

Plagiarism...NOT a Good Idea

According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, to plagiarize is to “steal and use the writings of another as one’s own.” Even if you don’t mean to, if you present someone else’s thoughts, ideas, or information without giving them credit, you are committing academic dishonesty. There are many penalties for plagiarism, and most often they vary depending upon the grade level, school, and degree of dishonesty. For Lake-Lehman, the penalties are as follows:

- Automatic zero for the assignment
- Required to complete the assignment properly for no credit
- Notification to parent/guardian
- Notice placed in permanent student file
- Possible detention, etc.

It is important that you remember that when you are writing a research paper, your teacher will assume that any information NOT cited (or given credit) is your own. If you pass off someone else’s ideas as your own, even if it is done on accident, you have plagiarized. Though the penalties at Lehman may appear harsh, students at colleges and universities have been kicked out of the institution for plagiarizing, and journalists have been fired from their jobs.

In this course, we are continually engaged with other people’s ideas: we read them in texts, hear them in lecture, discuss them in class, and incorporate them into our own writing. As a result, it is very important that we give credit where it is due. Plagiarism is using others’ ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information.

The World Wide Web has become a more popular source of information for student papers, and many questions have arisen about how to avoid plagiarizing these sources. In most cases, the same rules apply as to a printed source: when a writer must refer to ideas or quote from a WWW site, she must cite that source.

If a writer wants to use visual information from a WWW site, many of the same rules apply. Copying visual information or graphics from a WWW site (or from a printed source) is very similar to quoting information, and the source of the visual information or graphic must be cited.

How Can Students Avoid Plagiarism?

To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use:

- Another person’s idea, opinion, or theory
- Any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings--any pieces of information--that are not common knowledge
- Quotations of another person’s actual spoken or written words
- Paraphrase of another person’s spoken or written words.

Source URL: <http://woronko.wikispaces.com/Research+Writing+Worksheets>
Saylor URL: www.saylor.org/courses/K12ELA007#8.2.6

Attributed to: WikiSpaces



Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism:

- Put in **quotations** everything that comes directly from the text especially when taking notes.
- **Paraphrase**, but be sure you are not just rearranging or replacing a few words. Instead, read over what you want to paraphrase carefully; cover up the text with your hand, or close the text so you can't see any of it (and so aren't tempted to use the text as a "guide"). Write out the idea in your own words without peeking.
- **Check your paraphrase** against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words, and that the information is accurate.

How to Recognize Unacceptable and Acceptable Paraphrases

Here's the ORIGINAL text, from page 1 of *Lizzie Borden: A Case Book of Family and Crime in the 1890s* by Joyce Williams et al.:

The rise of industry, the growth of cities, and the expansion of the population were the three great developments of late nineteenth century American history. As new, larger, steam-powered factories became a feature of the American landscape in the East, they transformed farm hands into industrial laborers and provided jobs for a rising tide of immigrants. With industry came urbanization the growth of large cities (like Fall River, Massachusetts, where the Bordens lived), which became the centers of production as well as of commerce and trade.

Here's an UNACCEPTABLE paraphrase that is **plagiarism**:

The increase of industry, the growth of cities, and the explosion of the population were three large factors of nineteenth century America. As steam-driven companies became more visible in the eastern part of the country, they changed farm hands into factory workers and provided jobs for the large wave of immigrants. With industry came the growth of large cities like Fall River where the Bordens lived, which turned into centers of commerce and trade as well as production.

What makes this passage plagiarism?

The preceding passage is considered plagiarism for two reasons:

- the writer has only changed around a few words and phrases, or changed the order of the original's sentences.
- the writer has failed to cite a source for any of the ideas or facts.

If you do either or both of these things, you are plagiarizing.

NOTE: This paragraph is also problematic because it changes the sense of several sentences (for example, "steam-driven companies" in sentence two misses the original's emphasis on factories).

Here's an **ACCEPTABLE** paraphrase:

Fall River, where the Borden family lived, was typical of northeastern industrial cities of the

Source URL: <http://woronko.wikispaces.com/Research+Writing+Worksheets>
Saylor URL: www.saylor.org/courses/K12ELA007#8.2.6

nineteenth century. Steam-powered production had shifted labor from agriculture to manufacturing, and as immigrants arrived in the US, they found work in these new factories. As a result, populations grew, and large urban areas arose. Fall River was one of these manufacturing and commercial centers (Williams 1).

Why is this passage acceptable?

This is acceptable paraphrasing because the writer:

- accurately relays the information in the original
- uses her own words.
- lets her reader know the source of her information.

Common Knowledge

You do NOT have to document common knowledge. Common knowledge is any information that your readers will likely know without reading your paper. It is any piece of information that you were aware of prior to conducting any research on your topic. It does NOT have to be cited, because it came from your mind, based upon your knowledge of your topic.

