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Plagiarism

What is plagiarism?

Take the SFU Library interactive tutorial Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism **to test your expertise on plagiarism!**

Very simply, plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of other people's ideas or work. Plagiarism is often unintentional and can be avoided through careful work habits. Whether intentional or unintentional, plagiarism is recognized as a serious academic offence.

These are some examples of plagiarism. Some are obvious, but some may be new to you:

- Misrepresenting someone else's work as your own:
  - Copying another student's paper or an article from a journal or website
  - Buying an essay from a term-paper mill
- Copying sentences or paragraphs without properly citing their source:
  - Quoting material without proper use of quotation marks (even if otherwise cited appropriately)
  - Using specific facts without proper attribution (other than information that qualifies as 'common knowledge')
  - Using a specific argument or logic without crediting the source
  - Using art, graphs, illustrations, maps, statistics, photographs, etc. without complete and proper citation
  - Translating a work from one language to another without complete and proper citation
- Paraphrasing
  - Paraphrasing or summarizing information from a source without proper acknowledgement
  - Re-writing a section but not making it sufficiently different from the original (even if cited appropriately)

It is **your responsibility**, as a student and a member of the academic community, to ensure that you have appropriately acknowledged and correctly cited all the resources you have consulted and used in preparing your research paper.

Why is plagiarism considered to be such a serious offence?

In academic culture new ideas 'belong' to their creator. Proper and complete citations assist individual creators to retain ownership rights to their work. When sources are not properly acknowledged, a creator's right of ownership is threatened. Secondly, citing sources enables readers of your paper to review the research that you read when initially preparing your paper, and to therefore trace the path of your argument more effectively.

At the university level plagiarism can undermine the credibility of research done at academic institutions, and therefore universities have little tolerance for this type of behaviour.

What are the consequences of plagiarism?

Depending on the case, penalties for academic dishonesty at SFU are very severe and range from reprimand, to failure in a course, to suspension. We strongly suggest that you don't do it!

Two SFU policies address the issues of academic honesty and plagiarism:
- Code of Academic Honesty (T 10.02, May 1, 2000)
- Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct Procedures (T10.3, June 5, 2000).

SFU subscribes to a web-based service called Turnitin to assist instructors in detecting plagiarism in student essays and term projects.

How can I avoid plagiarism?

- Make sure you understand the material you are using
- Avoid relying too heavily on the ideas of others
- Make sure you know how to cite correctly
- Talk to a librarian and attend library instruction workshops
- Stay away from Internet 'paper mills'

You must always acknowledge the original sources that you used. Use proper citations whenever you:

- Borrow textual material, ideas, arguments, charts, graphs, maps, illustrations, etc.
- Quote passages directly. If you quote a source, you must quote word for word
- Paraphrase or summarize ideas or arguments
- Present facts that are not 'common knowledge'.

There are several ways to cite a source within a paper. Remember that the source that is cited within the paper must also be included in the bibliography. To be able to correctly cite the sources you have used, it's advisable to consult a citation style guide. Three of the most widely used citation styles are APA, MLA and Chicago. Check our guides for excellent examples that will help you with correctly citing your sources.

Useful tips

Quoting

- Use quotation marks whenever quoting an exact phrase, sentence or short paragraph
- Longer quotations should not be included in quotation marks, but indented, as indicated by the citation style in use
- Select and use quotations carefully. Use them only when they directly contribute to your argument
- Avoid quotations that only provide detail, common knowledge, or information that can be more effectively paraphrased

Paraphrasing and Summarizing

- Paraphrase when you need to represent another person's ideas, and a quote is not significant or suitable
- To correctly paraphrase, you must change both language and sentence structure
- Summarize if you want to provide the main points of another person's argument in a condensed format, more brief than a paraphrase
- Avoid taking notes verbatim or using the cut & paste tool in your software

Citing

- Make sure you acknowledged and cited all sources of borrowed ideas and materials
- Make sure you have a properly prepared bibliography

Terminology

Bibliography	
	Also called **reference list** and **list of sources cited**. A list of citations to books, journal or newspaper articles, or other items used in research. Bibliographies usually appear at the end of a journal article, book, or encyclopedia article.
Citation	
	Also called a **reference**. The information which identifies a book, article or any type of writing. It usually includes the author, title, place of publication, publisher and date of publication (a book citation), or the author, title of the article, title of the journal (source), volume, issue number, date and pages (an article citation).
Citing	
	The process of acknowledging the sources of your information and ideas.
Common knowledge	
	Information that the majority of people either know or can easily find in multiple public and authoritative sources, e.g. general reference sources. It is factual information. For example: 'The year has 365 days'. 'Canada has ten provinces and three territories'. 'John F. Kennedy was the 35th president of the United States. He was assassinated in 1963.'
Intellectual property	
	A form of creative endeavour that can be protected through a trade-mark, patent, copyright, industrial design or integrated circuit topography (Canadian Intellectual Property Office. *A guide to Copyright*).
Paraphrasing	
	Restating a quotation in one's own words, using the basic idea of the original author.
Plagiarise	
	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 (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*).
Quotation	
	Copying of text originally published elsewhere. Direct quotations generally appear in quotation marks and end with a citation.
Reference	
	see Citation
Reference list	
	See Bibliography
Term-Paper mills	
	A term applied to a growing number of Internet companies who sell pre-written term papers.

Recommended sites & sources

- How not to plagiarize- from the University of Toronto
- Avoiding Plagiarism : Mastering the Art of Scholarship - from the University of California at Davis
- Guide to Plagiarism and Cyber-Plagiarism - from the University of Alberta
- How to recognize plagiarism. Real plagiarism cases. From the Indiana University

- Plagiarism : it's a crime. / DVD, 2004. PN 167 P53 2004. Includes types of plagiarism and strategies for avoiding plagiarism.

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