

Plagiarism

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Plagiarism is academic dishonesty, one type of cheating. It is unethical and illegal. Faculty cannot plagiarize when they publish or present research, professionals cannot plagiarize when they prepare documents, and students cannot plagiarize when they write papers for school or research reports.

Plagiarism includes:

1. Presenting someone else's ideas or data as if they were your own
2. Using someone else's language without quotation marks and citation
3. Paraphrasing by borrowing someone else's grammatical structure or phrases
4. Handing in someone else's work as if it were your own
5. Submitting identical or highly similar papers to multiple courses without instructor knowledge and approval (even if you wrote the papers)

Notice that the definitions of plagiarism do not specify intentionality. If you plagiarize, even as an honest mistake, it is still plagiarism.

To avoid plagiarism:

1. Always use quotation marks when using someone else's language and provide pages from the source, e.g., "Intelligent people have messy desks" (Smith, 1985, p. 132) or Smith (1985) concluded that "intelligent people have messy desks" (p. 132).
2. Always cite the reference when presenting someone else's ideas or data in your own words, e.g., Garcia (1985) concluded that systematic desensitization is effective for treating phobias. You don't have to cite a reference for statements of well-known facts, such as Sigmund Freud was the founder of psychoanalysis.
3. Avoid plagiarizing someone's grammatical structure when you paraphrase by setting the original source aside and rewriting the concepts in your own words, e.g., The desks of intelligent people tend to be disorganized (Smith, 1985). Notice that the paraphrased language does not borrow the grammatical structure of the original passage. Imagine describing the idea to someone else in your own words; then use this language in your paper.
4. When taking notes for a paper, be careful to put quotation marks on quoted passages and to paraphrase without borrowing the grammatical structure of the original passage. Then, when you write your final paper, you'll not inadvertently introduce plagiarized language.
5. Do your own work. Don't hand in someone else's paper.

6. Write separate papers for each course. If you want to do a paper for more than one course, obtain the permission of all instructors before you submit the paper.

Let's practice. Here is a quotation from a Psychology 100 text written by Karen Huffman, Mark Vernoy, and Judith Vernoy (1994, page 607). [Three spaced dots indicate that material has been omitted from the quotation.]

One error, or shortcut, is so common and basic that it is known as the fundamental attribution error. People simply tend to prefer an internal, personality explanation for behavior rather than an external, situational one. . . . This explains why we blame people and personality rather than the external situation for the Waco and Guyana tragedies. This also happens in our everyday life.

When we see someone trip while walking across campus, for example, we're likely to attribute it to that person's carelessness or lack of coordination rather than uneven ground or ill-fitting shoes. . . . There are several possible explanations for our tendency to make internal rather than external attributions. But the most important is that human personalities and behaviors are more salient (or noticeable) than situational factors. . . . This saliency bias helps explain why people so often blame welfare recipients for their joblessness. The large situational factors that lead to poverty and joblessness are not concrete and conspicuous.

Here are some sentences based on this reading. Decide if plagiarism is present.

1. I think we tend to prefer an internal, personality explanation for behavior rather than an external, situational one, probably because internal factors are more salient.
2. The major reason that the fundamental attribution error occurs is because people's personalities and actions are more noticeable than situational variables (Huffman, Vernoy, & Vernoy, 1994).
3. According to Huffman, Vernoy, and Vernoy (1994) we tend to explain the behaviors of others by referring to internal traits, and we tend to ignore external factors that may have influenced the behaviors. This may occur for many reasons. Huffman, Vernoy, and Vernoy (1994) argue that it occurs because of a "saliency bias" (p. 607), a tendency to focus on internal attributes.

The first sentence is plagiarism because there is no citation. The writer is taking credit for someone else's ideas.

The second sentence also is plagiarism. Although a citation is given, the paraphrased language preserves the grammatical structure of the source. Simply substituting a few words for others does not allow the writer to avoid plagiarism.

The third passage is not plagiarism. A citation is given, paraphrasing does not borrow the grammatical structure of the source, and the phrase saliency bias is placed in quotation marks with an associated page number to indicate directly quoted words.

Let's try a second example, this time from a research report written by Anstey and Spence (1986), "Factors Associated with Stress in Mothers of Intellectually Disabled Children."

There are many potential stressors in the lives of parents of intellectually disabled children. . . .

Modern stress theory provides a comprehensive means of developing a framework for assessing the effects of parents of an intellectually disabled child. . . . According to this model, the production of stress is best viewed as a dynamic process. Manifestations of stress are the result of the complex interaction of sources of stress and mediators or moderators of stress. . . .

The findings of this survey show that the proportion of mothers of disabled children (41.5 percent) reporting a significant level of stress is approximately twice that of a female sample from the Perth general population (19.9 percent) administered GHQ by Burvill and Knuiman (1983). . . . In the present sample, there was no significant relationship between level of maternal stress and the "age of the disabled child, and the age, marital status and working status of the mother."

Decide if these statements contain plagiarism.

1. According to modern stress theory, the production of stress is viewed as a dynamic process, and signs of stress result from the complex interaction of stress sources and their mediators and moderators (Ansley & Spence, 1986).
2. I found that high amounts of stress are twice as common among mothers of disabled children than among mothers in the general population.
3. Anstey and Spence (1986) found that mothers of intellectually disabled children are twice as likely as other mothers to report high stress.
4. Mothers of intellectually disabled children report high levels of stress more often than other mothers (Ansley & Spence, 1986).
5. Although Ansley and Spence (1986) found higher level of stress among mothers of intellectually disabled children, their stress levels were not related to "the age of the disabled child, and the age, marital status and working status of the mother" (p. 253).

The first sentence is plagiarism because of borrowed grammatical structure. The second is plagiarism because the writer is taking credit for someone else's data.

The third and fourth sentences are not plagiarism. The paraphrasing used different grammatical structures and a citation was made.

The last example also is not plagiarism. A citation was given, the quoted material was placed within quotation marks, the page number for the quotation was provided, and the paraphrased material did not borrow the grammatical structure of the source.