

# Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

## Introduction

Academic integrity is the central principle on which the academic community depends. If a researcher falsifies data to support an hypothesis, or if a scholar steals the clever ideas of another and claims them as his or her own, the climate of trust that fosters the growth of knowledge and the creation of new ideas is destroyed. For students, copying others' work damages the intellectual integrity of their academic experience; it prevents intellectual engagement with a discipline and inhibits learning. It's unfair because it gives cheaters an advantage over honest students. Moreover, since the value of a university degree is based on the public's trust that graduates of that institution have gained a certain level of knowledge and ability, fraudulent shortcuts devalue the degree. In an attempt to prevent academic fraud, the university punishes those caught, and, depending on the crime, may even expel them from the university.

Plagiarism is perhaps the most common academic fraud and it can range from an extremely serious to a minor offence. Sometimes students knowingly attempt to deceive their instructors; sometimes they commit plagiarism because they are unclear about what it is. This Study Skills Tip Sheet is intended to clarify the issue, and to help you avoid plagiarizing when you write.

## What Exactly Is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is a combination of stealing and lying about it afterwards. It means using others' work and misrepresenting that work as your own without giving the author credit: this includes ideas, words, data, computer programming, or any other creative endeavour. An extreme example would be copying or purchasing an entire paper and submitting it as your own. Less extreme would be submitting a paper you have written for credit in another course without prior permission from your instructor. A more common example would be copying another author's phrases, sentences, ideas, or arguments without citing the source.

## Penalties for Plagiarism

UFV takes plagiarism seriously, and may assess one or more of the following penalties as listed in the Student Conduct Policy 310.12:

- a. When an instructor has evidence of plagiarism by a student (for example, can show the source used, but not acknowledged, by the student), or of cheating or falsifying data by a student, the instructor is entitled to assign a score of zero with the first incident. The instructor will file a written report in the Student Conduct Registry, with a copy to the student. The report will be removed two years after the incident.
- b. After the first incident, the instructor will provide the student with a written notice that a second incident will result in the requirement that the student withdraw from the course.
- c. When a student is required to withdraw from a course by an instructor, a report of the disciplinary action taken will be placed in the Student Conduct Registry, with a copy to the student. The report will be removed two years after the incident.
- d. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or cheating, and withdrawals will be reported to the President, and may result in suspension from UFV.

## The Good News About Citing Sources

Although we have been speaking about avoiding plagiarism to avoid negative consequences, there are also positive benefits to avoiding plagiarism for students who want to achieve good grades. Referencing actually makes your work appear to be more academic and positions it within the ongoing scholarly conversation or debate in your discipline; it provides an authority to back up your arguments. Citations create the impression that your own argument is founded logically and systematically on previous work (and, hence, are credible). As a result, in many subjects, the more you reference the more scholarly your paper will be. And referencing also

benefits others who are interested in pursuing the subject beyond your paper.

### Plagiarism and the Internet

In the last few years, attention has been focused on Internet plagiarism. Some people call it "the new plagiarism," because the advent of the World Wide Web has made information retrieval so simple that student plagiarism appears to have increased: just a few clicks of the mouse and information can be added directly to your own paper. It is now easier for a student to purchase an entire paper over the Web, to copy an entire article from an on-line journal, or to block and paste entire sentences or paragraphs from an electronic text directly into their papers. There is a kind of anarchy and a blurring of copyright boundaries on the Web that leads students to assume that all of the "free" material available there is not governed by the same rules as for printed material. But it is. However, it is also much easier for those marking the papers to find out the source of the information. Instructors can use easy search methods to find electronic articles which use particular words or phrases, and many universities purchase proprietary software or hire Internet businesses which use algorithms to find any instance of plagiarism.

The antidote to unknowingly plagiarizing Web material is to follow our Golden Rules #4, #5, and #6. Downloading the Web page (preferably to a disk so that you can virus check the material before putting it on your hard drive) will assure that you have the URL. Better still, printing the text will make it easy to copy all of the required bibliographical material (author, dates of publication and of access, publisher, etc.) for your reference list, should you later choose to incorporate some of the information into your paper. Ultimately, if you treat all of the words and information you receive from the Internet in exactly the same way that you would the material from a print-based article or book, you will be safe.

