How to Recognize and Avoid Plagiarising
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Recording ideas and evidence for readers (in text) or viewers (graphically) has been a key facet of human social development. In the modern world, scholarship extends human knowledge in ways that may be abstract or practical. It also passes learning from one generation to the next. Each scholar and researcher—student or professional—is responsible for presenting original work. That work is made credible by identifying other writing that influenced their ideas and conclusions, which may be other research, comments, or artistic expressions; creative writing adds dimensions to the human experience.

College students are intimately involved with other people’s words and ideas: reading them in texts, discussing them in classes, hearing them in lectures, and using them into their own writing. As learners, students participate in scholarship and are thus required to follow the same standards for originality as professionals.

Repeating or restating ideas and expressions of someone else's ideas is fine, so long as readers and writers at every level follow long-established principles of integrity, originality, and verifiability. Principles are translated into practice in the form of standards and styles; using them not only acknowledges individual contributions to human knowledge, they reinforce the credibility of scholarship. Learning to use standards and style is part of becoming a professional in your field. Plagiarism compromises both your learning and the fundamental nature of scholarship (making original contributions to human knowledge)—and can cost you big. Working professionals can lose a job over plagiarism. Students can lose credit for completing an assignment, can fail an entire class, and in serious cases, can be expelled from school. We function in a cut-and-paste world, but the technologically simple act that helps us get around in the digital world is a bad model for a learning environment. Cut-and-paste is the opposite of creative thinking.

"How to Recognize and Avoid Plagiarism" is designed around examples illustrating what plagiarism is (and is not). As you move through the module you will complete exercises that model habits and writing techniques to avoid plagiarism, and will complete assessments to judge how well you understand the principles and practices involved in responsible writing.

Let's admit up front that reading about plagiarism won't be either fun or very interesting. No one can make you read carefully or pay attention—but it just might help keep you in school, so it is probably worth your attention.

What is plagiarism and why does anyone care?
Boiled down, plagiarism means passing off someone else’s work or ideas in a form that suggests they are your own. Copying all or part of a Website or document into your work, repeating someone's arguments or ideas without noting where they came from, or presenting an image without a correct citation, each constitutes plagiarism.

Plagiarism a form of intellectual theft that can be intentional or unintentional; both carry the same penalties.

Intentional plagiarism can be as serious as copying an entire paper from somewhere, or as seemingly as minor as lifting a clever phrase from another writer. Either action (and everything in between) involves
you making choice: you have taken something that did not belong to you and claimed to your readers that it was your own creation. Plagiarism of this type is black and white because dishonesty does not have a sliding scale—you have either plagiarized or not. Intentional plagiarism is morally inexcusable and may be illegal. It is an act of willful dishonesty that breaks institutional honor codes and provides a basis for formal discipline if you are a student.

Unintentional plagiarism results from either laziness or carelessness. It is never genuinely “accidental”—and the possible penalties still apply. It might result from neglecting to insert a citation while you are writing, or lifting text from your poorly taken research notes, or pasting a block of text from a source without a proper citation. If challenged, unintentional plagiarism can be defended, but the root problem still exists—you have either plagiarized or you have not, and YOU are not the one who decides that.

Plagiarism and College Students
For a student, handing in a test, paper, or assignment is the same as “publication” and makes an explicit claim of original authorship. Any assignment turned in for a grade or credit that has text or ideas copied from another work is admissible as prima facia (“before the fact”—proof of thought before acting) evidence of plagiarism.

Scholarly databases and the World Wide Web have become rich and accessible sources to allow professionals to communicate about their work and to help students learn. Both are great source of information for study that involves research and writing. Both professors and students are justifiably concerned about avoiding plagiarism since it is easy to copy from electronic text and images. Keep in mind that if it is easy to locate material to support a research and writing assignment, it is just as easy for a professor to locate and document the source you exploited.

