

UNDERSTANDING AND AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

UIW Writing
and Learning
Center

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism simply means that you have used someone else's work (exact words, ideas, images, and so on) in your writing without giving proper credit. According to UIW's Policy on Academic Integrity, plagiarism is the "appropriation of another's work in one's own written work offered for credit." UIW also constitutes the unauthorized reuse of one's own work, or the "turning in of the same work to more than one class without consent of the instructor involved," as academic dishonesty.

Any time you use someone else's work without giving him or her credit, you are plagiarizing. This may include copying word-for-word, changing certain words, or using another person's ideas without properly citing him or her. It is also possible to plagiarize scientific information, art, music, and many other forms of media. Even if you do not plagiarize on purpose, using someone else's work without giving due credit is still plagiarism.

Why is Understanding Plagiarism Important?

Plagiarism is considered unethical in school and in the professional world: if you do not give the original author credit, you are telling the reader that you came up with the idea on your own. Most professors will outline their policy regarding plagiarism in their syllabi. These policies range from receiving an "F" on the plagiarized assignment to failing the course and being reported to the university. It is not unheard of for students to get dismissed from an institution due to plagiarism-related offenses.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

In order to avoid plagiarism, you need to be certain that anything you are stating without citation is your own idea. To make sure that you are properly expressing your own ideas and not the author's, you should take careful notes on your topic and make sure you distinguish the author's ideas from your own. You must properly cite the sources that you quote or paraphrase. It is important to note carefully where each piece of text comes from so that you can create an accurate bibliography.

- **Cite as You Write**

As soon as you add any information or direct quotes to your paper, add your citation. The more you practice doing so, the more it will become second nature. Otherwise, you will find yourself having to go back through pages of notes, articles, and books in search of the exact spot where the material is located. It is not enough to include a list of sources at the end of your paper.

You must show throughout the assignment which points came from others and which are yours. Citing credible sources shows how much work you have done and also signals

to your reader (in this case, your professor) that the information in your paper is reliable.

- **Quotations**

There are many times when using quotations will be more effective than paraphrasing. If you decide to quote, make sure to provide the proper citation for the format you are using. Use quotations any time you use someone else's exact words or when referring to technical terms that are not common knowledge. Even if you only use a few words and not an entire sentence, make sure to include quotation marks.

- **Paraphrasing**

You should paraphrase whenever you are using the author's ideas but do not need to quote the text directly. When you paraphrase, make sure to convey the author's ideas accurately and include an in-text citation. Make sure to include a citation for any information that is original to the author and not considered common knowledge.

- **Bibliographies**

At the end of your paper, make sure to include an accurate Works Cited or References page that includes each source you cite in-text.