For help in citing and referencing from Internet sites, follow the rules in our Study Skills Tip Sheet series on referencing.

### Frequently Asked Questions

**1. Isn't it enough to list in my bibliography all the materials I used for my paper, and have that be considered an acknowledgment of my sources?**

A bibliography, reference list, or works cited page may list the sources you used to compose your paper, but it does not indicate which ideas came from which source.

There are at least two good reasons why you should not simply indicate at the end of a paper the name of the books or articles from which you received your information:

1. Intellectual property can be owned too, and if someone, as a thinker or a researcher, has made a discovery, you must acknowledge this fact. If you merely list the source of your information in your bibliography, and do not mention it in your text, you are hiding it with the literary equivalent of smoke and mirrors; indeed, you may even appear to be suggesting that some of those ideas were yours.
2. As we have said before, there is a compelling and selfish reason why you should note your sources directly in your text. When you write a paper you are making an argument - you are trying to convince your readers that what you say is reasonable. One of the traditional ways that scholars try to convince others of the validity of the arguments they are advancing is by suggesting that their theories fit well with the accepted work of the learned authorities who have gone before them in the field. In other words, your work becomes more convincing when you can directly indicate the authority whose studies it extends.

To see how others do this, examine scholarly books and journal articles in your field of research. Your course texts may not include citations for information (but will usually include a bibliographical list at the end of chapters or at the back of the book), and popular magazines and newspapers handle references to sources in different ways, so these are not good examples for you to follow.

### **2. How will I know the difference between the ideas and information I have to reference and those I don't?**

Information which is considered common knowledge in the field is not referenced. This will vary to some extent from discipline to discipline. However, we could say that facts which could be found in a general reference book (historical dates, common definitions, descriptions of periods or schools of thought, or a country's population or area, for example) need not be referenced. Interpretations, which are commonly

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held and accepted and, in some cases, information from your lectures, may not require acknowledgement. When in doubt, check with your professor.

You always have to give a reference when you quote specific words or passages from another source. Quoting is usually done only when the words quoted are a) the best, most memorable, or most succinct way of expressing the information, or b) those of an acknowledged master or authority in the field.

You also must give a reference when you are using specific information to support your argument. If this information is not common knowledge, is in dispute within your discipline, is someone else's interpretation of points, or is the result of research done by others before you, you must give credit to the authors. This is not only intellectually honest, but it also gives the information authority, and makes your own argument more credible. e.g., Sweeney & Vannote (1978), for example, showed that many hemimetabolous aquatic insects reach smaller adult size with reduced fecundity when they grow at temperatures above and below their optima. (An example from Gould, S.J. and Lewontin, R.C. "The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: a Critique of the Adaptionist Programme." Ed. Jack Selzer. *Understanding Scientific Prose*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993. 350.) (\*MLA style)

Koedinger and colleagues (Koedinger & Anderson, 1998; Koedinger & Tabachneck, 1995) reported that students sometimes find it easier to reason about word problems than to perform the analogous symbolic manipulations, and Koedinger and MacLaren (1997) developed a model in which there are both algebraic and verbal methods for solving problems.

(An example from Anderson, John R. and Gluck, Kevin A. "What role do Cognitive Architectures Play in Intelligent Tutoring Systems." Ed. Sharon M. Carver and David Klahr. *Cognition and Instruction: Twenty-Five Years of Progress*. Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2001. 249.) (\*MLA style)

**3. If I put a reference after every idea that I have taken from another source, won't it look as if I**

**have just pieced together excerpts from other people's work?**

Yes it will, if your paper is nothing more than an assemblage of information you have taken from primary or secondary sources, without any analytical interpretation, argument, or thesis. Sometimes students come out of high school thinking that this is what an essay or report is: something that is patched and pasted together from notes they have made from books and articles on a particular subject. But that is not acceptable at the university level. Although it is true that what is expected from a first year student is less than what would be required from a senior student, at all stages of your university experience you should be looking at your subject from more than a descriptive point of view. You should be looking for connections between ideas, building arguments, and gradually developing your ability to discuss your topics in the context of the ongoing conversation within the field.

