



Avoiding Plagiarism

Writers sometimes make mistakes that lead to charges of **plagiarism**: the unacknowledged use of somebody else's words or ideas. A charge of plagiarism can have severe consequences. Fortunately, there are conventions in place to help writers cite outside sources and avoid plagiarism.

Knowing when you need to cite a source can be tricky, in part because of the contradictions of American academic writing. For instance, you must...

1. Show you have done your research but also write something new and original.
2. Appeal to experts and authorities but also improve upon or disagree with experts and authorities.
3. Improve your writing by mimicking what you hear and read but use your own words, your own voice.
4. Give credit where credit is due but make your own significant contribution.

Since professors may not distinguish between deliberate and accidental plagiarism, **the key to avoiding plagiarism is to make sure you give credit where it is due.**

When to Cite Sources

Need to Cite	No Need to Cite
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When you use or refer to somebody else's words or ideas from a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium.2. When you use information gained through interviewing another person.3. When you copy the exact words or a "unique phrase" from another source4. When you reprint any diagrams, illustrations, charts, and pictures.5. When you use ideas that others have given you in conversations or over email.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. When you are writing your own experiences, your own observations, your own insights, your own thoughts, or your own conclusions about others' words and ideas2. When you are using "common knowledge" — folklore, common sense observations, shared information within your field of study or cultural group3. When you are compiling generally accepted facts4. When you are writing up your own experimental results

Make Sure You Are Safe

	While writing	Finished product
When researching, taking notes, or interviewing	<p>Mark <i>everything</i> that is someone else's words with a big Q (for quote) and with big quotation marks</p> <p>Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources (S) and which are your own insights (ME)</p> <p>Record all information needed to locate the source: author, publication, title, date and pages numbers</p>	<p>Proofread and check with your notes (or photocopies of sources) to make sure that <i>anything</i> taken from your notes is acknowledged in some combination of the ways listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-text citation • Footnotes • Bibliography • Quotation marks • Indirect quotations
When paraphrasing or summarizing	<p>First, write your paraphrase and summary without looking at the original text so you rely only on your memory.</p> <p>Next, check your version with the original for content, accuracy, and mistakenly-borrowed phrases.</p>	<p>Begin your summary with a statement giving credit to the source: <i>According to Jonathan Kozol....</i></p> <p>Put any unique words or phrases that you cannot change, or do not want to change, in quotation marks: <i>"Savage inequalities" exist throughout our educational system (Kozol).</i></p>
When quoting directly	<p>Keep the person's name near the quote in your notes and in your paper.</p> <p>Select direct quotes that make the most impact in your paper. Too many direct quotes may decrease your credibility.</p>	<p>Mention the person's name either at the beginning of the quote, in the middle, or at the end.</p> <p>Put quotation marks around the text that you are quoting.</p> <p>Indicate added phrases with brackets: [] and omitted text with ellipses: ...</p>

Always proofread, revise, and, when possible, sit down with a tutor and talk about your writing.

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