



Division of Academic Affairs Frederick Douglass Library

Plagiarism

What is Plagiarism?

The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers 6th edition (2003) defines plagiarism as:

"... A form of cheating that has been defined as "the false assumption of authorship: the wrongful act of taking the product of another person's mind and presenting it as one's own. Plagiarism involves two kinds of wrongs. Using another person's ideas or expressions without acknowledging that person's work constitutes intellectual theft. Passing off another person's ideas, information, or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage constitutes fraud" (p.66).

It is a simple matter to avoid plagiarism.

- **You must tell the reader in the body or end/foot notes the title, author, and pages of your source, NOT JUST THE WORKS CITED PAGE**
- **If you use information from web sites or databases you still need to cite where you got the information.**

It is **NOT** plagiarism to cite information that is considered common knowledge, for example, Martin Luther King's birth date, nursery rhymes, or folk sayings.

People come up with many excuses for not citing sources of information correctly:

- I read the article and then put it in my own words.
- I listed the book in my works cited page.
- If it is on the web anyone can use it.
- I took notes from an article and accidentally put them in my paper.

Plagiarism is Plagiarism whether it is accidental or not.

Penalties for Plagiarism

Depending on the extent, intent, and policies of school, plagiarism may carry the following penalties:

- Dismissal from and failure of the class
- Loss of credit for all classes taken during a semester
- Academic probation, fines, permanent dismissal from the UMES

You can review UMES' plagiarism policy at:

http://www.umes.edu/deps/administration/academic_affairs/PlagiarismPolicyStatementA.pdf

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Examples of Plagiarism

1: Outright copying of the original excerpt into your paper: Do not take **all or part** of a quotation without informing the reader of where you got the information.

2: Substitution of words: Rearranging words, omitting words, or changing a word here and there is plagiarism if you do not inform the reader where you got the information.

3: Copying suitable phrases: This is still plagiarism. Do not intersperse large portions of the original quote through your work. You still need to inform the reader where you got the information.

4: Paraphrasing: Paraphrasing is plagiarism! You still need to give credit for the source of your information.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

Plagiarism often occurs when you have not organized your ideas around a topic statement. Taking time to construct a thesis statement makes it much easier to choose appropriate material. Structuring the research in this way allows you to keep track of the sources consulted during the construction of the paper.

What is the best way to avoid plagiarism?

- Use your own words and ideas.
- Give credit for copied, edited/adapted or paraphrased materials.
- Don't change words in an attempt to make someone else's work your own.
- When you copy information **ALWAYS** put it in quotation marks.
- Paraphrase but be careful not to simply rearrange or make slight wording changes.
- Acknowledge sources such as maps, tables, music (both words and notes) or graphs which you acquired in another source whether it is in print or electronic format.
- You should cite every piece of information including facts, figures, statistics, personal opinions and/or arguments.
- Enclose all quotations with a beginning and ending quotation mark followed by a parenthetical reference.
- When using information from a web page, print it out. This will give you the URL and the date you printed it, making it easier to cite and find the page later if need be.

The MLA Handbook (2003) recommends taking the following steps to avoid plagiarism:

- "Make a list of the writers and viewpoints you discovered in your research and use this list to double-check the presentation of materials in your paper
- Keep the following three categories distinct in your notes: 1) your ideas; 2) your summaries of other people's ideas; and 3) exact wording you copy
- Identify the sources of all materials you borrow whether it be exact wording, paraphrases, ideas, arguments, or facts
- Check with your instructor when you are uncertain about your use of sources" (p.75).

It is *YOUR* responsibility to list your source and to identify it properly.

Works Cited

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers 6th edition. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003.