So what your essay or report should look like is not so much a patchwork of other people's ideas, but an attempt to discuss results or argue a point - your own point, which you are supporting with evidence developed from the research you have done. The way that you structure and organize that argument is the frame of your essay or report - your own personal interpretation of the subject - and the reference you make to other people's research or information or interpretations is subservient to the major thrust of that argument. You use their work to support and give authority to your conclusions, or, on the other hand, your references to them can be used as a rhetorical strategy: you can "bounce" off them to lead into your own argument, which may not agree with theirs.

**4. If I put the ideas into my own words, can I avoid referencing?**

Once again, no. Putting the ideas into your own words (paraphrasing or summarizing the original) does not eliminate the need to reference. The information still comes from that source, and must be credited.

Bolingbroke is well aware that he needs the aid of the disaffected commons as well as the disgruntled and ambitious nobles. 1. See Barbara D. Palmer, "'Ciphers to This Great Accompt': Civic Pageantry in the Second Tetralogy," in *Pageantry in the*

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Shakespearean Theatre, ed. Bergeron, 114-29.  
In this instance, note that the author cites herself and her own chapter in a previous published book. This is a common practice in academia.

(An example from Palmer, Barbara D. "Gestures of Greeting: Annunciations, Sacred and Secular." Ed. Clifford Davidson. *Gesture in Medieval Drama and Art. Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Ser.* 28. Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001. 150.) (\*MLA style)

### **5. How can I remember which ideas are my own and which "belong" to someone else?**

This is difficult, particularly after you have been working intensively on a topic for some time. Try to paraphrase as you take your notes (except where you copy the exact words inside quotation marks because you consider that your information could not have been said in a better, or more succinct, way), always noting the page numbers for that information. This is one way to be clear about where the idea comes from; also use a different coloured ink to add your own comments beside the information. Such intelligent note-taking strategies also help you to adopt a critical and analytical attitude and develop your own point of view, even at the early information-gathering stages of writing your paper.

### **6. Is there such a thing as too much referencing?**

Yes, if you are constantly intruding references into your text in a heavy-handed way. This is usually a writing problem more than a sourcing one. Try to work your references into your text as a seamless web, to introduce references into the sentences in a variety of ways, and to write your paper in such a way that you don't have to refer to your sources every sentence or two. In the following examples, the first sample shows how referencing can become intrusive and awkward; the second takes the same information and presents it more smoothly.

"Bromley and Hill's (2003) theory of the relationship between hand gestures in Lock's drawings and those found in medieval religious art should change the way that art historians interpret her work" (Schumann, *Fear and Art* 849), but other critics (Jean 49; Legare 32; Martin 15) dislike this new interpretation (Schumann, *Fear and Art* 849). They argue that this theory is only of interest to those

studying her later drawings (Jean 49; Legare 32; Martin 15).(\*MLA style)

Schumann argues that "Bromley and Hill's (2003) theory of the relationship between hand gestures in Lock's drawings and those found in medieval religious art should change the way that art historians interpret her work" (*Fear and Art* 849), but other critics find that this new interpretation is only of interest to those studying her later drawings (Jean 49; Legare 32; Martin 15). (\*MLA style)

(\*Note that, following MLA style here, the title of Schumann's *Fear and Art* is inserted because more than one title is listed in the "Works Cited." In the other instances, there is only one title by each of the other authors; therefore, the titles need not be mentioned.)

The other occasion when you might find that you have too many references is if you are referencing even the most commonplace of ideas or facts (the dates of WW II, for example). However, if you have to choose between the two vices, it is better to reference too much than too little.

