

# Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR STUDENT SERVICES, WCC

When you use the words or ideas of other people, you MUST cite your sources. This includes information gathered from web pages, magazines, journal articles, books, newspapers, television, movies, interviews, or any other resources.

There are very specific rules for how to cite sources based upon *scientific* or *humanities* styles of documentation. If your instructor requires you to use MLA, APA, ASA, CBE, or Chicago style to prepare your list of references, help is available at the following places:

- the WCC Online Writing Center <http://writing.whatcom.ctc.edu/research.htm> for specific documentation rules
- The Writing Center, located in the Learning Commons, for assistance with improving your writing
- The library, for help from librarians, 360-383-3300, and for handouts on style in the spinner rack near the Information/Reference desk

The following simple examples show some of the basics using the MLA citation style:

## Original

Rebecca Moore Howard wrote the following statement for a national conference of English teachers. The complete citation is listed below as an example for the WORKS CITED.

“Instead of plagiarism, I would choose to speak of fraud, citation, and repetition – three very different categories. Fraud? Let’s go right on getting angry about it. Handing in a paper that somebody else wrote is as bad as falsifying a transcript or hiring a test-taker: It thwarts two of the academy’s most basic functions – to teach and to certify intellectual accomplishment” (488).

## Quotation

If you use the EXACT words (even if it is a portion of a sentence) you must use quotation marks around the passage. Here’s an example of a direct quote from the original source listed above.

Howard suggests that “instead of plagiarism,” we should use the categories of “fraud, citation, and repetition” (488).

## Paraphrase

If you summarize in your own words an idea or information from another person, you must still acknowledge that person. For example:

When people submit papers that are taken entirely from the Internet, it involves fraud. Rebecca Moore Howard argues that this type of fraud should enrage us because it is as serious as altering transcripts and it undermines the essence of learning in college (488).

## Works Cited

You must submit a works cited list at the end of your paper. It should provide the complete citation so that a person could locate any of your sources. Most instructors require specific citation styles. The following follows the Modern Language Association (MLA) citation style:

### Works Cited

“Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism.” *Duke Libraries*. Duke University, 2011. Web. 11 July, 2011.

Howard, Rebecca Moore. "Sexuality, Textuality: The Cultural Work of Plagiarism." *College English* 62.4 (2000): 37-55. *SURFACE: Writing Program Series*. Web. 11 July 2011. <<http://surface.syr.edu/wp/8/>>.

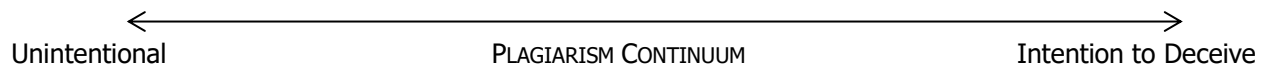
Stolley, Karl, and Allen Brizee. "Avoiding Plagiarism." *Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Purdue University, 6 June 2011. Web. 11 July 2011.

## What Is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person and presenting it as your own.

While this definition may seem simple, the question of plagiarism is complex because many of our ideas and opinions are actually shaped by what other people have already written.

Some people accidentally plagiarize because they are unclear about the importance of using quotation marks or citing their sources when they paraphrase the work of others. However, "unintentional" plagiarism can still result in very serious consequences in college; therefore, it is very important to learn how to cite your sources.



On the other end of the continuum is deliberate plagiarism such as taking the entire paper or major portions from Internet articles and websites or hiring someone to write the paper. This involves the *intention to deceive* and is considered a form of theft and fraud.

In college, plagiarism is very serious and can result in an "F" for an assignment or the class in addition to disciplinary action such as probation or suspension from the college.

### Tips to Avoid Problems

Be careful when you gather information for an assignment. Some students accidentally plagiarize because they are sloppy when they take notes and they mix-up their paraphrases and direct quotes.

### Note taking

- Highlight in a color or put quotation marks around everything that you copy directly from a source. List the author's name, page number, and source next to the quote.
- If you paraphrase an author, list the author's name, page number and source next to your paraphrase.
- Keep a list of all the required documentation information in your notes. Or, begin constructing the reference page when you begin taking notes.

### Paraphrasing

- Carefully read the original information. Then, cover it, and write your own words as if you were summarizing what you just read for a friend or classmate.
- Remember: when you paraphrase information that is NOT COMMON KNOWLEDGE you must reference the author at the beginning or end of the paraphrased statement.

### Common Knowledge

Purdue University defines common knowledge as information that most people already know or it can be found in 5 undocumented sources (Stolley et al.). For instance, it is common knowledge that Abraham Lincoln was the U.S. President during the Civil War. It is also common knowledge that President Obama is the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States.

Most information found on the Internet and within encyclopedias is NOT common knowledge. You **MUST cite information from Wikipedia**, online sources and dictionaries. Remember: When in doubt, cite your sources.