

How to Avoid Plagiarism

During your college experience, you will most likely have to write a number of essays, assessments and other writing projects. Believe it or not, classes other than English Composition require essays as part of the class requirement. Writing well is a good skill to have not only in college, but also beyond as you will need to be well versed in written communication to succeed in life. Unfortunately there are some dishonest people who resort to plagiarism, direct copying of someone else's work.

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the direct copying of someone else's work and using it as your own, without citing the original author. Sometimes students do it unintentionally, while others plagiarize with hopes of not getting caught.

How Can You Avoid Plagiarism?

- You can avoid plagiarism by citing your sources. If you use someone's direct quote, then be sure to wrap the quote in quotation marks and refer to the source. If you are using a paragraph of information, be sure to paraphrase in your own words. By paraphrase, that means reword the whole paragraph, not just change a word here and there. Even if you do paraphrase, you should still cite the source of your findings so that you do not plagiarize the ideas of someone else. If you are referring to facts, then you must cite sources for unknown facts that may not be common knowledge to the reader.

- Do not wait until the last minute to write your paper. By procrastinating, you are setting yourself up for a desperate and quick attempt to finish your writing project. You may be tempted to throw together some findings and put them together claiming them as your own. Do not set yourself up for failure, instead manage your time wisely and you should have the time to complete your project in an efficient and honest manner.

- Learn how to cite! Surprisingly a lot of students do not know how to properly cite quotations, websites, and articles; therefore they may plagiarize and not even realize that they are copying work. If you do not know how to cite properly, then ask your professor for help on how to properly credit the work of an author. With so many students using web sources in their writing projects now, it is important to learn how to cite web sources as well. Your professor will be able to guide you on how to properly cite sources. It can be confusing; however knowing how to do it will save you from any accusations of plagiarism.

You Will Get Caught

Twenty years ago, you could probably plagiarize and had a minimal chance of getting caught, however with today's technology, it is very easy to determine whether or not a paper has been copied. Some professors will run their students' work across clearinghouses that help detect plagiarism. Other professors will be able to detect if a D student suddenly submits an A paper; it may just look odd and stand out, therefore prompting him/her to check for plagiarism. Sometimes taking a sentence from the essay and doing a simple Google search can be enough to detect whether or not the work was taken from somewhere/someone else.

In this day and age of the Internet it is tempting to copy and paste your findings from another source and then pass them off as your own. Think about it, you would be really upset if you found a paper you worked so hard on, sitting out on the Internet with someone else's name on it claiming credit. College can be overwhelming and stressful, however you still have to be honest in your writing. It is important to be ethical and truthful.

Properly cite your work!

Use these resources:
Assembling a List of Works Cited

Works Cited - MLA Style
How to Cite Sources from the Web
Don't Cite Wikipedia!
How to Properly Paraphrase