### **7. Is there a difference in referencing between the arts and social sciences, and the sciences?**

Although all disciplinary areas are similar in that they are required to indicate whenever words or ideas have been taken from another source, there are differences in the style in which this is done. In the arts and most of the social sciences, there is a considerable use of direct quotation; in the sciences, direct quotation is rare. Since scientists are usually summing up the findings of research that has preceded their own work, they normally paraphrase these results. Also, in papers for some arts disciplines such as philosophy, where the train of thought is difficult and you don't want to distract from the argument, superscript footnotes or endnotes are appropriate. In the sciences, where the authority and reputation of those whose research findings have been consistent with those of your paper are of paramount importance, you might begin or end a sentence with a parenthetical citation made up of a string of names and dates:  
...(Hirshi and D'Amore, 1991; Miano et al., 1993; Nels and Drenckhahm, 1991,1993; Schilingemann et al., 1991; Tilton et al., 1979). (\*APA style)

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For a more detailed description of referencing, see the Writing Centre handouts APA Referencing Style, MLA Referencing Style, CBE Referencing Style, and Chicago Referencing Style.

### **8. In my country, copying authorities is considered a sign of respect, and knowledge is thought to be collectively generated and owned. Should I be punished here for following my own cultural norms?**

It is true that not all cultures look upon plagiarism in the same way as we do. However, if you are intending to function here as an academic, and if you hope to avoid being penalized or damaging your reputation while you are a student here, you should be extremely careful to follow the rules outlined in this Study Skills Tip Sheet.

### **Ten Golden Rules to Avoid Plagiarism**

1. If you didn't write the paper yourself, don't hand it in. (Don't buy, commission, download, or borrow papers from other sources, or write a paper with a friend and each submit it as your own work.)
2. Get written permission from your instructor before turning in a paper you have used for another course. (For example, if you have written a paper in a Russian history course dealing with some aspect of the Soviet Union and then the next year take a Political Science course covering the same country and period, you should not submit that paper again to your Political Science professor without permission.)
3. You must give credit in a citation, footnote, or endnote whenever you use more than three words from another source (this will appear in your text within quotation marks) or whenever you use someone else's idea, even when phrased in your own words.
4. When taking notes or downloading from another source, copy all of the bibliographic information right beside the information.
5. When taking notes or downloading, make sure you immediately put quotation marks around any words or phrases copied directly from the source.
6. When taking notes and paraphrasing an idea, look away from the source, write your paraphrase, check back to ensure that you have not used the original words, and then circle your paraphrase to indicate that it is in your own words. You will still need to provide the accurate reference citation for the idea, so write down all of the bibliographical material right then and there.
7. Never cut and paste text to create a paper from several quoted sources, supplying only your own introduction and conclusion. This is a patchwork quilt, not an essay.
8. Quote all the words that you have copied. A common type of plagiarism occurs when students quote a sentence or two, include a citation, then continue on copying the words from the source without quotation marks, implying that these were the students' own summarizing words. (This is wrong even with a concluding citation).
9. Never fake a citation or reference in your reference list in order to pad your research list.
10. When engaged in a group project, always get detailed instructions from your professor about ownership of work. When writing individual papers resulting from collaborative group work, give credit in citations for ideas generated by other members of the group.

### **Want more information?**

The Counselling Department is the best source for advice and information on issues related to learning, studying, time management, and academic performance. The Writing Centre, located in the Learning Centre, is available for advice and information on writing issues. An appointment is advised at the Writing Centre and can be booked by calling Abbotsford – 604-504-7441, local 4282 (G 132) or Chilliwack – 604-792-0025, local 2432 (A 205).

Workshops on learning, studying, etc., are offered regularly each semester by the Counselling Department.

Please contact Student Services at Abbotsford - 604-854-4528 (B 214) or Chilliwack - 604-795-2808 (E 105) to make an appointment.

Study Skills Tip Sheets providing information on many learning and time management topics, as well

as writing and referencing, are available free to students. The complete range of Study Skills Tip Sheets is available on-line at [www.ufv.ca/counselling/study/](http://www.ufv.ca/counselling/study/)

### **Other Relevant Study Skills Tip Sheets:**

Improving Your Writing  
Writing a Lab or Research Report  
Writing a Literature Review  
Writing University Essays

With thanks to the University of Guelph  
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The Learning Commons