

PLAGIARISM

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words or ideas. In academic circles, it is considered deceptive, corrupt and even criminal behaviour. It is possible to avoid plagiarism by following basic guidelines.

Acts which are considered plagiarism

- Buying / Borrowing, without consent, someone else's work
- Hiring someone to write your work
- Copying from another source without citing (intentionally or by accident!)
- Building on someone else's ideas without citing

Acts which are NOT considered plagiarism

- Using common knowledge (folklore, common sense observations, shared information)
- Compiling generally accepted facts

What exactly is 'common knowledge' or 'a generally accepted fact'?

If the same information

- can be found undocumented in at least five other sources.
- can be easily obtained with general reference sources.
- is one that a lot of people will already know (such as scientific or historical facts or folklore).
- a common sense observation.

If you are not sure, stay on the safe side and CITE!

What kind of information needs to be cited?

- Somebody else's words, opinions, theories or ideas from a web page, magazine, book, newspaper, or any other source.
- The exact words or unique phrase from somewhere.
- Any reprinted diagrams, illustrations, charts and pictures.
- An idea, opinion or theory that is obtained in conversations or over e-mail.
- Somebody else's interpretation of facts or events.

How can you avoid plagiarism?

- **When quoting directly**, put quotation marks around the exact words you are quoting and keep the person's name near the quote (remember not to overuse direct quotes as they might decrease the effectiveness of your work).
- **When quoting indirectly (paraphrasing or summarising)**, begin with a statement giving credit to the source (e.g. According to...,) and rewrite the key ideas using different words and sentence structures than the original text.

Tips:

1. When paraphrasing or summarising, read the text carefully, then close the text and rewrite in your own words without looking. Then check to make sure you haven't used the same words or phrases. It is important that the information in the original text be recorded correctly.
2. A combination of direct and indirect quoting is also very common. Make the differentiation clear by using quotation marks for direct quotes.

Documentation/Citation Styles

Documentation is a standard approach to the citation of sources that the writer has consulted, quoted, paraphrased or summarised from. Different academic disciplines use different documentation styles. Refer to your supervisor to determine which style to use. It is important to fully understand the documentation style you will use and to use it consistently. For more information on documentation styles, you can refer to AWC handouts, books or the Web.