

Plagiarism and Paraphrasing

University students are continually hearing other people's ideas and words. You hear and discuss them in lectures, read them in books and journals, and integrate them into your own writing. It is very important when using others' ideas to credit the person who came up with the idea for his or her work. The *American Heritage College Dictionary* (3rd Ed.) defines "plagiarize" as "To use and pass off as one's own (the ideas or writings of another)." (p.1044).

There are many forms of plagiarism. Some of these include:

- ◆ Turning in a paper that you did not write, but turning it in as your own (including papers purchased or copied from the Internet).
- ◆ Copying words and/or ideas from someone else without giving them proper credit.
- ◆ Quoting someone else's work without using quotation marks.
- ◆ Using the sentence structure of a source, but changing some of the words.
- ◆ Giving incorrect information about where you got your words/ideas.
- ◆ Copying so many words/ideas from a source that, even with citation, others' work makes up the majority of "your" work.
- ◆

In order to avoid plagiarizing, there are several important steps to take:

1. Place everything that comes word for word from a source in quotation marks, unless you are going to give a longer quote its own indented paragraph.
2. Cite any fact that is not common knowledge.
3. Cite any statistic, graph, or drawing.
4. Cite any idea, theory, or opinion that is not your own.
5. Give credit any time you paraphrase the words or phrases of anyone's original ideas or opinions.
6. When you are questioning whether or not to credit a source, err on the side of caution and credit the source.
7. Leave no doubt about who said what.
8. Learn how to paraphrase effectively and use this tool in your paper writing.
9. Take time to determine whether or not the source you are using is a reliable source, especially when using Internet-based sources.



Examples of plagiarism versus direct quotation and paraphrasing

Here is the original text from the book *The Intelligent Investor* by Benjamin Graham. Note that this quote is long enough that it is pulled out of the text and gets its own pseudo-paragraph. Typically, this happens when the quote you want to use is over a certain number of lines. Check with your style guide to determine when you should use this format in your paper. Note that when a quote is pulled out, the entire body of the quote gets indented, to distinguish it from the remainder of the paper.

What do we mean by “investor”? Throughout this book the term will be used in contradistinction to “speculator.” As far back as 1934, in our text book *Security Analysis*, we attempted a precise formulation of the definition between the two, as investment operation is one which, upon thorough analysis promises safety of principal and an adequate return. Operations not meeting these requirements are speculative.”
(Graham, 1973, p. 1)

Here is an **unacceptable** paraphrase:

What do I mean by “investor”? Throughout this paper the term will be used in contrast to “speculator.” In the 1934 text book *Security Analysis*, the authors attempted a precise formulation of the definition between the two: an investment operation is one that, upon complete analysis promises safety of investment and an adequate return. Investment not meeting these requirements is speculative.

This paraphrase is plagiarism for two reasons:

1. The writer has only changed only a few words, changed some of the order, and added a few words to the original text.
2. The writer of the original text has not been credited.

Doing either or both of these is considered plagiarism.

Here is an **acceptable** paraphrase:

The term “investor” has caused some debate as to its actual meaning. This paper will use it as Benjamin Graham did, first in his classic work *Security Analysis*. He distinguishes an investor from a speculator, stating that an investor is a person who has completely analyzed the investment opportunity and reasonably believes that not only will his or her principal be safe, but also there is a good likelihood of some return on the investment. Anything else is speculation (Graham, 1973, p. 1).

This is an acceptable paraphrase because it uses the writer’s own words, credits the author of the original work, and maintains the true idea of what the author said. It is possible to combine paraphrases and quotes in order to convey an idea. For example:

The definition of “investor” has caused some debate over the years. This paper will use it as Benjamin Graham did, first in his classic 1934 work *Security Analysis*. He distinguishes an investment from speculation, stating that “An investment operation is one which, upon thorough analysis, promises safety of principal and an adequate return. Operations not meeting these requirements are speculative” (Cited in Graham, 1973, p. 1).

This is an acceptable combination because the part of the paragraph that the writer wrote is in his or her own words, while the part of the paragraph that Graham wrote is set apart by quotation marks. Both are attributed to Graham, in such a way as to indicate the source, and precisely where (within the source) the information came from. It is important to use only your own words when paraphrasing, as failure to do so is an example of plagiarism.

Note that not placing quotation marks around the quotation is considered plagiarism. **This is true even if the writer cites the source from which the text was “borrowed.”**

Tips for effective paraphrasing

- ◆ Read the material you want to restate carefully. Make certain you fully understand the information.
- ◆ Put the material away some place you cannot see it, and write out what you want to say in your own words.
- ◆ Go back and check to make sure that your paraphrase is truly distinct from the original text.

Plagiarism & the World Wide Web

The Internet has become a common source for research information for students' papers. Because of this fact, the issue of plagiarism from the Internet has become increasingly prevalent. In most cases, the same rules that apply to printed text apply to the Internet: if you use other's words or ideas, **you must credit the original author.**

If you want to use visual information, the same rules apply; namely, if you use a source, you must cite that source. If you want to use a picture or graphics from the web (or a print source), it is important to credit where that picture came from. It may also be a good idea to get permission from the person with the copyright to that picture (e.g., the owner of the website) before using that picture or graphic.

Common Knowledge

Common knowledge refers to facts that can be found in numerous sources, and so generally do not need to be cited. For example, the fact that the American Civil War began in 1865 does not need to be cited, as it is information that can be found in numerous other sources. However, facts that are less well known, and interpretations of well-known facts do need to be cited.

Consequences of Plagiarism

Consequences of plagiarism may come from the institution, the government, and the person you have plagiarized. For sanctions from Alliant International University, please refer to the Undergraduate student handbook. Plagiarism is considered fraud, as it infringes on another individual's copyrighted material, which is legally protected. This can therefore result in fines or potentially jail time. The owner of the copyrighted material has the right to sue someone who has plagiarized his or her work for damages.

Material for this handout was obtained from:

The Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services Plagiarism pamphlet, available at: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.pdf>

Plagiarism.org's website is: http://www.plagiarism.org/research_site/e_home.html. It offers resources to students and educators on how to avoid plagiarism.

For additional writing help, please visit the Alliant International University Undergraduate Writing Lab in M-8 or call (858) 635-4439 for an appointment.

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