

## Preventing Plagiarism: Student Resources

In a research assignments, you have to come up with your own original ideas while at the same time using work that's already been done by others. But how can you tell where their ideas end and your own begin? What's the proper way to include sources in your paper? If you change some of what an author said, do you still have to cite that person?

Confusion about the answers to these questions often leads to **plagiarism**. If you have similar questions, or are concerned about preventing plagiarism, we recommend using the checklist below.

### A. Consult with your instructor or librarian

Have questions about plagiarism? What format of citation he/she would like; in-text, footnotes, endnotes. What style of citation; APA, MLA, Chicago.

### B. Understand you assignment and make a plan

### C. Take Effective Notes

One of the best ways to prepare for a research paper is by taking thorough notes from all of your sources, so that you have much of the information organized before you begin writing. Don't write your paper directly from the source. Write your paper from your notes. Also, get in the habit of marking page numbers, and make sure that you record bibliographic information or web addresses for every source right away – finding them again later when you are trying to finish your paper can be a nightmare!

### D. When in doubt, cite sources

And you don't want your instructor to think that you got all of your information from somewhere else. But if it is unclear whether an idea in your paper really came from you, or whether you got it from somewhere else and just changed it a little, **you should always cite your source**.

Remember you don't have to cite common knowledge!!!

### E. Make it clear **who** said **what**

Even if you cite sources, vagueness in your phrasing can often disguise the real source of any given idea, causing inadvertent

plagiarism. Make sure when you mix your own ideas with those of your sources that you always clearly distinguish them. If you are discussing the ideas of more than one person, watch out for confusing pronouns. For example, imagine you are talking about Harold Bloom's discussion of James Joyce's opinion of Shakespeare, and you write: "He brilliantly portrayed the situation of a writer in society at that time." Who is the "He" in this sentence? Bloom, Joyce, or Shakespeare? Who is the "writer": Joyce, Shakespeare, or one of their characters? Always make sure to distinguish **who** said **what**, and give credit to the right person.

#### F. Know how to Paraphrase:

A paraphrase is a restatement **in your own words** of someone else's ideas. Changing a few words of the original sentences does NOT make your writing a legitimate paraphrase. You must change **both** the **words** and the **sentence structure** of the original, **without** changing the content. Also, you should keep in mind that paraphrased passages **still require citation** because the ideas came from another source, even though you are putting them in your own words.

It is a common misconception among students that you need to hide the fact that you rely on other sources. Actually it is advantageous to highlight the fact that other sources support your own ideas. Using **quality** sources to support your ideas makes them seem stronger and more valid.

#### G. Evaluate Your Sources

Not all sources on the web are worth citing – in fact, many of them are just plain wrong. So how do you tell the good ones apart? For starters, make sure you know the **author(s)** of the page, where they got their information, and when they wrote it (getting this information is also an important step in avoiding plagiarism!).