Material is probably common knowledge if . . .

- You find the same information undocumented in at least five other sources
- You think it is information that your readers will already know
- You think a person could easily find the information with general reference sources.
- The facts can be found in numerous places and are likely to be known by a lot of people.
 - Example: John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.
 - This is generally known information. **You do not need to document this fact.**
- However, you must document facts that are not generally known and ideas that interpret facts.
 - Example: According to the American Family Leave Coalition's new book, Family Issues and Congress, President Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation (6).
 - The idea that "Bush's relationship with Congress has hindered family leave legislation" is not a fact but an *interpretation*; **consequently, you need to cite your source.**
- You do NOT need to document information that has become general knowledge by being reported over and over again in many different sources.
 - Example: Michael Jordan holds several NBA scoring records.

SELF-TEST: WHAT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE?

As you read each item in the list below, ask yourself this: is this item common knowledge to the majority of individuals your age? Answer yes or no.

-
- ___ 1. OJ Simpson was acquitted of criminal charges for the murder of his wife.
 - ___ 2. World War II began in 1939 and ended in 1945.
 - ___ 3. Research from the Human Genome Project estimates that human beings have approximately 50,000 genes.
 - ___ 4. Currently, the fastest growing group of Web users is comprised of women over the age of 55.
 - ___ 5. Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States of America.
 - ___ 6. Many literary critics believe that the novelist Virginia Woolf drew extensively from her own experiences for the central character in her novel, Mrs. Dalloway.
 - ___ 7. In the Northern Hemisphere, the summer solstice takes place on June 21st.
 - ___ 8. There are 5,283 hospice programs in the United States.
 - ___ 9. The freezing point of water is 32 degrees Fahrenheit or 0 degrees Centigrade
 - ___ 10. The teen pregnancy rate in the United States fell 8 percent from 1995 to 1997.

Five simple rules for avoiding plagiarism:

- **Rule 1:** A fact that is NOT common knowledge must have a citation
- **Rule 2:** When you write about an idea, you must make clear whose idea it is. If it is your own idea, you do NOT cite the source.
- **Rule 3:** If you are writing about someone else's idea, you must cite your source.
- **Rule 4:** If you use someone else's exact words, you must put them in quotation marks and give credit to the speaker as well as cite the source.
- **Rule 5:** When you use an author's idea without quoting exactly, you must write the idea in your own words (paraphrase), not just rearrange or change a few of his/her words, and you MUST cite the source.

There are three more varieties of plagiarism that you must avoid. They are:

- **Self-Plagiarism:** submitting a paper that you have submitted in a previous class.
- **Copying all or part of another student's paper:** a student who offers to share papers, journal entries, homework assignments, and the like does you a great disservice. These are acts of academic dishonesty and are likely to incur penalties for both parties.
- **Collaborative efforts, unless the teacher says it is ok:** unless you are allowed to work with another person, you must work alone on your assignments. Collaborative efforts where the teacher has not permitted such work results in academic dishonesty.

Summary of Rules about Plagiarism:

- Well-known facts require no citation
- Your own ideas require no citation.

Source URL: <http://woronko.wikispaces.com/Research+Writing+Worksheets>
Saylor URL: www.saylor.org/courses/K12ELA007#8.2.6

- You must cite the source of someone else's ideas, facts, and opinions.
- Using someone else's exact words requires quotation marks and citation of the source as well as credit to the speaker of the quote.
- Using an author's idea but not quoting it exactly requires a thorough paraphrase, not just a rearrangement of words, **and** citation of the source.



Source URL: <http://woronko.wikispaces.com/Research+Writing+Worksheets>
Saylor URL: www.saylor.org/courses/K12ELA007#8.2.6

Attributed to: WikiSpaces



Exercises for Practice

Below are some situations in which writers need to decide whether or not they are running the risk of plagiarizing. In the **Y/N** column, indicate if you *would* need to document (**Yes**), or if it is *not necessary* to provide quotation marks or a citation (**No**). If you do need to give the source credit in some way, explain how you would handle it. If not, explain why.

Situation	Y/N	If yes, what do you do? If no, why?
1. You are writing new insights about your own experiences.		
2. You are using an editorial from your school's newspaper with which you disagree.		
3. You use some information from a source without ever quoting it directly.		
4. You have no other way of expressing the exact meaning of a text without using the original source verbatim.		
5. You mention that many students in your grade belong to different clubs.		
6. You want to begin your paper with a story that one of your classmates told about her experiences in Bosnia.		
7. The quote you want to use is too long, so you leave out a couple of phrases.		
8. You really like the particular phrase somebody else made up, so you use it.		