



Citing Sources: Avoiding Plagiarism

Your “paper is a collaboration between you and your sources. To be fair and ethical, you must acknowledge your debt to the writers of those sources. If you don't, you are guilty of plagiarism, a serious academic offence” (Hacker, 2003, p. 383).

Hacker, D. (2003). *A writer's reference*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Definition of Plagiarism

- Claiming as your own another person's language, ideas, images, or other original materials

Examples of Plagiarism

- Borrowing language, ideas, statistics, or images, etc. without citation
- Summarizing or paraphrasing ideas without citation
- Quoting verbatim without citation and/or without quotation marks
- Copying and pasting text without citation
- Inadequate or incorrect citation of sources
- Submitting someone else's work
- Having someone else write your paper
- Buying a paper

Causes of Plagiarism

- Inaccurate understanding of crediting sources
- Incorrect citations
- Poor time management
- Ineffective note taking

Reasons to Avoid Plagiarism

- It's a form of stealing (you're taking someone else's ideas).
- It's a form of lying (you're pretending someone else's ideas are yours).
- It's unfair to other students (they work hard to acknowledge others' ideas but you're not).
- You're not only breaking the Simmons Honor Code, but you're also compromising your own integrity (you're claiming to be honest when you're not).

Citation Strategies

- Acknowledge that you used someone else's ideas.
- Learn the rules of your discipline's citation style.
- Take accurate notes and keep track of sources.

Resources

- Simmons Writing Center: simmons.edu/offices/writing-center/
- Indiana University's plagiarism tutorial: indiana.edu/~istd/
- Purdue University's online writing lab: owl.english.purdue.edu



To Cite or Not to Cite? A Brief Guide

Citations give credit to sources that have contributed to your ideas. Rather than claiming your ideas are all original, it's ethical to acknowledge the contributions others have made.

Understanding when citations are necessary involves understanding what constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism refers not just to a writer's failure to acknowledge the use of another person's *words* but also failure to acknowledge the use of another's *ideas*.

Plagiarism may be deliberate or accidental, often resulting from the writer's misunderstanding of what she needs to cite. Accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism. It is therefore the writer's responsibility to understand what must be cited and how to cite sources properly.

You need *not* acknowledge:

1. **Your independent material** (your observations, thoughts, compilation of facts, results of an experiment, etc., that are expressed in *your* words and format)
2. **Common knowledge**
 - *standard information*, including major facts of history
 - *folk literature* (stories such as fairy tales that are popularly known and not traceable to a particular author)
 - *commonsense observations*, or things that most people know (e.g., that inflation is most troublesome for people with low and fixed incomes)

*If in doubt about whether a piece of information qualifies as "common knowledge," it's best to err on the side of caution and acknowledge the source.

You *must* acknowledge:

Anything that does not fit into either of the above categories, including:

- **other people's independent material** (no matter how you use it, how much of it you use, or how often you use it)
- **any facts or ideas that are not common knowledge or your own**

Remember, acknowledgement is required no matter how you use the information from a source. You must provide a source citation when you are...

1. using language copied directly from your source*
2. paraphrasing from your source (rewording and restructuring, but essentially saying the same thing as your source)
3. summarizing information from a source (condensing extended information from a source into your own words)

* You must also use quotation marks around *any* copied material (whether it's an entire sentence or even just a phrase)

The above guidelines are condensed from *LB Brief*, 4th ed., pp. 424-430. Go there for further details.