Plagiarism

The English Department Statement of Plagiarism

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. The consequences of plagiarism can range from failing the assignment or the course to being expelled from the university.

For example, imagine that you work hard on a paper and are really proud of it. You turn it in to your professor and get an "A." A year later, a student taking that same class finds your paper. The student retypes the paper and puts his/her own name on it. They turn it in and get an "A" as well. They have plagiarized your paper. How do you feel? This is the same thing as using a source without documenting it.

Further, properly citing you work has many of positive benefits. Properly citing the sources of the information and ideas in your paper also helps you develop credibility for your claims, especially if you are including thoughts or opinions with which some people might disagree. A citation provides a credible source that readers can later explore if they are interested in a deeper understanding of the topic.

How do I avoid this?

Make sure that you give the original authors the credit they are due by documenting and citing ideas and prose you quote, paraphrase, and summarize. You don't have to cite common knowledge that an average American college student knows. For example, it is commonly known that the 2014 Winter Olympics were held in Sochi. However, if you are in doubt about whether or not to cite an idea, go ahead and cite it.

What are the citation/documentation styles?

Whenever you summarize, paraphrase, or quote, you must document or cite your sources according to an approved citation style. Each style is slightly different to emphasize different information, and most fields gravitate toward a particular style. For example, the humanities often use MLA because it emphasizes the author, while the sciences often use APA because it emphasizes the year. Your professors are likely to dictate which citation style they prefer for any particular assignment. These are some popular styles: Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), and Chicago (CMS).

What is paraphrasing, and how do I do this?

First read the original work, make sure that you understand it, lay it aside, and then write down the main ideas in your own words imagining that you are explaining it to someone who will read your paper. If you are having trouble putting it into your own words, then you probably don't understand it well enough to write about it. When you are finished, cite the author according to the citation style you are using.

Remember that borrowing both language and syntax too heavily from a source, even if you cite it, is plagiarism. Don't simply substitute synonyms in for the author's original words; re-arrange the order of ideas and the syntax as well.

Example of paraphrasing:

Read the 2 paragraphs following the original source and try to figure out which have been plagiarized and which have been paraphrased.

Original Source: "In earlier times, surveillance was limited to the information that a supervisor could observe and record firsthand and to primitive counting devices. In the computer age surveillance can be instantaneous, unblinking, cheap, and, maybe most importantly, easy." –Carl Botan and Mihaela Vorvoreanu, "What Do Employees Think about Electronic Surveillance at Work?" pg. 126

1. Scholars Carl Botan and Mihaela Vorvoreanu argue that in earlier times monitoring of employees was restricted to the information that a supervisor could observe and record firsthand. In the modern era, monitoring can be instantaneous, inexpensive, and, most importantly, easy (126).

2. Scholars Carl Botan and Mihaela Vorvoreanu claim that the nature of workplace surveillance has changed over time. Before the arrival of computers, managers could collect only small amounts of information about their employees based on what they saw or heard. Now, because computers are standard technology, employers can monitor employees effectively (126).

What if I want to use a direct quote?

When you use a direct quote, you must 1) reproduce the author's words *exactly*, and 2) enclose the author's original words in quotation marks in your paper. These quotation marks act as a signal to the reader that the words in quotes are not yours. If you don't use quotation marks, even though you cite the source, you are still plagiarizing.

Example of direct quotation:

Read the 2 paragraphs following the original source and try to figure out which has been plagiarized.

Original source: Early colonists viewed the lion as a threat to livestock, as a competitor for the New World's abundant game, and most importantly, as the personification of the savage and godless wilderness they meant to cleanse and civilize. –Kevin Hansen, *Cougar*, pg. 1

1. Early colonists took a dim view of the lion. According to Kevin Hansen, they saw it as a threat to livestock, as competitor for the New World's abundant game, and most importantly, as the personification of the savage and godless wilderness they meant to cleanse and civilize (1).

2. Early colonists took a dim view of the lion. According to Kevin Hansen, they saw it "as a threat to livestock, as competitor for the New World's abundant game, and most importantly, as the personification of the savage and godless wilderness they meant to cleanse and civilize" (1).

Introduce your sources properly: Avoid dropped quotes

A dropped quote means you have put a quote in a paper and have not introduced the source in any way. Thus the quote feels just "dropped" into the paper. This can leave the reader surprised or confused, especially when you have multiple references in one section or paragraph. The reader cannot see the boundary between your ideas and the sources' ideas, or where the different sources' ideas begin and end. You can avoid a dropped quote by using a signal phrase. This is a special phrase that prepares the reader for the quotation.

Example of a dropped quote:

What is the difference between these two paragraphs?

1. California law prevents the killing of mountain lions except for specific lions that have proven to be a threat to humans or livestock. "Fish and game is even blocked from keeping mountain lions from killing the endangered desert bighorn sheep" (Perry B4).

2. California law prevents the killing of mountain lions except for specific lions that have proven to be a threat to humans or livestock. The noted conservationist Tony Perry points out that, ironically, "Fish and game is even blocked from keeping mountain lions from killing the endangered desert bighorn sheep" (Perry B4).

Model Signal Phrases

Verbs in signal phrases with neutral meanings	Verbs in signal phrases that indicate agreement	Verbs in signal phrases that indicate disagreement	Other signal phrases
says observes reasons indicates responds comments points out thinks believes adds writes suggests claims notes reports implies compares	admits confirms grants concedes acknowledges endorses emphasizes insists declares asserts	refutes denies contends argues disputes	In the words of [the author]… According to [the author]… As [the author] states…