

# Avoiding Plagiarism



**“Ignorance, naiveté, or sloppiness is no excuse.”**

- from: “USM Social Science Guide to Plagiarism and Referencing.”  
n.d. <http://www.usm.maine.edu/~kuzma/Ideologies/Plagerism.html>  
[sic] (Accessed 23 Apr. 09).

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**Definitions | Important Terms | How to Recognize & Avoid Plagiarism | To Cite or Not to Cite**

## WHAT THE \*#@&%\* IS PLAGIARISM?

“It’s dishonest to take credit for another person’s original words or ideas. To do so would be an act of plagiarism.”

- from: Paradigm Online Writing Assistant. “Documenting in Context.” 14 April 2004. <  
<http://www.powa.org/documenting-sources/documenting-in-context.html> (Accessed 23 Apr. 2009).

“Plagiarism is not just incorrectly citing something. Plagiarism includes turning in someone else’s work as your own, passing off parts of others’ work as your own, and deliberately faking sources. Plagiarism covers **all sources**:

- written or electronic text,
- visual documents such as charts, graphs, etc.
- material taken from lectures, interviews, or television programs.”
- from: Texas A&M University Libraries. “Avoiding Plagiarism.”  
<http://ogs.tamu.edu/forms/documents/graduate-student-workshops-materials/Workshop%20Avoiding%20Plagiarism%2002-11-08.ppt>
- (Accessed 23 Apr. 09)

“[T]he act of plagiarism is a form of theft (taking of ideas) and a form of fraud (misrepresentation). You should remember that ideas and creativity are as valuable as tangible property. Simply put, the rule is to give credit where credit is due.”

- from: “USM Social Science Guide to Plagiarism and Referencing.”  
n.d. <http://www.usm.maine.edu/~kuzma/Ideologies/Plagerism.html> [sic] (Accessed 23 Apr. 09).

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## IMPORTANT TERMS

### Citation

-a complete reference entry on the Works Cited page that identifies the source of information (book, article, website, interview . . .). Includes author, title, publishing info, url, pagination, dates.

**Example (citation in MLA format):** Farkas, David K. and Jean B. Farkas. *Principles of Web Design*. New York: Longman, 2001.

### Citing / Documenting sources

- including a brief reference (usually in parentheses) to the source of the info presented. The **parenthetical reference** (see below) points the reader to the full citation / entry in the Works Cited. Each Documentation Style (MLA, APA, Chicago) has its own format for citing sources.

**Example (MLA parenthetical citation with author and page):** Communication skills are “critical in all accredited engineering programs” (Albertson 12)

**Example (APA parenthetical citation with author and date):** Communication skills are “critical in all accredited engineering programs” (Albertson 2003)

### Common knowledge

- information that is known by most people. The intended audience is a major factor in determining whether something is “common knowledge.” This information does not need to be documented. No parenthetical reference or citation is needed. Caution!! If you didn't know it and had to look it up, cite it.

**Example of common knowledge – no citation needed:** Saint John, NB, is the oldest incorporated city in Canada.

### Paraphrasing

- restating other people's ideas or words in your own words. A paraphrase is approximately the same length as the original. Paraphrasing does NOT mean to simply change or reorganize a few words from the original work. Paraphrases must be identified with a parenthetical reference (acknowledgement of the source of the idea), linking the reader to the full citation on the Works Cited page.

**See** examples under **How to Recognize and Avoid Plagiarism** below.

### Quoting

- using some else's EXACT words in your writing. Quotations must be identified by quotation marks and a parenthetical reference (acknowledgement of the source of the quote), linking the reader to the full citation on the Works Cited page. When quoting, you must keep the text EXACTLY the same as the original. Mistakes in the original can be acknowledged with the disclaimer “[sic].”

**Example:** According to Diestler, “The critical thinker is someone who uses specific criteria to evaluate reasoning and make decisions” (2)

**Example:** (MLA format) The brochure included an invitation: “The Faculty of Computer Science cordially invites you to it's [sic] first Research Expo” (Cameron 284).

### Summarizing

- restating other people's ideas or words in your own words. A summary is significantly shorter than the original.

### Parenthetical Reference

- stating the source of the paraphrase, quotation, data, or graphic in parentheses ( ) directly after the material is presented.

**See** “Citing / Documenting sources” above. In the examples, (Albertson 12) and (Albertson 2003) are parenthetical references.

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## HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND AVOID PLAGIARISM

Avoid plagiarism by developing good research methods and following some basic rules of writing and documentation when you paraphrase, quote, or summarize.

### Paraphrasing

<b>Original Text</b> (from Davenport-Hines, Richard. <i>The Pursuit of Oblivion: A Global History of Narcotics</i> . Norton, 2004).	The prohibition policies of the USA have escalated into the global Wars on Drugs associated since 1969 with the Nixon, Reagan and Bush administrations. The American approach can be summarised as requiring unconditional surrender from traffickers, dealers, addicts and occasional recreational users.
<b>Plagiarism (Unacceptable attempt at Paraphrase)</b>	The <b>prohibitive</b> policies <b>in</b> the <b>United States</b> have <b>become</b> the <b>worldwide</b> Wars on Drugs associated since 1969 with the Nixon, Reagan and Bush administrations. The American <b>way of dealing with things</b> can be summarised as requiring <b>complete</b> surrender from <b>dealers, addicts, traffickers</b> and occasional recreational <b>drug</b> users.
<b>Why is it plagiarism?</b>	1) Only a few words were changed or the order of words was altered. 2) The source of the text is not cited in a parenthetical reference.
<b>Acceptable Paraphrase</b>	Drug policies in the United States emphasize prohibition at all levels: traffickers, dealers, addicts and occasional recreational users. Although these policies originated in the US, particularly with Republican administrations of the last 30 years, they have grown into the "global Wars on Drugs" (Davenport-Hines 15).
<b>Why is it acceptable?</b>	1) The passage was rewritten in the writer's own words while maintaining the meaning of the original text. The length of the paraphrase is roughly the same as the original. 2) The source of the text is cited (the full citation would appear in the report's Works Cited section).  <b>Note:</b> You can use paraphrase and quotations together – even in the same sentence. This combination is often used in presenting ideas that are difficult to reword without altering the meaning.

