

Lesson 2. Plagiarism and paraphrasing

Site: [INASP Moodle](#)
Course: Academic Writing Skills (2022)
Book: Lesson 2. Plagiarism and paraphrasing

Printed by: Chuong Nguyen
Date: Thursday, 26 May 2022, 3:43 PM

Table of contents

Plagiarism – what is it?

How does plagiarism happen?

Self-plagiarism

Paraphrasing

Activity: Is this an appropriate paraphrase?

Version 1

Version 2

Version 3

External resources

Plagiarism – what is it?

According to plagiarism.org, "**plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.**"

Plagiarism is considered an ethical violation in research. Studies into ethical violations in research show that:

- "Research misconduct—fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism—is an insidious problem in the scientific community today with the capacity to harm science, scientists, and the public." ([Research misconduct: The search for a remedy](#))
- "Levels of misconduct appear to be higher than in the past. This may reflect either a real increase in the incidence of fraud or a greater effort on the part of journals to police the literature." ([Retractions in the scientific literature: is the incidence of research fraud increasing?](#))
- "The percentage of scientific articles retracted because of fraud has increased ~10-fold since 1975." ([Misconduct accounts for the majority of retracted scientific publications: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences](#))

Why is plagiarism a serious matter?

Plagiarism signals to the research community that you are capable of academic dishonesty, which has severe consequences.

The [U.S. Office of Research Integrity](#) states that "*plagiarism can be a very serious form of ethical misconduct*" that often results in authors being discredited, having to resign from their posts and their papers being retracted by journals.

Ethical standards are extremely important in research; they guide everything from the questions that we ask and the topics that we investigate, through to how we present and share our findings. If we don't properly acknowledge how we have come to a particular conclusion or recommendation, then we have deceived our peers and manipulated the research process, whether knowingly or otherwise.



Article and video

Before we begin this lesson, we recommend that you:

1. [Read this blog by AuthorAID mentor Matt Hodgkinson who gives practical advice on how researchers can avoid plagiarism accusations.](#)
2. [Watch this 7-minute video by AuthorAID mentor Maha Bali who talks about plagiarism, how learning how to cite properly helps avoid plagiarism, and why we should be cautious about plagiarism checkers.](#)

You can go through this resource in any of these languages: English, French, Spanish or Vietnamese. Use the language drop-down setting near the top left corner (next to 'INASP Moodle') to change the language. Translation from English to the other languages is automatically done by Google Cloud Translation. INASP is not responsible for the quality of the translated content.

How does plagiarism happen?

The University of New South Wales in Australia has identified and offered solutions for [9 common scenarios that may lead to plagiarism](#).



Take a look at each scenario and solution. Can you relate to any of the 9 problems identified? Are the solutions practical for you?

Best practice: if in doubt, cite it!

Self-plagiarism

Self-plagiarism

Plagiarism can be complex enough to understand and avoid, and self-plagiarism adds another layer of information that we must learn. Self-plagiarism is defined by [Merriam-Webster](#) as "***the reuse of one's own words, ideas, or artistic expression (as in an essay) from pre-existing material especially without acknowledgment of their earlier use.***"

A common question researchers ask is: *Is it ok to reuse my methods section in more than one paper?* This is a legitimate question, but the answer is complex. In this blog, researcher Stephen Heard [identifies 3 things that make self-plagiarism a complex subject](#):

1. Copyright restrictions of the journal where you originally published your methods section;
2. Journal policies around using previously published text; and
3. Readers' needs.

He offers 5 practical solutions to help you remain transparent and ethical when reporting your methods. [Editage](#) also offers 5 ways to make it clear to journal editors that your methods have been, or are about to be published elsewhere.



Additional activity

As a separate activity outside of this module, we recommend that you go through [How to Recognize Plagiarism: Tutorials and Tests](#), designed by Indiana University. This resource is very thorough and can take several hours to complete, but you can divide your time into smaller sessions and learn at your own pace.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing can be scary! If it's not done correctly, you can end up accidentally plagiarising something, so it's important to understand how to paraphrase something well.

To paraphrase appropriately, there are a number of techniques you can use:

- change the words from your original source by using synonyms
- change the sentence structure from your original source so that it is more active
- acknowledge all your sources accurately
- clearly present your own viewpoint as separate from what you are citing

Learning how to paraphrase appropriately is therefore an important skill to have when building your argument.

Activity: Is this an appropriate paraphrase?

During this activity you will learn more about whether a paraphrase of a given text is appropriate or not.

This activity uses a paragraph from the article "*Emerging policy perspectives on geoengineering: An international comparison*" (Huttunen, Suvi, Emmi Skytén, and Mikael Hildén. *The Anthropocene Review* 2.1 (2015): 14-32).

You will see 3 paraphrased versions of the original paragraph and you have to reflect on whether the paraphrasing is appropriate, or whether it shows plagiarism.

Continue to the next page to get started.



