



Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a funny word with a funny spelling. In fact, you may think the word plagiarism is spelled incorrectly at the top of this handout. It's not, though. I checked.

Another funny thing about plagiarism is that it seems much more complicated than it actually is. Scary plagiarism nightmares are in fact unnecessary, especially considering all the other great stuff you can have nightmares about.

To rid yourself of scary plagiarism nightmares, all you need is some basic information about plagiarism: what it is, what causes it and how to avoid it.

What It Is

Plagiarism actually has nothing to do with *plagues* of locusts flying about the classroom or hopping on your paper. In fact, according to the *MLA Handbook*, (Gibaldi, 30) the word plagiarism is a derivative of the Latin word *plagiarius*, which means *kidnapper*. Roughly defined, plagiarism is the purposeful or inadvertent use of the words or ideas of another person, without acknowledging their source through appropriate citation.

What Causes It

Writers commit plagiarism when they fail to cite someone else's ideas, or when they fail to use quotation marks when borrowing someone else's exact words. In other words, committing plagiarism is like stealing someone else's baby.

How to Avoid It

- When directly quoting from another source, use quotation marks to indicate which words are yours and which belong to the source.
- When paraphrasing, always credit your source.
- When creating a concise summary of information from several different sources, cite each source individually.
- Know the requirements of the particular citation style you are using (e.g. APA, CMS, MLA, AP or Scientific).

Citation

When Citation is Required

Information can be classified into two broad categories: retrievable and irretrievable. If the information you are using is retrievable, it should be cited *and* included in your bibliography. This includes information garnered from books, newspaper articles, journals, websites, interviews and classroom lectures. Even if you are borrowing only a few words from another source, if the words are essential to the author's expression, you should cite them.

If the information you are using is irretrievable, it must still be cited, but it should not be included in your bibliography. Ultimately, if you are unsure whether or not to cite your source, you should go ahead and cite it. Michelle's Maxim: It's better to "over cite" than to commit an oversight.

When Citation is *Not* Required

In some cases, citation is not required. Any information you have gleaned from personal experience is your own intellectual property, and you don't have to cite it.

Also, common phrases or familiar sayings are considered public domain, and do not require citation. However, you should be cautious when including them in your writing, as some familiar sayings are actually quotes. Misquoting in these instances, combined with a lack of citation, can reduce your credibility.

A Note on Academic Integrity

Because UWT assumes the highest academic integrity of its students, faculty and staff, the University makes no distinction between intentional and unintentional plagiarism. Both fall under the category of academic misconduct. The disciplinary sanctions that can be imposed for academic misconduct include academic warnings and reprimands, academic probation, and dismissal from the University.