

Avoiding Plagiarism

1. Plagiarism is a Serious Offense

It can result in not just failing a paper or a course, but expulsion from the University. It can also seem like an ethical “grey area,” but in reality, acceptable vs. unacceptable practice is quite clear.

Plagiarism happens when you use specific words, phrases, ideas, or structures from other authors’ documents without citing the source and giving credit to the original author. This means that emulating another author’s style, tone, organization or actual words **requires** that you credit the author.

Submitting another person’s work as your own is another, more straightforward, version of plagiarism. This means that copying work, hiring it out, having someone else edit your work, or using papers downloaded from the Internet are all forms of plagiarism.

So, you must be careful not to copy:

- Words
- Phrases
- Concepts or ideas
- Sentence, paragraph, argument, or sectioning structures
- Any work that was completed by another person

2. Exceptions

To be clear, every discipline has standard terminology—for instance, “mitochondrial DNA,” “Greek Revival style,” or “Second-Language Learners.” Using this language is unavoidable, and typically is not considered plagiarism. The exception is using industry-specific language within the context of another author’s work, by direct quotation or imitation (e.g. “Grange’s work on mitochondrial DNA may show the actual chain of evolution...”)

Three Ways to Avoid Plagiarism

- Crediting an original author in your text
- Using proper quotation and citation
 - Quoting means using the actual words of the original author. You may not use every word, and you may even use them within a new structure, but they must still be quoted and include a citation.
- Paraphrasing with citation
 - Paraphrasing means restating the same information in a new way. It is okay to use a few of the same words, but it is very important that most of the words and the sentence structures be your own. Also, even if you paraphrase, you must cite the original author.