Remember this:
- Just as with copyright infringement, there is no assumption of “innocent until proven guilty” with plagiarism: if accused, you are guilty until you can prove originality (innocence)
- Plagiarism shares the same burden of proof as copyright infringement—the writer has to prove their work was original and not using another's work unfairly

Plagiarism has a high cost
Students often plagiarise to meet an assignment deadline or to raise a grade, but it is a shortcut with a high cost. Simply turning in an assignment with your name on it constitutes proof of guilt in the case of plagiarism, which makes the act subject to sanction, even if the writer claims that it was accidental. Professionals can lose a job over plagiarism. For a student, even unintentional plagiarism can result in academic discipline; intentional plagiarism can get you expelled from school. Either one will affect grades and class standing, may compromise collegiate financial aid, and will become part of your permanent student record. Those consequences will affect your career options later in life. Plagiarism may look like an easy way to finish an assignment or show up well as a student, but it is a dangerously expensive educational "shortcut." Presenting only your original work is good business strategy.

What writers do to avoid plagiarism
Avoiding plagiarism is strictly a writer’s responsibility, and it exists whether or not another reader ever sees your work. Once you have presented your work to readers, you cannot influence them further about what you have written. Only readers or reviewers decide whether or not a writer has plagiarized another writer. Be careful to leave nothing in any stage of your writing that would raise a question about whether your work uses someone else’s work untruthfully.
To avoid accidental plagiarism in your writing, you must do both of two things: 1) present your own ideas and expressions (especially when writing about someone else’s work); 2) identify what you use from another’s words or ideas and its origin, including things like:

- conclusions, statements, opinion, or theory
- facts, statistics, graphs, drawings—any pieces of information—that are not common knowledge
- actual spoken or written words
- your own summary, paraphrase, restatement, or revision of another person’s spoken or written words

Being smart about how you do research and take notes will help a lot. This tutorial walks you through a series of examples and activities to help you recognize what plagiarism looks like and what strategies you can use to avoid it. Words in **bold** are terms defined at the end of the document.

**Quotation**

We’ll start by talking through what seems like a direct contradiction: using someone else's words in your work, without change: a quotation. Learning to use quotations strategically is a good way to reinforce the ideas or arguments in your work.

**Terms and conditions**

Quotation is nothing more than including someone else’s words in your work, usually by copying them exactly. Wait— isn’t that plagiarizing? Well, no. Quoting is a perfectly acceptable practice in scholarship if your use of a quote employs ALL of the following three conditions:

- **It is short** There are no standards for how much text may be quoted, but it is always good practice to quote as little as possible.
- **It is exact** Wording in a quote must be exactly—exactly—as it appears in the source, or marked otherwise (more later). The words should not be pulled out of context or “misquoted” by the user.
- **It is identified** The precise source of a quotation is given in the standard documentation style used by the discipline.

Why use a quotation? Mostly because it allows a writer to demonstrate that they have done their homework, and that previous author's work is directly relevant to what they are saying (either for or against, or some mix of both). Inserting quotations is a way to engage and persuade the reader by bringing authoritative statements, assertions, or language to their attention.

Keep in mind that too much of a good thing is still too much. Direct quotes are most effective when they are used only occasionally as emphasis. You, as the writer, are responsible for producing the main arguments and stating evidence something that a quote cannot do alone.

**When do I use a quote?**

A quote is a use where a writer or presenter pulls a source’s language out of their work and puts it in their own work for emphasis. Learning how to use quoted material is an important skill strengthening good writing. Keep in mind that a quote is different than the citation that identifies it: a quote always requires a citation, but not all citations document quotes.

Quotes should never be used to present an argument—that is a writer’s job. A quote is “an appeal to authority.” Use quotes only as evidence or authority for a statement already made or implied in the work.
There are two style methods for presenting properly quoted material: as an in-text quote, or as a block quote. We'll talk about those separately, below. But before discussing how to structure a quote, let's hit a basic question: what exactly is a quote, and when do you use one in writing?

**Structure: In-text quotations**

In-text quotations are worked into your text so that they flow relatively naturally into your ideas, phrasing, and language. They are always set off with quote marks, meaning that the text you use is indicated as exact or precise—quoted—by putting quotation marks—“”—around the section taken directly from the source. The marks are used to set off a quotation from your own writing.

