

Step 6: What is plagiarism?

plagiarism simply means that

- A piece of writing that has been copied from someone else and is presented as being your own work; to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own; to use (another's production) without crediting the source; to commit literary theft/steal; to present as new and original idea or product derived from an existing source.
- In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud/ cheat. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.
- All of the following are considered plagiarism:
 - I. turning in someone else's work as your own
 - II. copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
 - III. failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
 - IV. giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
 - V. changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
 - VI. copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not

1. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement. All published and unpublished material, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, is covered under this definition.

The best way of avoiding plagiarism is to learn and employ the principles of good academic practice from the beginning of your university career. Avoiding plagiarism is not simply a matter of making sure your references are all correct or changing enough words, so the examiner will not notice your paraphrase; it is about deploying your academic skills to make your work as good as it can be.

2. Forms of plagiarism

- **Verbatim (word for word) quotation without clear acknowledgement**
Quotations must always be identified as such using either quotation marks or indentation, and with full referencing of the sources cited. It must always be apparent to the reader which parts are your own independent work and where you have drawn on someone else's ideas and language.
- **Cutting and pasting from the Internet without clear acknowledgement**
Information derived from the Internet must be adequately referenced and included in the bibliography. It is important to evaluate carefully all material found on the Internet, as it is

less likely to have been through the same process of scholarly peer review as published sources.

- **Paraphrasing**

Paraphrasing the work of others by altering a few words and changing their order, or by closely following the structure of their argument, is plagiarism if you do not give due acknowledgement to the author whose work you are using.

A passing reference to the original author in your own text may not be enough; you must ensure that you do not create the misleading impression that the paraphrased wording or the sequence of ideas are entirely your own. It is better to write a summary of the author's overall argument in your own words, indicating that you are doing so, than to paraphrase sections of his or her writing. This will ensure you have a genuine grasp of the argument and will avoid the difficulty of paraphrasing without plagiarizing. You must also properly attribute all material you derive from lectures.

- **Collusion**

This can involve unauthorized collaboration between students, failure to attribute assistance received, or failure to follow precisely regulations on group work projects. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are entirely clear about the extent of collaboration permitted, and which parts of the work must be your own.

- **Inaccurate citation**

It is important to cite correctly, according to the conventions of your discipline. As well as listing your sources (i.e. in a bibliography), you must indicate, using a footnote or an in-text reference, where a quoted passage comes from. Additionally, you should not include anything in your references or bibliography that you have not actually consulted. If you cannot gain access to a primary source you must make it clear in your citation that your knowledge of the work has been derived from a secondary text (for example, Bradshaw, D. Title of Book, discussed in Wilson, E., Title of Book (London, 2004), p. 189).

- **Failure to acknowledge assistance**

You must clearly acknowledge all assistance which has contributed to the production of your work, such as advice from fellow students, laboratory technicians, and other external sources. This need not apply to the assistance provided by your tutor or supervisor, or to ordinary proofreading, but it is necessary to acknowledge other guidance which leads to substantive changes of content or approach.

- **Use of material written by professional agencies or other persons**

You should neither make use of professional agencies in the production of your work nor submit material which has been written for you even with the consent of the person who has written it. It is vital to your intellectual training and development that you should undertake the research process unaided. Under Statute XI on University Discipline, all

members of the University are prohibited from providing material that could be submitted in an examination by students at this University or elsewhere.

- **Auto-plagiarism**

You must not submit work for assessment that you have already submitted (partially or in full), either for your current course or for another qualification of this, or any other, university, unless this is specifically provided for in the special regulations for your course. Where earlier work by you is citable, i.e. it has already been published, you must reference it clearly. **Identical pieces of work submitted concurrently will also be auto-plagiarism.**

3. Why should you avoid plagiarism?

There are many reasons to avoid plagiarism. At first it may seem very difficult to develop your own views, and you will probably find yourself paraphrasing the writings of others as you attempt to understand and assimilate their arguments. However, it is important that you learn to develop your own voice. You are not necessarily expected to become an original thinker, but you are expected to be an independent one - by learning to assess critically the work of others, weigh up differing arguments and draw your own conclusions. Students who plagiarize undermine the ethos of academic scholarship while avoiding an essential part of the learning process.

You should avoid plagiarism because you aspire to produce work of the highest quality. Once you have grasped the principles of source use and citation, you should find it relatively straightforward to steer clear of plagiarism. Moreover, you will reap the additional benefits of improvements to both the lucidity and quality of your writing. It is important to appreciate that mastery of the techniques of academic writing is not merely a practical skill, but one that lends both credibility and authority to your work and demonstrates your commitment to the principle of intellectual honesty in scholarship.



4. How to Avoid Plagiarism in Research Papers

Writing a research paper poses challenges in gathering literature and providing evidence for making your paper stronger. Drawing upon previously established ideas and values and adding pertinent information in your paper are necessary steps, but these need to be done with caution without falling into the trap of plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the unethical practice of using words or ideas (either planned or accidental) of another author/researcher or your own previous works without proper acknowledgment. Considered as a serious academic and intellectual offense, plagiarism can result in highly negative consequences such as paper retractions and loss of author credibility and reputation. It is currently a grave problem in academic publishing and a major reason for retraction of research papers.

It is thus imperative for researchers to increase their understanding about plagiarism. In some cultures, academic traditions and nuances may not insist on authentication by citing the source of words or ideas. However, this form of validation is a prerequisite in the global academic code of conduct. Non-native English speakers face a higher challenge of communicating their technical content in English as well as complying with ethical rules. The digital age too affects plagiarism. Researchers have easy access to material and data on the internet which makes it easy to copy and paste information.

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Guard yourself against plagiarism, however accidental it may be. Here are some effective tips to avoid plagiarism.

a) Understand the context

- Do not copy–paste the text verbatim from the reference paper. Instead, restate the idea in your own words.
- Understand the idea(s) of the reference source well to paraphrase correctly.

b) Quote

Use quotes to indicate that the text has been taken from another paper. The quotes should be exactly the way they appear in the paper you take them from.

c) Identify what does and does not need to be cited

- Any words or ideas that are not your own but taken from another paper need to be cited.
- Cite Your Own Material If you are using content from your previous paper, you must cite yourself. Using material, you have published before without citation is called self-plagiarism.
- The scientific evidence you gathered after performing your tests should not be cited.

- Facts or common knowledge need not be cited. If unsure, include a reference.

d) Manage your citations

- Maintain records of the sources you refer to. Use citation software like EndNote or Reference Manager to manage the citations used for the paper
- Use multiple references for the background information/literature survey. For example, rather than referencing a review, the individual papers should be referred to and cited.

e) Use plagiarism checkers

You can use various plagiarism detection tools such as iThenticate or eTBLAST to check for any inadvertent plagiarism in your manuscript.

Tip: While it is perfectly ok to survey previously published work, it is not ok to paraphrase the same with extensive similarity. Most of the plagiarism occurs in the literature review section of any document (manuscript, thesis, etc.). Therefore, if you read the original work carefully, try to understand the context, take good notes, and then express it to your target audience in your own language (without forgetting to cite the original source), then you will never be accused with plagiarism (at least for the literature review section).

Caution: The above statement is valid only for the literature review section of your document. You should NEVER EVER use someone else's original results and pass them off as yours!

What strategies do you adopt to maintain content originality? What advice would you share with your peers?