

Avoiding plagiarism--APA

Lesson Objective

Students will learn the definition of plagiarism and how to avoid it. They will complete a short quiz on plagiarism to show mastery of the skill.

Handouts

1. "Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism"
2. "Plagiarism Quiz"

Length of Lesson

20-30 minutes

Variations for Different Disciplines

1. General
2. Film

Source

Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism and Part 1 of the Plagiarism Quiz was adapted from Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, by the Brooklyn College Writing Fellows.

Part 2 of Plagiarism Quiz was written by Brendan O'Malley (Fellow 2009-2011) and Siobhan Cooke (Fellow 2008-2010).

Approved

12/1/09

File Name

ML_plagiarism_Gen_APA.doc

Lesson Instructions

1. Give students the handouts.
2. Discuss the definition of plagiarism, examples of plagiarism, and how to avoid it. It may be advisable to pair this lesson with one on correct citation in the student's discipline. (10 minutes)
3. Give the plagiarism quiz and discuss the answers. (10 minutes)

According to Brooklyn College policy, plagiarism is representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise. Examples include:

- Copying another person's actual words without the use of quotation marks and citation to attribute the words to their source.
- Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging the source.
- Using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the source.
- Submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers, paraphrasing or copying information from the Internet without citing the source, and "cutting and pasting" from various sources without proper attribution.

It is easy to avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism by following the guidelines outlined below. As always, if you have specific questions about whether something is plagiarism or not, ask your instructor.

Quotation: Whenever you copy something directly from another text, put it in quotation marks. Also, document the source according to the standard documentation style in your discipline.

Example: According to journalist Kevin Sack of the *New York Times* (2009), "The insurance lobby has said that if Washington required coverage for all, it would end the practice of denying coverage to those with pre-existing health conditions" (p. 4).

TIP: Be especially careful to indicate a quotation with quotation marks when you are taking notes during your research, so that you don't forget and think that you wrote the passage yourself.

Paraphrase: Sometimes you want to state another person's ideas, but in your own words. You must still acknowledge the source of the information. Be sure you aren't just rearranging or replacing a few words.

Example: A *New York Times* journalist has noted that the insurance industry would cover people with pre-existing conditions if the government required everyone to have insurance (Sack, 2009, p. 4).

Check your paraphrase against the original text to be sure you have not accidentally used the same phrases or words and that the information is accurate. Remember that the source of each idea you use must be cited separately; it's not enough to simply refer to an author once if you have used his or her ideas throughout your paper.

TIP: Read over what you want to paraphrase carefully, and then cover up or close the text so you aren't tempted to use the text as a "guide." Write out the idea in your own words without peeking.

Common Knowledge: You do not need to document the source of facts that can be found in numerous places and are likely to be known by a lot of people.

Example: John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States in 1960.

However, you *must* document facts that are not generally known.

Example: Kennedy was elected by a margin of only 0.2%, according to the website of the National Archives.

You must also cite interpretations of facts made by specific people.

Example: Many Americans believe that JFK was elected in 1960 as a result of widespread electoral fraud, but political scientist Edmund F. Kallina (1988) has argued that while the election may not have been completely clean, the amount of fraud was not significant enough to change the results.

This is not a fact but an interpretation; consequently, you need to cite your source.

TIP: When in doubt, ask yourself if what you are saying is agreed on by many readily available sources. If so, it is common knowledge. If the information is disputable, then your readers will want to know where you are getting that version of the facts and therefore you need to cite your source.

Part 1. True False

Please indicate whether each statement is true or false.

1. Plagiarism is using the ideas and words of someone else as my own work without citing the original work.
2. If I download something from the Internet and change a few words and phrases, I can use that information as my own for class assignments.
3. If I find a newspaper article on the Internet, I can use it in my work without reference because it is in an electronic form.
4. It is actually getting very easy for someone else to do an electronic search to find the sources of information I used from the Internet.
5. If someone said something in a lecture or on TV, I don't have to cite it because it is not written.
6. It is acceptable to use text from Wikipedia in my paper without citation because it is anonymously edited, and it is difficult or impossible to find the author.
7. Paraphrasing is rewording someone else's ideas or facts. It is acceptable to paraphrase in a paper as long as the source is cited.
8. If an article is anonymously written it still must be cited.
9. Paraphrasing information from the Internet and using it as my own work without citation is considered plagiarism.
10. If I am unsure about how to cite a source, I should consult a style manual to find the correct citation style.

Part 2. Identifying Plagiarism

The following are quotes from sources and excerpts from student papers that somehow employ the source quote. In each case, ask yourself: **Is this plagiarism?**

❖ Example 1

Original Quote:

“To be sure, Atlantic Africans made important contributions in forging the interconnected, mutually influencing entanglements of the Atlantic world; yet they were also ensnared by them—through slavery, through racism, through colonial subjectivity.”

