

Using sources in your writing without plagiarism

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Content of this session

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- What constitutes plagiarism?
- Why is plagiarism an important issue?
- Why do students engage in plagiarism?
- How do tutors recognise plagiarism?
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What do students say about plagiarism? Are they right?

“Universities in the UK take plagiarism very seriously. It’s very different where I come from. Nobody had warned me about plagiarism before.”

What do students say about plagiarism ?

Are they right?

- “The rules of the game are not clear.”
- “It’s difficult to know when, and when not, to reference.”

What do students say about plagiarism ?

Are they right?

- “You wouldn’t want someone else to steal *your* work.”
- “It’s unethical to plagiarise because someone else has done the work and should receive credit for it.”
- “Referencing enables me to acknowledge the ideas, data, models and practices produced or developed by others.”

What do students say about plagiarism? Are they right?

- “Plagiarism prevents you from establishing your own ideas and views on a topic.”
- “Referencing is a key part of the process of supporting my own ideas in an assignment.”
- “Referencing is an important device to build on, agree or challenge the ideas of others.”

So, what is plagiarism?

Newcastle University definition:

- Plagiarism is defined as the use of the work of others without acknowledgement. This covers not just using words, but also concepts, ideas, data, designs, images, computer programmes and music.
- So plagiarism refers to ideas, not just to words.
- Even if you express someone else's ideas in your own words, the source of the idea must still be acknowledged.

Collusion: A related offence

Newcastle University definition:

- Collusion is defined as *the submission by two or more students of the same or similar pieces of work (or parts of pieces of work) which are presented as the individual's own solely authored work.*
- This could arise from students working together to complete the work, or by one student allowing another to copy his/her work.
- Copying without the author's permission is not collusion, but taking another student's work without permission is theft and constitutes a disciplinary offence.

Why is plagiarism an important issue?

- Good academic work draws on sources, but these must be acknowledged.
- It would not be fair to the author not to acknowledge their contribution (Plagiarism is theft!)
- You need to use sources to support the ideas you have developed. This gives authority to your work and helps you to develop a convincing argument.
- Your tutors need evidence that you have done enough reading and understood the material you read.

Why do students engage in plagiarism?

- Poor note-taking skills (sources are not identified in the notes students take)
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of academic conventions regarding the use of sources in student texts
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of academic conventions regarding the construction of lists of references
- Feelings of insecurity about their own writing (The author puts it so much better than me!)
- Fear of failure/fear of taking risks (Plagiarism may SEEM safer, but it isn't!)
- Poor time management (starting work on the assignment too close to the deadline)
- They have heard of cases of plagiarism that went undetected/were handled leniently

How do tutors recognise plagiarism?

- Lack of/very few citations
- Vague referencing
- Writing style is uneven (student's own style is different from that of the unacknowledged sources)
- Student text is the same as or very similar to the source
- Two students submit the same (or very similar) assignment
- Assignment uses dated/unsuitable sources (bought essays?!)

Is this plagiarism?

Source (Catt and Gregory, 2006):

Writing is a powerful means of communication - transcending time and space - and can be transformative.

Student text:

Catt and Gregory define writing as “a powerful means of communication – transcending time and space – ... [which] can be transformative.” [1]

Answer: Not plagiarised

Source (Catt and Gregory, 2006):

Writing is a powerful means of communication - transcending time and space - and can be transformative.

Student text:

Catt and Gregory define writing as “a powerful means of communication – transcending time and space – ... [which] can be transformative.” [1]

Not plagiarised: reference to source provided;
appropriate use of quotation

Is this plagiarism?

Source (Catt and Gregory, 2006):

The act of writing carries intrinsic importance because learning can take place in and thorough the writing process.

Student text:

Writing has intrinsic significance since learning can occur in and through the process of writing.
[1]

Answer: Plagiarised? Very close paraphrase

Source (Catt and Gregory, 2006):

The act of writing carries intrinsic importance because learning can take place in and thorough the writing process.

Student text:

Writing has intrinsic significance since learning can occur in and through the process of writing. [1]

Plagiarised? The attempt at paraphrasing here was limited to changing a few words. This is a dangerous strategy: if you use it repeatedly, your text will be very similar to the original.

Is this plagiarism?

Source (Catt and Gregory, 2006):

Graduates need to be able to develop and sustain complex ideas with a clear sense of purpose and awareness of readership. Clearly, writing competence is foregrounded more in some degree studies than in others.

Student text:

Graduates must develop complex material with a definite “sense of purpose and awareness of readership”. It must be acknowledged, however, that the ability to write well is more important in some disciplines than others.

Answer: Plagiarised

Source (Catt and Gregory, 2006):

Graduates need to be able to develop and sustain complex ideas with a clear sense of purpose and awareness of readership. Clearly, writing competence is foregrounded more in some degree studies than in others.

Student text:

Graduates must develop complex material with a definite “sense of purpose and awareness of readership”. It must be acknowledged, however, that the ability to write well is more important in some disciplines than others.

Plagiarised: Source text is not cited in the student text.

Bibliography or list of references?

- Bibliography: everything you have read in preparation for your assignment – NOT VERIFIABLE!
- List of references: every source you have cited in the text – VERIFIABLE!

List of references: sample entries

Books

[1] G.O. Young, “Synthetic structure of industrial plastics”, in *Plastics*, 2nd ed., vol. 3, J. Peters, ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964, pp. 15-64.

[2] W.-K. Chen, *Linear Networks and Systems*. Belmont, CA, Wadsworth, 1993, pp. 123-135.

List of references: sample entries

Paper in academic journal:

[3] J.U. Duncombe, “Infrared navigation – Part 1: An assessment of feasibility,” *IEEE Trans. Electron. Devices*, vol. ED-11, pp. 34-39, Jan.1959.

[4] E.P. Wigner, “Theory of travelling-wave optical laser”, *Phys. Rev.*, vol. 134, pp. A635-A646, Dec. 1965.

What can I do to avoid plagiarism?

- **When taking notes**, clearly indicate whether you have copied a piece of text (use quotation marks or put a 'Q' in the margin)
- Make sure your notes include full bibliographical details of the source (including page number)

What can I do to avoid plagiarism?

- **In your writing**, acknowledge ALL of the following:
 - other people's ideas, opinions, models or theories
 - statistics, graphs, tables, diagrams and other drawings
- But you do not need to acknowledge facts that are common knowledge.

What can I do to avoid plagiarism?

- **Use quotation marks if you copy a phrase or short sentence verbatim from a source – don't forget to cite the source.**
- **If quoting a longer piece of text (long sentence; paragraph), do not use quotation marks. Instead, put the quotation in a separate, indented paragraph – don't forget to cite the source.**
- **Use quotations sparingly**
- **When paraphrasing a source**, change the following:
 - Vocabulary (whenever possible – technical vocabulary doesn't change)
 - Sentence structure (join short sentences, separate long sentences, change the order of clauses)
 - Style (maintain a consistent style – your own – even if it is not as sophisticated as that of the original)
- **Check your paraphrase** against the source text to make sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words, and that the information is accurate.

What can I do to avoid plagiarism?

- Use the **citation and referencing** system approved by your school (IEEE).
- Make sure that all the sources you cited in the text are listed in the list of references, numbered in the order cited.
- Do not include sources that you have not used in the text in your bibliography.

Useful websites

Newcastle University

The Right-Cite for Academic Practice

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/right-cite/>

Writing Development Centre

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wdc>

Information for IEEE Transactions, Journals and Letters Authors

http://www.ieee.org/documents/info_authors_kit.pdf