

The Writing Center @ KUMC

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Plagiarism: Part 1

Plagiarism is the use of another's words and ideas without citation of the source. It can also be mirroring sentence and paragraph structure of source material. Sometimes plagiarism is deliberate, but often it happens accidentally because of carelessness or forgetfulness. However, whether deliberate or accidental, plagiarism has serious consequences—from an F on a paper or the entire course to suspension or expulsion—so it's vital to understand what plagiarism is and the steps to take to avoid it.

Reading and Note-Taking

When doing research, allot as much time as possible each day to read source materials and understand the content. Not fully comprehending research can lead to an inability to explain concepts in our own words, which results in plagiarism. If ample time is spent on fully understanding sources and taking careful notes from the beginning, using your own voice when writing will be easier. These are steps to take when doing research to avoid plagiarizing:

- Keep track of your sources as you do your research. Write the author's name and book or article title and URLs.
- Always put the author's words within quotation marks when taking notes.
- In your notes, put an *S* next to ideas from sources and *ME* next to your ideas.

Writing

After you've completed your research and selected the sources you want to incorporate into your paper, you're ready to write your draft. Following these guidelines will help you avoid mirroring the language of your sources as well as correctly cite material that is not your own.

- Try writing your paraphrase or summary without looking at the original, relying only on your memory and notes. For those who prefer talking out ideas, first record your paraphrase or summary and then write down your words on playback.
- Check your paraphrase or summary with the source and correct any inaccuracies you find. If you use any exact phrases, use quotation marks to set this off.
- Check your paraphrase or summary to make sure you have not repeated the sentence and paragraph structure of the original text.
- Enclose any unique words or phrases that you cannot or do not want to change in quotation marks.
- When using the language of your source, quote exactly within quotation marks and cite your source. If using ideas or information that is not common knowledge, cite the source. And remember, when in doubt, cite your source!

Takeaway Tips

- Organize your schedule to allow enough time for compiling and understanding your research.
- Take accurate notes, making sure to include author names, article or book titles, and other publishing information with your paraphrases or quotations. When including a quotation, make sure to use quotation marks and cite the page number(s).
- When writing your draft, try to refer only to your memory and notes.

Plagiarism: Part 2

A Tale of Two Graduate Degrees

As someone who spent many years as a student in writing-intensive majors, I learned effective study and writing habits to replace my inefficient ones. It took me a long time to see the light, but I was introduced to better writing habits by two professors while earning my second graduate degree. They structured their classes in a way that enabled me to see how I misused my time, energy, and focus, offering a path for me to remedy my bad writing habits.

As an undergraduate and a graduate student the first time, I spent hours and hours researching and taking notes. In fact, I went overboard. I think this was the root of my inefficiency. The more time I spent on research and notetaking, the less time I had for writing. I realize now that it was really a form of procrastination. Also, the more reading and notetaking, the less time for fully understanding the research. There is also a greater chance when writing a paper to incorrectly cite a reference if pressed for time and dealing with multiple articles.

Researching and writing for my second graduate degree was a markedly different experience, primarily because of two professors. One could argue that I was a different person in a different situation, more than a decade older and living half a continent away from family and friends. Perhaps I *was* more mature and less distracted. However, I attribute most of my growth as a researcher and writer to my professors and their assignments.

In high school, I was taught to organize a research paper by keeping information on notecards and developing an outline. This method seems to work for some, but I felt constrained by it. What helped me to be a more thoughtful and organized writer was a reading journal. I'd only kept a *personal* journal before, until one of my grad school professors required that all students keep a *reading* journal. By engaging with and responding to the class readings, I found that I had a deeper understanding of the content, which translated to my writing a clearer and more concise paper.

The other professor who showed me how to be a more careful and reflective writer required two drafts before the final draft. He would review and comment on them. Our drafts weren't graded, only the final paper. This forced me to be more organized, and it opened my eyes to how my writing improved using a more measured and focused approach. I now plan my writing time if I have anything due, consciously, since my inclination is still to write in bursts when I'm inspired. But waiting for that creative spark when you have a due date looming is a risky proposition. I've

found that by organizing my time to better engage with and reflect on my research, inspiration comes more readily than when I was that last-minute writer.

Besides introducing me to better writing habits, these two professors also reinforced my appreciation for thoughtful, informed feedback. In many courses, the only writing appraisal you'll get before submitting your paper is from your peers. Remember, the KUMC Writing Center offers helpful counsel as well. Here at the Writing Center, we can assist with all phases of the writing process, from helping develop a thesis and organizing your argument to reviewing sentence structure for clarity. Whatever your writing question or dilemma, the Writing Center will offer careful consideration and assistance.

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