

Plagiarism Overview

The Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences

Student writers must be very careful to avoid plagiarism when incorporating or referring to outside sources in their writing.

What Is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is presenting words or ideas of another as your own.

In greater detail, *plagiarism*, according to Diana Hacker (2007), is defined as follows:

The unattributed use of a source of information that is not considered common knowledge. Forms of plagiarism are failure to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, failure to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, failure to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words, and submission of someone else's work as your own.

Besides being a severe injury to one's personal integrity, plagiarism is a violation of intellectual honesty and fairness. It is like stealing. Sometimes students are tempted to regard this form of cheating as trivial and justified, but it is regarded by the faculty and administration (and trustees) of The Christ College, as at all colleges and universities, as among the most serious violations of trust. In our academic careers, we practice applying knowledge and skills that will be vital to our life after college, and in the same way academic work is an arena for practicing ethics. A student who violates these standards of intellectual honesty in academia will be subject to suspicion as being liable to violate standards of honesty and due care in his or her vocation and in public life.

The cost of plagiarism is borne by both the plagiarist and her or his community in a number of ways. In the article "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism" (2003), the Council of Writing Program Administrators notes,

Understanding, augmenting, engaging in dialogue with, and challenging the work of others are part of becoming an effective citizen in a complex society. Plagiarism does not simply devalue the institution and the degree it offers; it hurts the inquirer, who has avoided thinking independently and has lost the opportunity to participate in broader social conversations.

Consequences

The consequences for plagiarism are severe. As outlined in the Christ College Student Handbook, they may include not only a zero on the plagiarized assignment but failing the course in which the plagiarism occurred, suspension, or expulsion.

How to Avoid It

The most blatant instance of plagiarism is when a writer copies and pastes material written by another and presents it as their own writing without acknowledging the source. In addition to avoiding such outright cheating, one also needs to be aware that source material can be incorporated in academic or professional writing in three ways. Each way requires its own kind of care to deal responsibly with sources and avoid plagiarism:

1. **Quoting:** when using the exact words of a source, one must stick to the original words exactly and acknowledge the source. In terms of format, one must:
 - a. *enclose the borrowed words* with quotation marks or, with longer passages, set them off by indenting them;
 - b. *indicate omissions from the original with ellipses (. . .) and additions with brackets []*; and
 - c. *acknowledge the source* of the words in a signal phrase, parenthetical citation, footnote or endnote; APA format requires signal phrases or parenthetical citations.

2. **Paraphrasing:** this is using one's own words to present information or ideas in nearly the same number of words as the original. The original source must be acknowledged (cited) using proper APA format. In addition to citing the source, to avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing, one must take care to change the original in two ways:
 - a. *in words*, by using one's own phrasing that is noticeably *different from the original wording*; and
 - b. *in sentence structure*, by *rearranging the order* of clauses and phrases so that one is not copying the structural language strategies of the original.Paraphrases are often valuable when changing the original can achieve greater clarity for the intended audience or when such changes allow the writer to more neatly fit the paraphrased material into the context of the larger argument the writer is making. If one cannot sufficiently differentiate an attempted paraphrase from the original, it may be just as well to quote the original, in whole or in parts.

3. **Summarizing:** this is drastically condensing the original passage into a brief statement of its essential meaning, free of details. Whereas a paraphrase will be nearly the same length as the original, a summary will be much shorter. Summaries are valuable when one needs to present the main idea(s) of a long passage or of a whole work. To avoid plagiarism, one *must acknowledge the source of the ideas*. Borrowed ideas must be acknowledged as well as borrowed words.

To avoid plagiarism when summarizing or paraphrasing, it is helpful to put the ideas in one's own words without looking at the original text. It is also important to check a

paraphrase against the original and change it further if it seems too close in wording or sentence structure.

While researching, it helps to use personal codes in one's notes to distinguish one's own words and ideas from those of sources. It's also important to keep a clear written record of the key bibliographical elements of sources consulted: authors, titles, publishers, publication dates, volume numbers, page numbers and so on (including URLs and dates of access for Web material).

The rules for formatting and citing source material apply to all sources, in any media: print, Internet, broadcast audio or video, and personal conversation.

Common Knowledge

Research papers and research-based writing will contain a great deal of sourced material, and one should err on the safe side when unsure whether or not to cite. However, it's also important to know what does not need to be cited. The key term here is *common knowledge*, which means information that is known by your audience without their having to look it up, or more exactly, as defined in "Avoiding Plagiarism" (2006) by the Purdue University Online Writing Lab, information that is found "undocumented in at least five credible sources." What is considered common knowledge will vary depending on the intended audience. The range of information in physics that is considered common knowledge among physics professors is much greater than the range on the same subject for a general reading audience.

Resources for Information and Exercises

The basic definition of plagiarism should be clear. Knowing how to apply the definition and developing habits that will ensure that you avoid it are not as simple. It is your responsibility to understand this issue thoroughly, to act in good faith, and to raise questions with your instructors when you are in doubt. To help you gain certainty and confidence about this issue, the following resources include information and exercise that may be useful:

Avoiding plagiarism. (2006). Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL).

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

Hacker, D. *A Writer's Reference* (6th ed., pp. 344-347, 418-421). (2007). Boston:

Bedford/St. Martin's. Relevant exercises are available from the online companion

to this print source at www.dianahacker.com/writersref at Research Exercises >

E-ex APA 2—1 through APA 2—5.

References

Avoiding plagiarism. (2006). Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL). Retrieved

July 2, 2007, from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

Defining and avoiding plagiarism: The WPA statement on best practices. (2003). The

Council of Writing Program Administrators. Retrieved July 2, 2007, from

<http://wpacouncil.org/positions/plagiarism.html>

Hacker, D. (2007). Glossary of research terms. Retrieved July 2, 2007, from

http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p05_c13_s1.html#p05_c13_s1_g1_g13