

Handout Number Eight

Is It Plagiarism?

There are some actions that can almost unquestionably be labeled plagiarism. Some of these include **buying, stealing, or borrowing a paper** (including, of course, copying an entire paper or article from the Web); **hiring someone to write your paper** for you; and **copying large sections of text** from a source without quotation marks or proper citation. Bottom line, document any words, ideas, or other productions that originate somewhere outside of you.

But then there are actions that are usually in more of a gray area. Some of these include using the words of a source too closely when paraphrasing (where quotation marks should have been used) or building on someone's ideas without citing their spoken or written work.

Here, then, is a **brief list of what needs to be credited or documented**:

- Words or ideas presented in a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, Web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium
- Information you gain through interviewing or conversing with another person, face to face, over the phone, or in writing
- When you copy the exact words or a unique phrase
- When you reprint any diagrams, illustrations, charts, pictures, or other visual materials
- When you reuse or repost any electronically-available media, including images, audio, video, or other media

There are, of course, certain things that do not need documentation or credit, including:

- Writing your own lived experiences, your own observations and insights, your own thoughts, and your own conclusions about a subject
- When you are writing up your own results obtained through lab or field experiments
- When you use your own artwork, digital photographs, video, audio, etc.
- When you are using "common knowledge," things like folklore, common sense observations, myths, urban legends, and historical events (but **not** historical documents)
- When you are using generally-accepted facts, e.g., pollution is bad for the environment.

Safe Practices

Writing Paraphrases or Summaries

- Use a statement that credits the source somewhere in the paraphrase or summary, e.g., According to Jonathan Kozol, ...
- If you're having trouble summarizing, try writing your paraphrase or summary of a text without looking at the original, relying only on your memory and notes
- Put quotation marks around any unique words or phrases that you cannot or do not want to change, e.g., "savage inequalities" exist throughout our educational system (Kozol).

Writing Direct Quotations

- Keep the source author's name in the same sentence as the quote
- Mark the quote with quotation marks, or set it off from your text in its own block
- Quote no more material than is necessary; if a short phrase from a source will suffice, don't quote an entire paragraph

- To shorten quotes by removing extra information, use ellipsis points (...) to indicate omitted text, keeping in mind that
- To give context to a quote or otherwise add wording to it, place added words in brackets, []; be careful not to editorialize or make any additions that skew the original meaning of the quote—do that in your main text, e.g.,
- Use quotes that will have the most rhetorical, argumentative impact in your paper; too many direct quotes from sources may weaken your credibility, as though you have nothing to say yourself, and will certainly interfere with your style

Revising, Proofreading, and Finalizing Your Paper

Proofread and cross-check with your notes and sources to make sure that anything coming from an outside source is acknowledged in some combination of the following ways:

- In-text citation, otherwise known as parenthetical citation
- Footnotes or endnotes
- Bibliography, References, or Works Cited pages
- Quotation marks around short quotes; longer quotes set off by themselves, as prescribed by a research and citation style guide
- Indirect quotations: citing a source that cites another source

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As stated on NDU's website:

Academic Dishonesty

Students are expected and encouraged to be honest and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity in their academic work and assignments at the University. They shall refrain from any academic dishonesty or misconduct including; but not limited to:

Plagiarism; that is, the presentation of someone else's ideas, words or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one's own creation. Also, paraphrasing, summarizing, as well as well as direct quotations are considered as plagiarism, if the original source is not properly cited.

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