

How to Cite Skillfully and Avoid Plagiarizing

Graduate Student Orientation
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“ For such kind of borrowing as this, if it be not bettered by the borrowers, among good authors is accounted Plagiare.”

John Milton (1608-1674) *Iconoclastes*,

From *The Devil's Dictionary* by Ambrose Bierce...

“Plagiarism, *n.* A literary coincidence compounded of a discreditable priority and an honorable subsequence.

Plagiarize, *v.* To take the thought or style of another writer whom one has never, never read. “

It is against official Baylor policy to plagiarize.

Plagiarism is using another's ideas without appropriate attribution: it makes it appear that those ideas are yours. According to Funk (1921), plagiarism is

"1. The act of plagiarizing or appropriating the ideas, writings, or inventions of another without due acknowledgment; specif. the stealing of passages either for word or in substance, from the writings of another and publishing them as one's own. 2. A writing, utterance, or invention stolen from another" (Funk, 1921; italics mine)

Although one could steal another's ideas or words without publishing them (as in a diary), what is truly reprehensible to the scientific community is the public use or publication of them "as one's own".

Plagiarism is a serious concern for scientists and graduate students. A career can be completely derailed by it. One must know how to cite correctly.

We should distinguish two extremes of plagiarism. At one extreme is the theft of an entire grant proposal or manuscript, and submitting it as your own. At the other extreme is the occasional inclusion in your writing of a string of references obtained from a review and the uncited paraphrase or generalization. Also at this extreme is "cryptomnesia... referring ... to seemingly creative thought in which ideas based upon unrecalled past experiences are taken to be new " (Merton, 1973).

There are two reasons why scientists should not plagiarize: (1) it is against our ethical standards and (2) it reflects incompetence. Similarly, there are two reasons to use effective citation technique: (1) to avoid plagiarizing and (2) to communicate our scholarship effectively and thereby establish our own credentials as competent members of the scientific community.

Plagiarism is often a failure to use appropriate citation techniques. From this point of view, plagiarism is simply the failure to cite the source of your information. The purpose of this handout is to acquaint graduate students with the need for correct citation practices, and to indicate some useful techniques of citation.

xxiii. *Bartlett's Quotations*

In my experience, plagiarism by scientists occurs most often in the "background" sections of papers. What happens is that the writer, rather than synthesizing several sources for himself or herself, relies instead on the scholarship of one review or journal article as a source of both specific facts and generalizations. As a result, the writer becomes committed to the information, point of view and often the wording of the source.

Another kind of plagiarism is **autoplagerism** - using your own material without citing yourself. Remember: the copyrights to articles you publish belong to the publisher- not to you! Copying your own words without permission may be copyright infringement! This can affect graduate students who include published work in their thesis, and full professors who publish more than one review or book chapter per year.

**One simple concept:
It's the idea, not just the words,
that must be cited!**

Some simple things not-to-do.

Don't paraphrase without giving an immediate citation. It doesn't matter if you change every word in a sentence- you still must cite it because that is where you got the idea.

Don't use a textbook as a background source for specific information. Textbooks are over-simplified, poorly referenced, and often out-of-date. In most cases the textbook is an inappropriate source for specific

information. If you must use a textbook for the source of an idea- be sure to cite it.

Don't quote without using quote marks, and giving a citation. There is no firm rule on when you must use quote signs (See below).

Don't grab a string of references to use as your own. This is theft of scholarship and fraudulent use. It is also sloppy technique: some references are likely not to be appropriate for your usage, and may contain typographical errors as well. If you must cite a citation, indicate your original source, as in "As pointed out by Huxley (1879a), Darwin's Origin of the Species (1859) revolutionized the way natural scientists view the world".

Never enter quotes or paraphrases text into your word processor without immediately entering the correct citation!

Some simple things to do when:

Quoting: When is a paraphrase no longer a quote? My rule of thumb is that "three words or more" is in the danger zone. However, there are times when even a single word should be placed in quotes - if it is a newly-coined word or used in a context that is unusual. **The key issue is that you must use quotes whenever the string of words being borrowed is not part of the common lexicon in your field.** Obviously you must be somewhat of an expert in your field before you know what is in the "common lexicon" and what is not.

When in doubt, use quotes and give the citation, or seek advice.

Paraphrasing. Generally a risky practice. It is better to synthesize several sources. If you must, be sure to cite each sentence you paraphrase. If you paraphrase more than a single sentence (why are you?!) - be sure to indicate that the section is a paraphrase. Don't mix paraphrases from different sources or parts of a source: the paraphrase should "represent" faithfully the content of the original.

Citing Ideas. H. Gilbert asks, should I cite the sentence "Proteins are made of amino acids"? My rule of thumb is this: if you have a source document in front of you, then you should cite it. If the fact is, instead, from your accumulated wisdom and therefore likely to be part of the professional knowledge base, you can not cite it. In some contexts- such as when discussing the history of ideas, you would want to give the original source of that idea.

Paraphrasing in a non-native language. You may feel that you cannot articulate some idea as clearly as did the original writer. If you must, then quote or paraphrase appropriately, BUT ALWAYS GIVE THE CITATION!

Going to the library. When taking notes: be sure to indicate clearly what are quotes and make sure they are exactly correct! If you paraphrase in your notes- indicate clearly that it is a paraphrase - don't rely on your memory! Keep track of your references by including citations to a particular source in your notes. Photocopy at least the front page of every article you read and

make sure you have complete pagination information.

Using the word processor. Always cite immediately for quotes and paraphrases. If you can't find the source for a particular point, flag the text with a unique symbol such as "@ref" that will remind you later. Before final printing- scan for the @ symbol and make sure you insert the appropriate reference.

Using reference managing programs These include PapyrusTM, EndNoteTM, Reference ManagerTM, etc. Learn how to use them and use them. They allow you to organize your references, enter citations quickly into your text, generate a final copy with citations and produce an organized reference list.

Adapting figures and tables. If you use or adapt figures from another source- be sure to say so. Figures from printed sources are usually copyrighted! If you adapt a table from another source- be sure to credit the original source and obtain permission from the copyright holder.

References

Funk, I. K. (1921). **New Standard Dictionary of the English Language.**

Merton, R. K. (1973b). **The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations.** Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p.402-403.

For additional information see this web site:

http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/immuno/igr_homeric.html

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