

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM: QUOTING, PARAPHRASING & SUMMARIZING

WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

Plagiarism is considered a form of **academic dishonesty** (or cheating) because it is much like theft: if you take someone else's ideas or phrasing without acknowledgment, you are taking the property of another person and acting as if it were your own. In university, taking someone else's work and passing it off as your own is doubly problematic: not only do plagiarists steal, they also cheat *themselves* out of the opportunity to learn from the feedback given by their instructors. Sometimes, however, students do not intentionally plagiarize. **Unintentional plagiarism** happens not because students are dishonest or to avoid hard work, but because they are unsure about how to quote, paraphrase & summarize correctly.

"Plagiarism is the use of someone else's ideas, wording, or organization without any acknowledgment of the source."

*--Kathleen T. McWhorter,
Successful College Writing, p. 613.*

Quoting

- Quotations must be **identical** to the source material.
- Quote when you want to reproduce **short** selections of a source: a word, phrase, or a sentence or two.

Paraphrasing

- Use your **own words** and **sentence structure** when paraphrasing
- Maintain the **intent** of the original source
- A paraphrase should be approximately the **same length** as the original passage.

Summarizing

- Summarizing is like paraphrasing: you must use **your own words** and **sentence structure**, and you must maintain the **intent** of the original source.
- However, a summary **shortens** the original passage and focuses on its main points.

WHEN TO QUOTE, PARAPHRASE OR SUMMARIZE?

When reproducing short selections of an original source, some disciplines (often those in the Humanities) prefer quotations over paraphrasing. Others, like the Social Sciences and the Sciences, prefer paraphrasing. When you need to share information or ideas gathered from a long passage or an entire publication, summarizing is your best option. But whether you quote, paraphrase, or summarize, **you must always cite the original source** according to the style guide for your particular discipline (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.).

ACCEPTABLE USE, OR PLAGIARISM?*

*The following examples are from the University of Southern Mississippi's online Plagiarism Tutorial, which can be found at their University Libraries website. Take the full, interactive tutorial at: <http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php>

SOURCE MATERIAL:

"In order to communicate effectively with other people, one must have a reasonably accurate idea of what they do and do not know that is pertinent to the communication. Treating people as though they have knowledge that they do not have can result in miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment. On the other hand, a fundamental rule of conversation, at least according to a Gricean view, is that one generally does not convey to others information that one can assume they already have."

From Raymond S. Nickerson's "How We Know-and Sometimes Misjudge-What Others Know: Imputing One's Own Knowledge to Others." *Psychological Bulletin* 125.6 (1999): p737.

PLAGIARISM:

For effective communication, it is necessary to have a fairly accurate idea of what our listeners know or do not know that is pertinent to the communication. If we assume that people know something they do not, then miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment may result (Nickerson, 1999).

ACCEPTABLE PARAPHRASING:

Nickerson (1999) suggests that effective communication depends on a generally accurate knowledge of what the audience knows. If a speaker assumes too much knowledge about the subject, the audience will either misunderstand or be bewildered; however, assuming too little knowledge among those in the audience may cause them to feel patronized (p.737).

ACCEPTABLE SUMMARIZING:

Nickerson (1999) argues that clear communication hinges upon what an audience does and does not know. It is crucial to assume the audience has neither too much nor too little knowledge of the subject, or the communication may be inhibited by either confusion or offense (p. 737).

REFERENCES:

McWhorter, K. T. (2011). *Successful college writing: Skills, strategies, learning styles* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martins.

The University of Southern Mississippi (n.d.). Plagiarism tutorial. Retrieved from <http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php>