

MOORE ABOUT.. AVOIDING PLAGIARISM



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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

What is plagiarism?



Many students will have heard the term 'plagiarism' but that does it really mean in an academic context? Essentially, plagiarism means using the ideas or outputs of others in your own work without offering an appropriate acknowledgement. There are many reasons why you might want to use other people's work in your own, for example to back up a point you have made or demonstrate your wider reading around a topic.

However any use needs to be clearly labelled – mostly through adding a reference – to show the reader what is your own work and what belongs to someone else. This helps the reader to understand the contribution you have made rather than just how many books and articles you have managed to read!

Types of plagiarism

Plagiarism can broadly be divided into two types: intentional and unintentional.

Some students intentionally commit fraud in their assignments by turning in work they know to be copied or otherwise not their own. Although this is rare it does happen and is always discovered. More dangerous is the issue of unintentional plagiarism. This happens when a student does not deliberately set out to deceive but includes materials that are not their own, for example they heavily quote a source but do not include a reference. Most unintentional plagiarism happens as a result of sloppy writing practices so it is vital to employ some of the strategies discussed on the next few pages.



There is also the possibility of self-plagiarism. This happens when someone reuses their previous materials in a new work. Although this is most common when an author has had something formally published and signed away the rights it can also happen with academic work. Students need to be careful not to reuse their existing work in different assessments. It is important to stress that this does not apply to any drafts of work which you create as you work.

STRATEGIES FOR AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

The keys to avoiding accidental plagiarism are to understand what it is and to get into good habits early on in your studies. There are several techniques that you can use to do this.

TAKING GOOD NOTES



When making notes you should always fully record the reference to the materials you are consulting. Include the title, author, edition, page numbers and access information (library classmark, URL etc) as a minimum. This will help you to keep track of where you found that incredibly important piece of information so you can find it again at a later date.

It is also a good idea to summarise any arguments from your reading in your own words unless you are recording a direct quotation. This will help to avoid confusion in the future when it comes to writing up and you are unsure which words are your own. It also lessens the potential for accidental plagiarism.

You will find a note taking system which works for you over the course of your studies. If you need inspiration you may find information on the [Cornell Method](#) or the [Outline Method](#) useful.

REFERENCING



Referencing the work of other people is a necessary part of academic life. Get into the practice of adding your references as you go along rather than waiting to the end of your writing up. This can help you keep track of how much you are referencing and avoid last minute dashes to the library to double-check a page number the night before the assignment is due.

Although you can add your references by hand you might find it easier to use an online reference manager such as Zotero or Endnote. These tools not only keep track of your references but allow you to insert them into your document at the touch of a button using your preferred style.



USE GOOD WRITING TECHNIQUES

Developing an understanding of how to use the work of others in your own outputs can both help to strengthen your writing style and avoid accidental plagiarism. There are several techniques that you may want to use depending on the nature of your work but you should be aware of the following:

QUOTING

Quotations are direct copies of short extracts of work and are used when the reader needs to see the original words. Quotations might also be used when the original author was an authority on the topic and their words are needed to add weight. All direct quotations should be clearly marked using quotation marks and include a reference. It is important to use quotations sparingly and include some type of comment on them – readers want to know what you think not how much you have read.

PARAPHRASING

Essentially this means outlining the meaning of an idea or argument in your own words. This does not mean just rearranging the order of the existing words but demonstrating how you have understood what they mean. You will also need to explain to the reader why this point is important to your own work and remember to include a reference.

SUMMARISING

Often confused with paraphrasing, summaries involve outlining the main points of a longer document. You will need to use your own words and include a reference to the original document. Depending on your task you may need to summarise multiple documents and show how they work to contribute to or refute an argument.

FURTHER INFORMATION

With some understanding and planning you can avoid accidental plagiarism and help to strengthen your academic work. Explore some of the resource below for more information.

- [Manchester University: Academic Phrasebank](#).
Excellent resource offering guidance on the language to use to incorporate the work of others into your own.
- [LibGuides: Good Academic Practice and Avoiding Plagiarism](#).
Easy to use summary of plagiarism including a quiz to test your knowledge.
- [CamGuides: Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism](#).
This resource from Cambridge University Libraries covers the essentials of academic referencing.



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