Depending on how you choose to make the quote, in-text quotations can stand alone as a sentence and always have a note identifying a citation (in example A the citation is indicated with a raised number for a footnote or endnote):

*Example A:* The experiment showed that wear to gear-tooth surfaces of non-carburized steels was consistent between sample sets. “We must conclude that wear in this design is a function not only of gear hardness, but of shaft vibration.”16 Two other teams repeated the study and found. . . .

or they can be run in as part of your own sentence. Usually run-in quotes consist of only a few words and the writer works to make the quote make sense in the context and flow of their own words (example B uses an in-text citation):

*Example B:* In the second story the story hides the author's statement of general truth until the story's main action has concluded and the narrator explains to the reader that old men think they want a second wife "when what they are chasing is youth" (Kroll 1936, 337).

**Structure: Block quotes**

Depending on the style you use block quotes typically do not require quotation marks because the indented text margin and space above and below the quote set it off from the writer's own text. The fact that the text is set differently in the margins than your text indicates that it is an extract from another work.

Style manuals handle block quotes differently, but a general, unwritten "rule of thumb" is that a quote of five or more lines in text should be set as a block quote. Consult the style manual your discipline uses to confirm how block quotes are set and cited in text.

Here is an example of a block quote as might be used in a history paper (this example quotes a real work: Gordon S. Wood, The Purpose of the Past, p.194).

*Example C:* Writers have argued for years about absolute truth in history. Gordon Wood explains that sometimes the absolute factual "truth" is not what a culture or nation wants, for their own immediate reasons.

Correcting the heritage that distorts and violates the authentic history of persons and documents in the past is presumably what critical historians are supposed to do. That may be appropriate when we are correcting obvious myths like the stories of Parson Weems about George Washington. But what about the uses that Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. made of Jefferson and his statements about equality? By the precise standards of critical history, these uses were part of a false heritage that it is presumably the responsibility of historians to correct. Yet these distorted heritages
are precisely what many people want and perhaps need in order to keep the past alive and meaningful. Should we critical historians tamper with this popular memory?25

Wood does not answer his own question directly, but concludes by discussing the famous line attributed falsely to Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a woman?," noting that sometimes the power of the myth is more important than the truthful fact behind the myth.

Notice that the author introduces the block quote by talking about the source (Gordon Wood), and in the process explains why the block quote is important to the argument in the paper. The quote is not used to explain (that is the author's job); instead, it is used as evidence to reinforce what the paper's author has discovered in their research.

Keep in mind that lengthy quotes might require permission.

Structure: Tweaking a quote
A writer may shorten, explain, and sometimes correct quoted material to make it fit sensibly in their work. Any change to a text made by a later writer must be evident to a reader. This can be done in different ways (all of these examples use in-text citations, but citations could be foot- or endnotes as well):

1) A quotation can be shortened. The deleted text within a quoted sentence is indicated with an ellipsis (the three dots in the middle of the sentence; all three together are one punctuation mark).
   
   Example D: The research concluded the reaction provided “clear evidence that . . . the fundamental chemistry of the process was being interrupted,” although at what point the interruption occurs was still to be demonstrated (Tinker/Walsh, 3776).

2) Quotes taken from different part of the same paragraph or page would be quoted separately but cited together.

   Example E: Ellis observed that “the decay of the family has long been a favorite theme of social alarmists” but that in a sense they are “completely justified” (Ellis, 21).

3) Quotes from widely separated parts of a work, or from more than one work are typically quoted and documented independently.

   Example F: The essayist says on one hand that geologic time “is itself only fractional when compared to universe’s scale of creation and destruction” but in saying so contradicts himself, having stated earlier that it “is essentially the same scale that bounds the stars and planets” (Smith, 86, 13).

   Example G: Citing the report, one city official suggested that “youth are less likely to be involved in violence” because of the program, but another representative whose more stringent bill was voted down dismisses the report as “hasty conclusions based on inadequate study” (Gazette-Times, 2012 Apr 7; Herald-Tribune, 2012 Apr 10).

4) A writer may also insert their own clarifying or explanatory comments into a quote by setting off their addition with opening and closing brackets—[   ]. Bracketed text may qualify or explain a point, identify a referent, replace or explain an abbreviation, and sometimes clarify usage or add necessary punctuation for the reader.
Example H: The CEO finally decided “not to file a challenge to the court’s acceptance of *amicus* briefs [comments on legal points filed by parties not involved in the lawsuit]” to counter an assertion that DetCo feared its case was built on inappropriate precedents.

