



# Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when you use the words, thoughts, or ideas of someone else to support your claim and don't properly cite them as a source. This might be done purposely, trying to pass the words off as your own, or accidentally by failing to properly cite a source.

Either way it is considered cheating and should be avoided at all costs. It is better to be cautious and cite when there is any doubt rather than to possibly plagiarize.

## Ways to avoid plagiarism:

<p><b>Cite often</b> and properly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cite any ideas that are not your own, including summaries</li><li>• Be sure to include <i>in-text</i> parenthetical citation after <b>quotes</b> and <b>paraphrases</b></li><li>• Include all sources on the Works Cited or References page</li></ul>	<p>Use <b>quotation marks</b> around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• specific words or phrases from an author (direct quotes)</li><li>• ideas, theories, and any information that is not your own</li><li>• <b>3</b> or more consecutive words from a source</li></ul>
<p><b>Cite as you write!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Although it might seem easier to save the citations for later, you risk mixing up your sources and accidentally not citing a source</li><li>• Organize and take notes as you do your research</li><li>• Include your in-text citations as you add them to your paper</li></ul>	<p><b>Other Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• use a block quote when a quotation has <b>40</b> or more words</li><li>• avoid <i>self-plagiarism</i>: don't recycle papers and presentations from previous assignments</li><li>• don't rely too much on direct quotes</li></ul> <p style="text-align: center;">“ ”</p>

## What you *don't* have to cite:

- Your own ideas, findings, and conclusions.
- Common knowledge:
  - public domain facts that are contained in multiple reference materials.  
*e.g. George Washington was the first President of the United States*
  - widely known phrases, expressions, and sayings.  
*e.g. The early bird gets the worm*
- Common terms and knowledge within a field:  
*e.g. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs* (in Psychology or Child Development courses)

**When in doubt, cite!!!**



# Strategies for Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is taking the words of another and making it your own by using different words and sentence structures than the original.

It still counts as plagiarism if you keep the original sentence structure while switching the author's words with synonyms. For example:

Original text:

The teen driver ran his car off the road while driving over 100 mph last night.

Plagiarized text:

A young adult drove his automobile off the highway while driving very quickly yesterday.

Properly paraphrased text:

The previous day a young driver lost control while driving his vehicle at a high speed (Smith, 2015).

1. Read the source material several times, without stopping to take notes as you go.
2. Try to recall what main points you read without consulting the source material again (keep the book closed and see what you come up with).
3. Be sure you understand the source material and can identify the main idea(s).
4. Write down in your own words what you understood as the main point(s).
  - It helps if you pretend you are explaining it to another person who has not read the source!
5. Repeat the process until you have a version that is in your own words and accurately interprets what the source text says.
6. If you can't paraphrase using only your own words, be sure to use quotation marks around unique phrases from the original that you do use (and don't forget to cite, too!).  
For example:

Original text:

"...and the biggest lie of all is that there is one, set, specific, appropriate, formal way to communicate in America" (Young, 2009, p. 20).

Plagiarized text:

The biggest lie of all is the idea of there being a Standard English.

Properly paraphrased text:

Young (2009) claims that "the biggest lie of all" is the very idea of there being a Standard English (p. 20).

## Additional Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism/Paraphrasing

- Keep a separate Word document of sources
- Use color coding in your paper—highlight sentences that you need to cite in the same color as the source on your References page
  - In Microsoft Word, store your sources under the "References" tab OR use web-based reference organization tools like Zotero or RefWorks
- Add annotations or comments to sentences as you write
- Re-read your paper and make sure you have cited all quotes, summaries, and paraphrases
- If you're not sure whether or not a sentence is plagiarized, Google it. If it includes **3** or more words from any of the results, you need to cite it (and add that source to your references, if it's not there already).