

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism

Hi, I'm Christine Jewell, Liaison Librarian at the University of Waterloo.

This video describes plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own.

Whenever you use someone else's work or idea, acknowledge that use.

Give credit to your source by providing a citation, a reference, to your source.

What sorts of things should you credit?

Credit quotations.

If you use someone else's exact words, place these words in quotation marks.

Credit a paraphrase.

A paraphrase is a restatement of someone else's words.

It contains the same level of detail as the original.

It must be in your own words, so take care that you do not repeat distinctive words, phrases, or even the sentence structure of the original.

Credit summaries.

A summary is a broad outline of someone else's work.

Be sure to credit all aspects of your summary.

Your reader needs to know when you are summarizing someone else's work, and when you are presenting information that is original with you.

Credit ideas and reasoning.

In the course of your research if you come across an interesting analysis, conclusion, or theory, you can use it in your work but make sure your readers know that it isn't original with you.

Tell them where you found the idea.

Credit the products of someone else's work.

Products include things like images, charts and graphs, datasets, and computer code.

Anything that you use that someone else has produced should include a reference to the creator.

Credit sources from all media.

Print sources must be cited.

Electronic sources must also be cited.

Cite a source that you discovered on the internet.

Credit a webpage if you have used it, even if it is freely available.

Information discovered in a TV or radio broadcast must be cited.

If an idea was received through a verbal source, such as a classroom lecture, a conference, or seminar presentation, you must give credit to the speaker.

Sometimes a citation is not necessary.

It is not necessary to cite common knowledge.

Common knowledge includes well-known information generally accepted as fact, and information that is widely available and discoverable in numerous sources.

Consider your readers.

Specialized information can count as common knowledge when your readers are knowledgeable in that field.

When in doubt, provide a citation.

Plagiarism is academic misconduct, even if it is unintentional.

Here are some tips for avoiding unintentional plagiarism.

Accept only limited assistance.

A heavily edited work is not your own.

Submit content only once.

If you would like to submit a paper or even substantial content more than once, you must seek approval from both the initial and the subsequent recipient.

Sharpen your note taking skills.

If you keep track of your sources from the earliest stages in your research, you'll be less likely to paraphrase too closely, or blur your original thinking with your source information.

Be alert to the risk of cryptomnesia.

Sometimes an idea that you have come across in your research becomes separated from its sources and can appear to you as your own idea.

Careful note taking practices will reduce this risk of unconscious plagiarism.

It is important to credit the sources you use.

Crediting your sources demonstrates how your work is connected with other scholarly work on your topic.

These connections contribute to the development of your own ideas.

Demonstration of the connections between your work and other scholarly works on your topic adds to the authority of your work.

Documenting your trail of thinking will enable further research in the area.

Your readers will know where to locate your sources.

Avoid penalties.

Failure to credit your sources is academic misconduct and subject to penalties imposed by the university from reprimand to expulsion, as outlines in policy 71.

Be informed.

Policies vary from one school to another.

Expectations at Waterloo may be different from your previous institution.

Know and understand what counts as plagiarism.

It is in your own interest to become informed of the criteria for what counts as plagiarism, and make all efforts to guard against unintentional plagiarism.

Be a skilled note taker and know how to cite your sources.

Detailed information is available in the Credit your Sources section of this website, including citation examples, tips, and best practices, a bibliography of writers' handbooks, and a list of style guides used in various fields of study

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