Example I: In the Saturday-evening address his biographer “would not attempt to explain how the reclusive novelist would allow them [the anonymous *Times* reviewer] to go unchallenged.”

Example J: The practitioner was certain that “the case has been properly diagnosed by DSM-IV-TR [*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition, revised*] criteria” and that “clinical professionals had followed established standards.”

Example K: In a touching letter to a close friend after the skirmish, the commanding captain admitted being “sikken[ed] by the loss[,] and [he] made a chanct to see his soljurs as thay lay on the feeld of battel.”

Of course, each example H–K would have a note or citation documenting the source of the quote. The same principles apply to changes a writer might choose to make in block quotes.

*When you DON’T need quotes (but probably want a citation)*

Keep in mind that some things are common knowledge and do not need to be either quoted or cited. Facts that can be found in a variety of places and are likely known by a lot of people are considered common knowledge.

Example L: George W. Bush was elected President of the United States in 2004.

The fact in example L is generally known information and would not need to be documented in a paper. Facts that are not generally known, even if they are not quotes, are documented in a citation. Citations not only provide a way to prove a writer has done their homework, they are evidence readers use to help them determine whether the fact (and writer) is credible.

Always document a comment, opinion, or interpretation made ABOUT facts.

Example M: Despite serving two terms as president, George W. Bush was popularly elected only once, in 2004.


Example M is an assertion by the writer, stated as fact. By itself it would not need a citation, but supportive documentation would certainly be required for the assertion to be received as credible. In example N, the idea that “Bush’s relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation” is not a fact but an interpretation, even though it appears in a published source. You would cite the source of that interpretation, as is shown one way in the example. The first statement, though stated as fact, would be considered opinion or interpretation and its source should be cited as well.

**Paraphrasing**

Paraphrase is probably the practice you will use most often when weaving research sources into your writing as a student, particularly in essays and papers. A paraphrase presents someone else’s ideas or evidence but puts them before a reader in your own words. You might recognize this as summary, or
restatement. Although you use your own words to paraphrase, a writer still always acknowledges the source they use.

Paraphrasing requires two things of a student: first, that they have located and studied sources; and second, that they have studied well enough to identify, understand, and communicate the key points of evidence or argument in a source.

The examples below show how relying on a paraphrase helps a student grasp a topic for discussion, and how careless paraphrasing can be viewed by a reader (like a professor) as the actionable offense of plagiarism.

When is it not a quote—but not paraphrasing either?

Before showing you how to paraphrase effectively, pay attention to a common circumstance that gets inexperienced writers into trouble all the time: deciding that a source states something much better than they could themselves, and tweaking a cut-and-paste section so the words are not identical to the source. Writers who do this want a shortcut to completing an assignment; what they are giving up is real learning, and what they are doing is clearly plagiarism.

Changing some words from text that has been copied and pasted from somewhere is still plagiarism, even if you cite the source, because the thoughts behind it are not yours, they are your source's.

Here’s is a short piece of ORIGINAL text from pages 16–17 of The Impending Crisis (1976), a US history book by David M. Potter:

Example O: The American victory over Mexico and the acquisition of the Southwest had sealed the triumph of national expansion, but it had also triggered the release of forces of sectional dissent. Much of the national harmony had rested upon the existence of a kind of balance between the northern and southern parts of the United States. The decision to fight the war had disturbed this balance, and the acquisition of a new empire which each section desired to dominate endangered the balance further.

Here is an UNACCEPTABLE paraphrase that would be considered plagiarism:

Example P: Acquiring the Southwest in the war with Mexico had sealed the conquest of national expansion, but it had also prompted forces of sectional dissent. A lot of the national harmony had rested upon the existence of a balance between the southern and northern parts of the United States. The presidential decision to fight the conflict had upset this balance, and the acquisition of a new empire which each section desired to dominate threatened the balance even more.