This quote comes from page 305 of the following:

Sweet, J. H. (2009). Mistaken identities? Olaudah Equiano, Domnigos Álvares, and the methodological challenges of studying the African diaspora. *American Historical Review*, 114(2), 279-306.

Student paper excerpt: As one historian has written, people from Africa played an important role in creating the interconnectedness of the early modern Atlantic world even though they were often victims of slavery and racism.

Is this plagiarism? YES. This passage paraphrases the idea of another author without providing a specific citation. Even though the student acknowledges that the idea is not her own by writing “As one historian has written,” the source information is not provided. A specific citation for the source is needed to be completely free and clear of plagiarism.

❖ Example 2

Original Quote:

“On April 12, while the Union fleet lay helpless offshore, the Confederates began bombarding Fort Sumter, and after thirty-four hours Anderson and his garrison were forced to surrender.”

This quote comes from page 292 of the following:

Donald, D. H. (1995). *Lincoln*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Student paper excerpt: The Confederates started the American Civil War in April 1861 when they bombarded Fort Sumter.

Is this plagiarism? NO. The fact that the Confederates started the American Civil War by firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861 is considered general knowledge. While a member of the general public might not know this exact date off the top of his or her head, any scholar or instructor of United States history will know this. Thus if you are writing an academic paper, you do not have to cite this well known fact.

❖ Example 3

Original Quote:

“In 1893, the city’s star rat catcher was Frederick Wegner, who arrived from Bavaria and made his name, first, by ridding Brooklyn’s Prospect Park and then Greenwood Cemetery of rats. When there was a rat infestation in the Central Park Zoo—the rumor was that the elephants had been attacked by rats—he was immediately called in and caught 475 rats in his first week; he used traps because the zookeeper was worried about poison around elephants.”

This quote comes from page 97-98 of the following:

Sullivan, R. (2004). *Rats: observations on the history & habitat of the city’s most unwanted inhabitants*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Student paper excerpt: The journalist Robert Sullivan (2004) has noted that New York City’s most successful rat catcher of the 1890s was a Bavarian immigrant named Frederick Wegner, who rid the Central Park Zoo of a major infestation without the use of poison (p. 97-8).

Is this plagiarism? NO. The student paraphrases the source author and then provides a full citation in a footnote.

❖ Example 4

Original Quote:

“Just as some advocates viewed Central Park as the future rendezvous of the polite world, so some enthusiasts imagined a zoological garden as a place for their socializing.... The private society’s projected zoo would be open to the public but closed to the general public on Sundays. (London’s Zoological Garden admitted only subscribers on Sundays, ‘the fashionable day’ to visit.) The *Herald* warned that ‘such class regulations’ ‘in favor of the wealthy few’ would not be tolerated in republican America.”

This quote comes from page 342 of the following:

Rosenzweig, R. & Blackmar, E. (1982). *The park and the people: a history of Central Park*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Student paper excerpt: When Central Park was founded some advocates viewed the park as the future rendezvous of the polite world, and they wanted to restrict admission to the zoological garden to subscribers on Sundays (Google Books, 2009).

Is this plagiarism? YES. The student quoted directly from the source without the use of quotation marks and did not accurately cite the source. A corrected version might read:

When Central Park was founded, “some advocates viewed the park as the future rendezvous of the polite world,” and they wanted to restrict Sunday admission to the zoological garden to subscribers (Rosenzweig & Blackmar, 1982, p. 342).

❖ Example 5

Original Quote:

“Though no deed of sale exists, the event is generally accepted as having taken place. In a 1626 letter, a Dutch merchant reported he has just heard, from ship passengers newly disembarked from New Netherland, that representatives of the West India Company had ‘purchased the Island Manhattes from the Indians for the value of 60 guilders.’ In 1846, using then current exchange rates, a New York historian converted this figure into twenty-four U.S. dollars.”

This quote comes from page xiv of the following:

Burrows, E. G. & Wallace, M. (1999). *Gotham: A history of New York City to 1898*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Student paper excerpt: The legend that Manhattan was purchased for twenty-four dollars does appear to have some historical evidence to support it. According to a Dutch merchant, the West India Company gave sixty guilders for the island.

Is this plagiarism? YES. While the author acknowledges that the information comes from “a Dutch merchant,” no source is cited. A corrected version might read:

The legend that Manhattan was purchased for twenty-four dollars does appear to have some historical evidence to support it. According to a Dutch merchant, the West India Company gave sixty guilders for the island (Burrows & Wallace, 1999, p. xiv).