

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is representing the words, creative work, or ideas of another person as one's own without providing proper documentation of source.

— University of Minnesota Student Conduct Code
as taken from <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/preventing/definitions.html>

This can be either (*from* <http://www.wpacouncil.org/node/9>)

- submitting someone else's text as one's own or attempting to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source, or
- carelessly or inadequately citing ideas and words borrowed from another source.

Ever heard about someone being caught plagiarizing? Share the story with your group. Include what the plagiarism consisted of and what the consequences were, if known. Why did the author plagiarize? Perhaps ignorance, carelessness, insecurity, or deceit?

(*list of reasons from* <http://clover.slavic.pitt.edu/tales/plagiarism.html>)

Plagiarism: From Copying to Patchwriting

Not all plagiarism is simply copying text word-for-word. There is a spectrum, from straightforward copying, to what is called *patchwriting*. The Purdue Writing Lab defines patchwriting this way. (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/929/15/>)

Patchwriting: Writing passages that are not copied exactly but that have nevertheless been borrowed from another source, with some changes — a practice which The Bedford Handbook for Writers calls “paraphrasing the source’s language too closely” (477). This “patchwriting” is plagiarism regardless of whether one supplies footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical notes that acknowledge the source.

However, patchwriting is not always a form of academic dishonesty; it is not always committed by immoral writers. Often it is a form of writing that learners employ when they are unfamiliar with the words and ideas about which they are writing. In this situation, patchwriting can actually help the learner begin to understand the unfamiliar material. Yet it is a transitional writing form; it is never acceptable for final-draft academic writing, for it demonstrates that the writer does not fully understand the source from which he or she is patchwriting.

We will discuss three examples on this spectrum of plagiarism.

Copying everything

No specific discussion today...

Changing only a few words.

Example from http://pages.turnitin.com/plagiarism_spectrum.html

Original:

Since its first discovery by non-indigenous people in the mid-nineteenth century, Yosemite Valley has held a special, even religious, hold on the American conscience because its beauty makes it an incomparable valley and one of the grandest of all special temples of Nature. While Yosemite holds a special grip on the western mind, perceptions about the Valley have evolved over time due to changing politics, migration patterns and environmental concerns as man has become more attuned to his relationship and impact on nature.

Unoriginal:

Since it was first discovered by non-native people in the mid-1800s, Yosemite Valley has held a unique, even sacred, hold on the American psyche because its beauty makes it an incomparable valley and one of the grandest of all special temples of Nature. While Yosemite holds a special grip on the western mindset, perceptions about the Valley have changed over time as a result of changing political movements, migrations, and the rise of environmental issues as people have become more attuned to their relationship and impact on nature.

Read these two paragraphs and discuss the plagiarism you see. What was changed? What was unchanged? How serious is this kind of plagiarism, and what might you do about it? How does your answer depend on the context? Be ready to share your thoughts with the group.

Copying segments/rearranging/selective omission

Example from http://pages.turnitin.com/plagiarism_spectrum.html

Original:

Since its first discovery by non-indigenous people in the mid-nineteenth century, Yosemite Valley has held a special, even religious, hold on the American conscience because its beauty makes it an incomparable valley and one of the grandest of all special temples of Nature. While Yosemite holds a special grip on the western mind, perceptions about the Valley have evolved over time due to changing politics, migration patterns and environmental concerns as man has become more attuned to his relationship and impact on nature.

Unoriginal:

Yosemite Valley, one of the grandest of all special temples of Nature, was first sighted by non-Indians in 1833 by Joseph Rutherford Walker. Since then, Yosemite Valley has had a special hold on the American conscience. But as man has become more attuned to his impact on nature, perceptions about the Valley have changed, due to politics, migration patterns and environmental concerns.

Read these two paragraphs and discuss the plagiarism you see. What was changed? What was unchanged? How serious is this kind of plagiarism, and what might you do about it? How does your answer depend on the context? Be ready to share your thoughts with the group.

Different words, same structure

Example from Purdue Writing Lab: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/1/>

Original (from Lester, James D. Writing Research Papers. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.)

Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes.

Unoriginal:

Students often use too many direct quotations when they take notes, resulting in too many of them in the final research paper. In fact, probably only about 10% of the final copy should consist of directly quoted material. So it is important to limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes.

Read these two paragraphs and discuss the plagiarism you see. What was changed? What was unchanged? How serious is this kind of plagiarism, and what might you do about it? How does your answer depend on the context? Be ready to share your thoughts with the group.

Additional Topics...

Citing standard statistical tests:

We don't usually cite Student when running a t-test. Why not? What guidelines would you suggest for deciding if a test needs to be cited or not?

Statistical boilerplate: Sometimes analyses are very similar, or even identical between several studies. What about taking text from one study and just replacing the appropriate parts? Or even using suggested boilerplate from a text or website, such as “A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of (IV) _____ on (DV) _____ in _____, _____, and _____ conditions. There was [not] a significant effect of (IV) _____ on (DV) _____ at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions [$F(_, _) = _, p = _$].” http://statistics-help-for-students.com/How_do_I_report_a_1_way_between_subjects_ANOVA_in_APA_style.htm

Is this plagiarism? What are the pros and cons of reusing statistical text or using boilerplate?

Catchy words or phrases: In a paper I'm to be a co-author on, a draft contained this sentence: "The relatively new field of behavioral economics is proposed as a means to improve dietary behavior based on the effectiveness of small, environmental changes known as nudges to alter choice behavior." Another co-author suggested that we needed to give credit for the word "nudge" to Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler, who used this word in this way in their book "Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness."

What statistical words or phrases can you think of for which we should credit the originator?

Citing data sets:

Is it important to cite the originator of data sets? Why or why not? Is citing the paper you got the data from sufficient, or do you need to go back farther?

Self-plagiarism:

Why is self-plagiarism considered academic dishonesty? In what contexts might it be more or less acceptable?

Name: _____

What techniques have you used, or do you think you might use, to help you avoid plagiarism?

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