What makes the attempt in example O plagiarism? The passage is considered plagiarism for two reasons: • the writer has only changed around a few words and phrases, or changed the order of the original’s sentences. • the writer has failed to cite a source for any of the ideas or facts.

If you do both OR EITHER of these things, you are plagiarizing. Let's be clear: even if you try to “make it your own” by changing wording and cite correctly, cutting and pasting from one or more sources is still plagiarism.
NOTE: The revision (example P) is also problematic because some word choices change the sense of the sentence in places (for example, “conquest of national expansion” in the second sentence misses the original’s emphasis on the treaty as a historical high point of national expansionism).

Acceptable paraphrasing
Here is the original text again, for comparison:

Example O: The American victory over Mexico and the acquisition of the Southwest had sealed the triumph of national expansion, but it had also triggered the release of forces of sectional dissention. Much of the national harmony had rested upon the existence of a kind of balance between the northern and southern parts of the United States. The decision to fight the war had disturbed this balance, and the acquisition of a new empire which each section desired to dominate endangered the balance further.

Here is an ACCEPTABLE paraphrase of Potter, which would be acceptable in a paper or on an exam:

Example Q: David Potter explains that the treaty transferring the Southwest from Mexico to the US presented a new problem for American politics. Prior to the Mexican Cession, Congressional representation of northern and southern states had been reasonably balanced. Each section saw the new territory as a place for their interest to expand, and their interest required political organization and legislative representation favorable to their established interests. Thus, the war’s successful conclusion itself unbalanced the nation (Potter, 16–17).

Why is this passage acceptable? This is acceptable paraphrasing because the writer:
- uses their own words to accurately relay the ideas from the original text
- lets the reader know the source of the information (by both a direct attribution in the text, and a citation)

Using paraphrase and quotation
Here is Potter's text once more:

Example O: The American victory over Mexico and the acquisition of the Southwest had sealed the triumph of national expansion, but it had also triggered the release of forces of sectional dissention. Much of the national harmony had rested upon the existence of a kind of balance between the northern and southern parts of the United States. The decision to fight the war had disturbed this balance, and the acquisition of a new empire which each section desired to dominate endangered the balance further.

Here is an example of quotation and paraphrase used together, which is also ACCEPTABLE:

Example R: The treaty transferring the Southwest from Mexico “sealed the triumph of national expansion, but it had also triggered the release of forces of sectional dissention.” Prior to the Mexican Cession northern and southern sectional representation had been reasonably balanced in Congress. Each section saw the new territory as a place for their economic patterns to expand. Their interest required adequate political organization and legislative representation. Thus, the “acquisition of a new empire which each section desired to dominate endangered the balance further” (Potter, 16–17).

Why is this passage acceptable? This is acceptable paraphrasing because the writer:
- accurately presents the ideas from the original passage
• gives credit for the ideas in this passage
• indicated which part is taken directly from the source by putting the passages in quotation marks
• cites the source specifically

NOTE: If the writer had used the quoted phrases or sentences in a paper without putting quotation marks around them, they would unquestionably be plagiarizing, even though using only a small portion of the original work. Using another writer’s phrases or sentences without presenting them within quotation marks is considered plagiarism EVEN IF the writer later correctly cites the source of the unmarked phrases or sentences.

Practical paraphrasing
There are several good methods to learn paraphrasing and to paraphrase acceptably. Here are two:

1) Read carefully over what you want to paraphrase until you feel you understand the points the writer is making. Cover the text with your hand or close the book or site so you can’t see any of it (and so aren’t tempted to use the text as a “guide”). Write out the idea in your own words without peeking. Edit the work yourself to ensure you are saying what you want to communicate, then check your paraphrase against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words, and that the information and way you phrase general ideas is accurate. Make a note clearly identifying the source. Congratulations—you have just written a paraphrase!

2) As you read, created a bulleted list of points an author makes, set the text aside, and then using your list just relate those points in your own words. Your writing may not be as clear and straightforward as the source. That's fine—at least it will be yours.

Once you have paraphrased a source, you can work your own thoughts into the text, contradict what is discussed, or add additional evidence to support the paraphrase. Both methods of paraphrasing can be used with more than one source. In fact, mixing the ideas of similar sources together in your own words and presenting the result in a rational manner is the essence of research writing.

