



## **Avoiding Plagiarism:**

### **Using Style Guides to Cite Properly and Improve Your Writing**

By Sue Ann Brainard, Reference/Instruction Librarian, Milne Library

Plagiarism is a serious offense that can lead to expulsion from college. Most students understand that submitting to a professor a research paper that they did not write is plagiarism. And most students also know that lifting a sentence from an article, book, or web page, and placing it in a research paper without citing where it came from, is plagiarism.

However, there are many other types of plagiarism which many students commit unconsciously. They do this because they do not understand how to cite properly, or because they think the professor doesn't want to see an excessive amount of quotes and citations in their paper.

Understanding the proper way to cite sources, paraphrase, and place quotes in a research paper can not only save you from plagiarism accusations, it will make your paper easier to read, your ideas clearer, and your writing more elegant. And that can mean the difference between a C and an A!

**Sources:** *Plagiarism: A Student's Guide to Recognizing It and Avoiding It*  
Dr. C. Barnbaum, Department of Physics and Astronomy, Valdosta State University  
([http://www.valdosta.edu/~cbarnbau/personal/teaching\\_MISC/plagiarism.htm](http://www.valdosta.edu/~cbarnbau/personal/teaching_MISC/plagiarism.htm))

## **Definition from SUNY Geneseo's Policy on Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's words or ideas as one's own, or the arrangement of someone else's material(s) as one's own. Such misrepresentation may be sufficient grounds for a student's receiving a grade of E for the paper or presentation involved or may result in an E being assigned as the final grade for the course. Any one of the following constitutes evidence of plagiarism:

- Direct quotation without identifying punctuation and citation of source
- Paraphrase of expression or thought without proper attribution
- Unacknowledged dependence upon a source in plan, organization, or argument

([http://bulletin.geneseo.edu/first/?pg=01\\_Student\\_Affairs\\_policies.html#Heading248](http://bulletin.geneseo.edu/first/?pg=01_Student_Affairs_policies.html#Heading248))

### **Still more:**

For information about citing sources, see: <http://library.geneseo.edu/research/citing.shtml>

If you have questions about using style guides or concepts like 'common knowledge' or using quotes in your paper, please see: <http://library.geneseo.edu/research/plagiarism.shtml>

***Come to the Reference Desk for help!***

**Source:** <http://library.geneseo.edu/research/plagiarism.shtml>



## **Types of Plagiarism**

### **Copy and Paste**

Any time you lift a sentence or significant phrase intact from a source, you must use quotation marks and reference the source.

### **Word Switch**

If you take a sentence from a source and change around a few words, it is still plagiarism. If you want to quote a sentence, then you need to put it in quotation marks and cite the author and article. But quoting Source articles should only be done if what the quote says is particularly useful in the point you are trying to make in what you are writing. In many cases, a quotation would not really be useful. The person who plagiarizes is sometimes just too lazy to synthesize the ideas expressed in the Source article.

### **Metaphor**

Metaphors are used either to make an idea clearer or give the reader an analogy that touches the senses or emotions better than a plain description of the object or process. Metaphors, then, are an important part of an author's creative style. If you cannot come up with your own metaphor to illustrate an important idea, then use the metaphor in the Source Article, but give the author credit for it.

### **Idea**

If the author of the source article expresses a creative idea or suggests a solution to a problem, the idea or solution must be clearly attributed to the author. A word about "common knowledge:" Students seem to have a hard time distinguishing author's ideas and/or solutions from common knowledge, or public domain information. Common knowledge or public domain is any idea or solution which people in the field accept as general knowledge. For example, what a black hole is and how it is defined is general knowledge. You do not need to reference a general description of a black hole. The escape velocity of earth is also general knowledge and needs no reference. The distance to the center of the Galaxy is also general knowledge. However, a new idea about how to look for black holes or a new solution to a physics problem needs to be attributed to the authors. If you don't know what is accepted as public domain in a particular field, ask.

### **Reasoning Style/Organization**

When you follow a Source Article sentence-by-sentence or paragraph-by-paragraph, it is plagiarism, even though none of your sentences are exactly like those in the Source article or even in the same order. What you are copying in this case is the author's reasoning style.