**What is Plagiarism?**

**Plagiarism** is the act of using another person's words, ideas, images, or any other intellectual property and presenting them as your own, without proper acknowledgment. It is essentially an act of **intellectual theft**.

It applies to all forms of media, not just written text, including:

* Ideas, opinions, or theories.
* The exact words of a speaker or writer.
* Data, statistics, graphs, and images.
* Paraphrasing or summarizing someone else's work without giving credit.
* Submitting a paper or project created by another person (buying papers online).

**Common Types of Plagiarism**

| Type | Description |
| --- | --- |
| **Direct Plagiarism** | Copying text verbatim (word-for-word) without using quotation marks or citing the source. |
| **Self-Plagiarism** | Reusing a substantial part of your own previously published or graded work without citing the original context. |
| **Mosaic Plagiarism** | Interweaving phrases and clauses from a source into your own text without quotation marks, or failing to cite the source correctly. |
| **Paraphrasing Plagiarism** | Using a source's ideas or structure but changing a few words while maintaining the original meaning and not providing a citation. |
| **Accidental Plagiarism** | Forgetting to cite a source, misquoting a source, or incorrectly using a citation style. While often unintentional, it is still treated as a serious academic offense. |

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**Why is Plagiarism Wrong?**

Plagiarism is considered a serious ethical and academic violation for several key reasons:

1. **It is Dishonest:** Plagiarism is a form of lying. It misrepresents the origin of the work, claiming credit for someone else's effort and thought.
2. **It Undermines Learning:** The purpose of academic work is for you to develop critical thinking and research skills. Plagiarism shortcuts this process and means you haven't actually mastered the material yourself.
3. **It is Illegal (in some cases):** While plagiarism itself is an ethical violation, it often constitutes a violation of **copyright law**, which protects original works of authorship.
4. **It Harms the Original Author:** It deprives the original creator of the credit, recognition, and potential compensation they deserve for their intellectual labor.

**Consequences**

The consequences of plagiarism can be severe, ranging from academic penalties to professional damage:

* **Academic:** Failing a paper or course, suspension, or expulsion from a university.
* **Professional:** Loss of job, damage to professional reputation, and termination of publishing contracts.
* **Legal:** Fines and legal action if a serious copyright infringement has occurred.

**How to Avoid Plagiarism (Citing and Referencing) 📝**

The simple rule to avoid plagiarism is: **When in doubt, cite!**

Citing and referencing are the mechanisms that allow you to use others' ideas while distinguishing your original contributions.

**1. Quotations**

* Use a source's exact words only when necessary, and always enclose them in **quotation marks** ("...").
* Immediately follow the quotation with an **in-text citation** that directs the reader to the full reference (e.g., (Smith, 2024, p. 5)).

**2. Paraphrasing**

* **Paraphrasing** means restating an idea from a source in your own words, maintaining the original meaning, structure, and length.
* You **must** still provide an **in-text citation** for the original author, even though you used your own words.
* **Do not** just rearrange a few words; this is a form of plagiarism (Mosaic Plagiarism). You must completely rephrase the idea.

**3. Summarizing**

* **Summarizing** means distilling the main points of a large section of text or an entire work into a much shorter form.
* Like paraphrasing, you **must** provide a citation for the original source.

**4. Citation Styles**

Different academic fields use different standards for citation. The most common styles are:

* **MLA (Modern Language Association):** Often used in the humanities and liberal arts.
* **APA (American Psychological Association):** Often used in the social sciences, such as psychology and education.
* **Chicago/Turabian:** Used in history, fine arts, and some social sciences.

Mastering a specific citation style is the best defense against accidental plagiarism. Many free online tools and university writing centers can help you learn and apply them correctly.