With either method you will always document or cite the source(s) you have just paraphrased; citing the source at the end of the paragraph will ensure you have left a clear trail through your research for readers. Keep in mind that a single note can refer to one or more sources, but that each should be directly relevant to the point that is cited

Including complete, accurate citations
Documenting one’s research by including citation or references to source material not only provides a way to prove a writer has done their homework, they are evidence readers use to help them determine whether the fact (and writer) is credible.

Probably the first skill that writers should develop to reduce the likelihood of plagiarism in their work is to learn to document correctly the sources they use. Documentation of sources, in the shorthand form of a citation, provides information in enough detail and in a specific format to allow a reader to locate the words or ideas being cited. A citation is something like a “street address” for the source.

There are different ways of structuring citations, and "what is acceptable" varies between disciplines. Depending on the style generally accepted for your discipline, a citation may be set up as an in-text citation, footnote, or endnote. Word processing functions make creating notes into an easy process, but the form (citation style) and content is still your responsibility. This tutorial has used one form of in-text citations; other note forms will vary, though some styles share similarities.
Citations follow specific rules about what sort of data is and is not used in a citation, and in what standardized form the data will appear. Both the Parrish Writing Center (third floor of the Humanities Building) and library reference desk have copies of style manuals to help you format citations. Be sure to follow the style manual for the discipline in which you are writing.

Get in the habit of inserting a complete, accurate citation as you take notes or draft your writing. Never put off or omit notes, assuming you will return later to insert the reference. If you plan to confirm a detail or insert a citation later, mark the spot clearly, perhaps by inserting a note that says nothing more than “re-check source”.

There are way too many citation standards to talk about individually in this tutorial. Ask about style manuals at the campus writing center or library reference desk.

**Working with drafts and reviews**

* Scheduling
  One of the most important ways to insulate yourself against an accusation of plagiarism is to keep clear notes, and to maintain copies of your drafts as you go along. That may involve changing your writing habits (or developing good habits). The haste of throwing together a last-minute paper increases the likelihood that you may miss a citation, forget quotation marks, or not have time to do a qualified paraphrase of a source, or recheck your work.

  - Start early—take the first step on the day the assignment is given: establish a schedule to complete the work
  - Break the assignment into discrete sequential tasks
  - Schedule tasks, dividing larger steps into parts that are accomplished on successive days
  - Do what you have planned, and revise the plan as necessary
  - Leave time at the end of the schedule for doing nothing
  - Review your work for potential problems before submitting

This only works with unintended plagiarism—if you intentionally plagiarize and are caught, you have earned what you get.

* File maintenance
  “File maintenance” is one of those good ideas that is so obvious it is overlooked by nearly every college student. Keep separate digital files of sources, drafts, and completed work for each class.

* Working with drafts
  Occasionally a student gets into trouble when they try to writing save time and throw together a draft of a paper, one that may draw too heavily on a source and lack proper citations, then ask for a professor’s review suggestions. If the professor later forgets that the submission was intended for comment only, they may mis-remember the paper as a completed submission and therefore as grounds for referral to Student Discipline.

To keep a draft from involving you in a disciplinary action, get in the habit of taking four simple steps as you complete writing assignments:

- Don't single-draft anything (which means starting early to avoid last-minute writing). Work far enough ahead to leave time for properly paraphrasing, quoting, and citing sources fully at every stage of your writing, beginning with your notes, and always make a full citation so you never have to track down bibliographic details

- Identify any document you work on—print or electronic (especially one you ask someone to review)—with the current date, the date the work is due for class, and a return-to-me date
• Until you print or submit the final version, clearly mark at least the first page of any printed or electronic copy as a “Draft” or “For comment only” so there is no question where it stands in your writing process (header or footer functions in word processing software is great for this)
• Keep copies of your written work at each major stage of production. Doing so allows you to demonstrate a process of original creation (and provides a backup copy if you lose a final draft).

The best defense against unintentional plagiarism is good research and writing habits.

**Real writers pay attention to copyrights and permissions**

People sometimes confuse plagiarism with copyright. Copyright covers only some works, while plagiarism covers everything. Plagiarism is a moral issue; copyright is a legal issue.