Original versus paraphrase

Original text:

As a topic, geoengineering entered the policy sphere earlier in the USA than in the other countries. The oldest document we found was a hearing in the US House of Representatives from 1997 where a scientist mentions geoengineering as a topic worth exploring in response to climate change. In the USA the following references were from 2007 in hearings related to the environment, energy and resources. It is not until 2009 that thorough reports were made by the House of Representatives, Congressional Research Service and Government Accountability Office. An important characteristic of the American geoengineering discussion is the presence of lobbies and think tanks, some of which advocate fiercely for research or even deployment of geoengineering. In the UK, the House of Commons has published two committee reports on geoengineering, the first in 2008 as a part of a larger inquiry, 'Engineering in Government' and a second which focuses solely on the governance issues, 'The Regulation of Geoengineering', in 2010.

Now see the paraphrase of the above text:

Geoengineering came to the policy sphere earlier in the USA than in the other countries. The oldest example we found was a hearing in the US House of Representatives from 1997 where scientists mention geoengineering as a topic worth exploring in response to climate change. In the USA the following references were from 2007 in hearings related to the environment, energy and resources. An important characteristic of the American geoengineering discussion is the presence of lobbies and think tanks, some of which advocate fiercely for research or even deployment of geoengineering. In the UK, the House of Commons published two committee reports on geoengineering, the first in 2008 as a part of a larger inquiry, 'Engineering in Government' and a second on the governance issues, 'The Regulation of Geoengineering', in 2010.



Can you spot the differences between the original and the paraphrased version? Would you say that the paraphrasing has been done appropriately?

Click reveal to find out what we think.

Reveal

Version 2



Original versus paraphrase

We will use the same excerpt from the paper. A second paraphrased version is given below the original.

Original text:

As a topic, geoengineering entered the policy sphere earlier in the USA than in the other countries. The oldest document we found was a hearing in the US House of Representatives from 1997 where a scientist mentions geoengineering as a topic worth exploring in response to climate change. In the USA the following references were from 2007 in hearings related to the environment, energy and resources. It is not until 2009 that thorough reports were made by the House of Representatives, Congressional Research Service and Government Accountability Office. An important characteristic of the American geoengineering discussion is the presence of lobbies and think tanks, some of which advocate fiercely for research or even deployment of geoengineering. In the UK, the House of Commons has published two committee reports on geoengineering, the first in 2008 as a part of a larger inquiry, 'Engineering in Government' and a second which focuses solely on the governance issues, 'The Regulation of Geoengineering', in 2010.

Now see the paraphrase of the above text:

Geoengineering came to the policy sphere earlier in the USA than in the other countries. The oldest example was a US House of Representatives hearing from 1997 where scientists mention that geoengineering is worth exploring as an important topic, particularly in response to climate change. In the USA there were a number of references from 2007 in hearings related to the environment, energy and resources. It was only in 2009 that House of Representatives, Congressional Research Service and Government Accountability Office made thorough reports about geoengineering. An important characteristic of the American geoengineering discussion is the presence and role of lobbies and think tanks, who are strong advocates for research and deployment of geoengineering. In the UK, the House of Commons published two committee reports on geoengineering, 'Engineering in Government' in 2008, and 'The Regulation of Geoengineering', in 2010.



Can you spot the differences between the original and the paraphrased version? Would you say that the paraphrasing has been done appropriately?

Click reveal to find out what we think.

Reveal



Original versus paraphrase

We will use the same excerpt from the paper mentioned previously. A third paraphrased version is given below the original. Can you spot the differences between the original and the paraphrased version?

Original text:

As a topic, geoengineering entered the policy sphere earlier in the USA than in the other countries. The oldest document we found was a hearing in the US House of Representatives from 1997 where a scientist mentions geoengineering as a topic worth exploring in response to climate change. In the USA the following references were from 2007 in hearings related to the environment, energy and resources. It is not until 2009 that thorough reports were made by the House of Representatives, Congressional Research Service and Government Accountability Office. An important characteristic of the American geoengineering discussion is the presence of lobbies and think tanks, some of which advocate fiercely for research or even deployment of geoengineering. In the UK, the House of Commons has published two committee reports on geoengineering, the first in 2008 as a part of a larger inquiry, 'Engineering in Government' and a second which focuses solely on the governance issues, 'The Regulation of Geoengineering', in 2010.

Now see the paraphrase of the above text:

Huttunen et al (2015) note that geoengineering became part of USA policy discourse at least 10 years before it become part of UK policy discourse. They claim that the first mention of geoengineering in USA policy-making was in 1997, with the UK's parliament beginning discussions in 2008. Their study is important as it not only highlights geoengineering's link in the USA to "the environment, energy and resources" (2015: 19), but also highlights a dominant part of those early discussions, namely "the presence of lobbies and think tanks" (2015: 19).



Can you spot the differences between the original and the paraphrased version? Would you say that the paraphrasing has been done appropriately?

Click reveal to find out what we think.

Reveal

External resources

Please take your time to understand paraphrasing and plagiarism, as this is something more complex than we first realise.

There are lots of **free resources** to help you understand paraphrasing and plagiarism. At the end of this module, in the 'external resources and references' lesson, we have listed what we believe to be particularly useful resources that are currently available free of cost.