the exact words.
- ♣ Just like quoting material, you must cite your source when paraphrasing.

## 6 Steps to Effective Paraphrasing

1. Read over the text several times until you grasp its full meaning.
2. Set the original text aside, and write your paraphrase on a note card or sheet of paper.
3. On the note card, jot down the subject of the paraphrase and a few key words that will help you put this information in context later on in your paper.



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4. Go back and check your notes to make sure you included all the necessary information that was in the original material.
5. Use quotation marks to identify unique words or terminology that you borrowed directly from the original material.
6. Record the bibliographic information on the note card so you can easily refer to it if you use the material in your paper.

## What is Synthesis?

- ♣ Synthesis is the ability to support your point argument with materials and information from a variety of sources.
- ♣ When you synthesize you are examining several sources to see how their content overlaps and how this information relates to your thesis statement.

## Tips for Effective Synthesis

- ♣ Make sure you have a clear and effective thesis statement.
- ♣ Become familiar enough with your sources that you can comfortably discuss them in your paper.
- ♣ Try to use more than one source per point – the more sources you use, the more likely your reader will be side with your argument.
- ♣ If you quote two sources, make sure to explain how the quotes relate to your main idea and each other.

## A Note about Internet Sources:

- ♣ Never cut material from an online source and paste it directly to your paper – summarize or paraphrase materials before you include them in a paper.
- ♣ Keep the material that you found, downloaded, or printed separate from you writing.
- ♣ If you're not sure about a text or passage, try submitting it an internet search engine.