**Copyright**

Copyright is a legally stated list of rights belonging to the author of a work. It is not the same as plagiarism. Copyright law provides users with some exceptions to an author’s exclusive rights, a fair use, but “fair use” does not provide grounds or a defense for plagiarism. If you are challenged, the alleged infringer carries the legal burden of proof to show a source has been used fairly.

Some published material is not subject to copyright and is considered to be in the public domain. Work produced by government employees in their jobs, work for which copyright has expired (like Shakespeare’s plays) are two examples of materials in public domain. Intentional collaborative works, like Wikipedia, are often protected under flexible Creative Commons agreements. Because public domain is a legal status and not a moral one, the standards about what constitutes plagiarism still apply if you use works in public domain.

It is assumed that writing and presentations you produce for class assignments will not be shown or available beyond class. Once a student portfolio, project, or entry in any sort of competition is accessible beyond campus in any form, that work is no longer “educational.” Any text you might have quoted extensively (including poetry), any graph, photo, or illustration would require permission to include, even if you have correctly cited it.

**Permissions**

Permission simply means contacting a copyright owner with a request to use their material in your project or writing. If you do not receive written permission to use something, then it might still be used in your schoolwork (properly quoted and cited) but could not appear in something that would be circulated beyond campus (including a Web page). You might, however, paraphrase the text appropriately or produce a new graph or illustration based on the original, citing either one properly.

How much can you quote before seeking permission? There are no legal standards, but more than one or two sentences would probably be too much. Quotation, when lengthy, need permission. Better to paraphrase.

Citation is not a substitute for getting permission. Permission must be stated in a printed form (email counts, but texting would probably not). Keep a hard copy of any permission request and response, otherwise the courts consider that no permission has been granted.

Here is an example: say a student is constructing a Web page as a class project. If they copy graphics or visual information from other sites (but not layout or design elements), they must also provide information about the source in their own site or presentation. If that Web page is accessible only to class members and the professor, perhaps through course-management software like Blackboard, such use is
not a problem. But, Web pages are generally public and are accessible beyond the course; it might be a good idea to get permission from the Website’s owner before using graphics even in schoolwork. The current edition of the Chicago Manual of Style includes a section that is a good help for structuring permission requests. Copies are available in the library.

Habitual PQPCM
Making the effort to avoid plagiarism has great payoffs. It helps you learn more effectively, strengthens your writing skills, and ultimately provides a useful skill for any job involving ideas or writing. Lessening the likelihood of plagiarism involves adopting a few good writing habits.

1. Learn to paraphrase effectively. Present someone else’s ideas by restating and summarizing a text in your own words, being careful to do more than just rearrange or replace a few words.
2. Practice careful quotation, putting quotes—“ ”—around everything that comes directly from a text, and correctly use block quotes (extracts) for longer quotations. Be especially careful to identify quotes when taking notes from a source.
3. Get permission for any extensive use of quoted text and for individual graphic objects.
4. Create full, correct citations for sources you use, appropriate to the style for your discipline.
5. Date and clearly mark all drafts submitted for review and comment.

Paraphrase-quote-permission-cite-mark—PQPCM

Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>An amendment to text, usually a note, which specifies the precise source of a quote or idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright</td>
<td>Control over others’ use of one’s original work that by law (17 USC) belongs to the author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common knowledge</td>
<td>Facts that are widely known or available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Commons</td>
<td>An alternative to exclusive copyright control, where a creator states up front what users may do with a given work (<a href="http://www.creativecommons.org">www.creativecommons.org</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>The process of compiling accurate citations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair use</td>
<td>A limited right to quote another’s work and include it in your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase</td>
<td>Restating an idea to capture the concept without copying specific language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>Presenting someone else’s work or ideas as your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public domain</td>
<td>Works for which the author’s rights have expired, or never existed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission</td>
<td>Limited grant of authority by a copyright holder to use part of their work in a specific way (but only in that way)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation</td>
<td>Inserting a short, exact transcription from another source, set off by quotation marks or margin indents, and with the source correctly identified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Produced by the University of Tennessee at Martin, based on a Website maintained by Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.