

## What is Plagiarism?

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, to "plagiarize" means:

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

## Ways to avoid Plagiarism

It is easy to find information for most research papers, but it is not always easy to add that information into your paper without falling into the plagiarism trap. There are easy ways to avoid plagiarism. Follow some simple steps while writing your research paper to ensure that your document will be free of plagiarism.

### Some Ways to Avoid Plagiarism

- **Paraphrase** - If you have found information that is perfect for your research paper. Read it and put it into your own words. Make sure that you do not copy verbatim more than two words in a row from the text you have found. If you do use more than two words together, you will have to use quotation marks.
- **Cite** - Citing is one of the effective ways to avoid plagiarism. Follow the document formatting guidelines (i.e. APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) used by our educational institution or the institution that issued the research request. This usually entails the addition of the author(s) and the date of the publication or similar information. Not citing properly can constitute plagiarism.
- **Quoting** - When quoting a source, use the quote exactly the way it appears. No one wants to be misquoted. Most institutions of higher learning frown on "block quotes" or quotes of 40 words or more. A scholar should be able to effectively paraphrase most material. This process takes time, but the effort pays off! Quoting must be done correctly to avoid plagiarism allegations.
- **Citing Quotes** - Citing a quote can be different than citing paraphrased material. This practice usually involves the addition of a page number, or a paragraph number in the case of web content.
- **Citing Your Own Material** - If some of the material you are using for your research paper was used by you in your current class, a previous one, or anywhere else you must cite yourself. Treat the text the same as you would if someone else wrote it. It may sound odd, but using material you have used before is called self-plagiarism, and it is not acceptable.
- **Referencing** - One of the most important ways to avoid plagiarism is including a reference page or page of works cited at the end of your research paper. Again, this page must meet the document formatting guidelines used by your educational institution. This information is very specific and includes the author(s), date of publication, title, and source. Follow the directions for this page carefully. You will want to get the references right.

## Checking Research Papers

Be sure to edit your research paper carefully and check for plagiarism before turning it in to the class. The steps above are essential for research paper writing. Using plagiarism checker services such as Turnitin is a great way to assess your paraphrasing and other anti-plagiarism

skills. Most educators and educational institutions are using some kind of plagiarism checker software to check students' papers. Do not take the chance of *not* checking your research paper. **Plagiarism could mean the loss of your academic degree or career.**

[The Turnitin Plagiarism Spectrum](#)

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