### Quoting

<b>Original Text</b> (from Farkas, David K. and Jean B. Farkas. <i>Principles of Web Design</i> . New York: Longman 2001).	The word "aesthetic" refers to the human response we associate with beauty. Aesthetic appeal is a key goal of graphic design on the Web because it engages users. Aesthetics is especially important on the home page, where users make a split-second decision whether to stay or leave. Furthermore, an aesthetic design lends prestige and credibility to the organization that owns the website, subtly asserting, "These people know what they're doing."
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<b>Unacceptable Quote</b>	"Aesthetic appeal is a key goal of design on the web because it engages users. Aesthetics is especially important on the home page where users make split-second decisions on whether to stay or leave."
<b>Why is it plagiarism?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The passage has not been quoted accurately (use of capitals, punctuation, wording).</li> <li>2) The source of the quotation is not cited with a parenthetical reference.</li> </ol>
<b>Acceptable quotation</b>	Websites are created for a range of specific purposes, most commonly to educate, entertain, inform, or persuade; and particular design characteristics are chosen to further that purpose. However, regardless of the specific purpose of the site, effective Web designers will ensure that the opening home page offers immediate appeal to the user, who will often "make a split-second decision whether to stay or leave" (Farkas 242).
<b>Why is it acceptable?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The phrase in quotation marks has been quoted accurately and within the proper context.</li> <li>3) The source of the quotation is cited.</li> </ol>

### Summarizing

<b>Original Text</b> (from Cooper, Sheila and Rosemary Patton. <i>Writing Logically, Thinking Critically</i> . 4 <sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson / Longman, 2003.)	When you support a judgment with factual evidence and reasoning, you are mounting an argument . . . But it is also possible to persuade with <b>visual images</b> . Increasingly we live in a world of intense visual stimulation. Television computers, printed media, billboards — we are surrounded by pictorial impressions designed to persuade, telling us what to buy, what to think, how to vote. Pictures in the news, entertainment visuals, advertising, all play significant roles in our culture. Thus it is important that we train ourselves to interpret visual images in much the same way that we develop our skills in making inferences as we read printed texts.
<b>Unacceptable summary</b>	In addition to supporting a judgment with factual evidence and reasoning, it is also possible to persuade with visual images.
<b>Why is it plagiarism?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Sections of the passage have been lifted from the original, but no quotation marks are used.</li> <li>2) The source of the material is not cited with a parenthetical reference.</li> </ol>
<b>Acceptable summary</b>	Visual images are often used to support arguments. These images must be interpreted just as critically as are arguments in words (Cooper and Patton 42).
<b>Why is it acceptable?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Both sentences offer acceptable paraphrases of the original ideas.</li> <li>3) The whole passage is cited.</li> </ol>

**As you research:**

- Keep track of the sources you use.
- Accurately record the AUTHOR, TITLE, PUBLISHER, DATE, and PAGE NUMBERS from which your notes were taken. You will need this information to document your source correctly.
- In your notes carefully differentiate your own ideas from the ideas of others. If you copy exact quotations from the text, make it clear in your notes that it is a quotation, either by using quotation marks, or highlighting, or putting a big "Q" in the margin.

**As you write:**

- When paraphrasing, read over the material that you want to paraphrase; then CLOSE THE SOURCE. Without looking back at the original, write out the idea in your own words. Next, check your version against the original for accuracy and mistakenly borrowed phrases.
- When paraphrasing, consider beginning your statement by giving credit to the author of your source. [Example: According to Mill Superintendent Lynn Hunt, the improvements that were made last year have resulted in a 30% increase in productivity.]
- When quoting, you can also mention the author's name at the beginning or at the end of the quote. [Example: Lynn Hunt, the Mill Superintendent, agreed that the initial costs were well worth the money: "Productivity has grown by 30% following the upgrades to the #1, #2, and #3 boiler units in the power plant."]
- If there are words or phrases used by an author that you think are unique and essential, put them in quotations and cite them.

**As you proofread:**

- Be certain that you have accurately and completely documented all material from another source.
  - Check direct quotations against the source to be sure that they are accurate.
  - Double check paraphrased material to make sure that your words and sentence structure are different than the original source.
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## TO CITE OR NOT TO CITE?

By now it must seem that you have to document every sentence you write. Here's a table that will help you decide.

Needs Documentation	NO Documentation Needed
When you use or refer to someone else's words or ideas whether from a printed source (book, magazine, etc.), the Internet, television, advertisement, movie, or any other medium.	When you are writing about your own experiences, observations opinions, conclusions, etc.
When you use information from an interview with another person.	When you are using "common knowledge"--that is, information that most people know. It might be common sense observation, folklore, shared knowledge, etc.
When you use statistics, diagrams, factual data from another source.	When you are stating generally accepted facts.
When you use ideas that others have given you in conversation or by email.	When you are reporting the results of your own experimental work or primary research.

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## SOURCES

### Website design and partial contents (used by permission):

Moore, Deborah J. and Nancy Getty. Avoiding Plagiarism. 1 May 2003.  
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<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/> (Accessed 23 April 2009)

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