

Proper Citation: Avoiding Plagiarism, Rachel Remmel

SO, WHAT'S THE POINT?

When you write a paper, the goal is to contribute your own thoughts and ideas about a particular topic to an ongoing academic conversation about that topic. Thus, it is essential to tell your reader which thoughts and ideas are yours—and which belong to other people participating in the academic conversation you are joining. You get credit for your own ideas (literally, grades and a college degree), and you give credit to others for their ideas in the form of citations. Put another way, citations help readers locate the source of material you used that interests them. It boils down to this:

- 1) Can someone reading your paper identify which parts you borrowed from another source?
- 2) Can someone reading your paper identify the specific source for each and every borrowed part of your paper?

If someone reading your paper can not only see which sentences contain borrowed material but also, using only your paper, find the source of that borrowed material, no matter where it may be, then you have done your job as a writer.

ELEMENTS OF A CITATION

For direct quotations: 1) quotation marks around exact unchanged words, 2) end-of-sentence citation, 3) full bibliographic information on source at end of paper.

For paraphrased material (borrowed material you have put into your own words): 1) end-of-sentence citation, 2) full bibliographic information on source at end of paper.

Advice: If you are paraphrasing, be sure to paraphrase fully. It is important that paraphrased material looks nothing like the original. If you are changing a couple of words to synonyms, you aren't paraphrasing and should just use a direct quotation. For examples of incomplete and full paraphrase, see: http://www.esm.rochester.edu/registrar/files/2014/05/plagiarism_examples1.pdf
<https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/what-constitutes-plagiarism>
<http://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/academic-writing/avoiding-plagiarism-paraphrasing>

SOURCES YOU MUST CITE

Virtually everything that isn't in your head, including websites, books, journals, online full-text databases, CDs and other forms of musical recordings or performance, conversations with friends, family, etc., personal letters and e-mails, newspapers, class discussions, course readings, magazines, museum labels, pamphlets, and many, many other kinds of sources. I require students to cite information presented in class. You should always assume that you need to cite course materials and class discussions unless your instructor has stated in writing that you don't have to.

NO NEED TO CITE

- 1) ideas that came from your own head
- 2) common knowledge (i.e., factual things that you knew before you took the course and that the average person walking down the street would know). Example: The U.S. Constitution was written in 1787. George Washington was the first president of the United States. **Not** common knowledge: anything that isn't strictly factual, even if the average person would know it. Example: the lyrics to the national anthem, since the Star-Spangled Banner is a creative production of its author, Francis Scott Key, not a fact.

PARTS OF YOUR PAPER YOU MUST CITE

- 1) direct quotations
- 2) paraphrase
- 3) borrowed words or key concepts
- 4) borrowed ideas or arguments
- 5) facts or statistics that are not common knowledge (see above)
- 6) all creative products of others
- 7) information presented in class

Important:

You must include proper citations EVEN IF:

- 1) you give the name of the source in the bibliography
- 2) you give the name of the source in the text
- 3) you change the language of the source completely into your own words
- 4) you borrow a concept, idea, or key term, rather than a section of a text
- 5) you are citing a fact (unless is it common knowledge)
- 6) the assignment is ungraded
- 7) the assignment is a draft
- 8) the assignment is a proposal that may not be executed

OTHER FORMS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

- 1) turning in a paper or parts of a paper that you did not write
- 2) turning in the same paper or parts of the same paper for more than one course
- 3) purchasing a paper or parts of a paper
- 4) copying a paper or sections of a paper from any source, including the internet
- 5) having a friend help you write your paper (see below)

In this last case, it is OK to have a friend proofread your paper, give feedback on your paper, or suggest an idea or evidence for your paper that you then properly acknowledge with a citation. It is not OK to have a friend contribute an idea to your paper or suggest evidence for your paper without citation; write any section of your paper with or without citation; or do anything else that would constitute creating the paper. The main differences here are 1) friend marking but not fixing mechanics like spelling or grammar (no need to cite) 2) friend improving the paper by suggesting things that you write yourself (must cite) and 3) friend writing or otherwise creating the paper (not allowed even with citation).

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT CITING

Academic honesty violations carry painful consequences. You can read more about them on the academic honesty website: <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/index.html>

RULE OF THUMB:

If you are ever confused, include a citation and ask your professor!
There is never a downside to citing.