

# Plagiarism and Cheating

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged presentation of the work of others as one's own. To represent such work as self-created is dishonest and academically worthless. The Office of Research Integrity for the US Public Health Service considers plagiarism "to include both the theft or misappropriation of intellectual property, and the substantial unattributed textual copying of another's work, ... which means the unattributed verbatim or nearly verbatim copying of sentences and paragraphs which materially mislead the ordinary reader regarding the contributions of the author" (ORI Newsletter, Volume 3, No. 1, 1994:3).

Cheating involves the using, giving, receiving, or the attempt to use, give or receive unauthorized information during an examination in oral, written or other form; or, copying an essay, examination or report, or allowing someone else to copy one's essay, examination or report.

If a student is uncertain whether a course of action might constitute plagiarism or cheating, s/he should consult the instructors involved in advance.

Students should carefully read the Policy on Academic and Research Misconduct, especially the section on Sanctions, which is published in the current Graduate Calendar.

"Penalties may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a requirement to repeat the assignment, examination or course;
- failure on the assignment, course, examination, thesis or dissertation;
- suspension from the program or from the university;
- cancellation or revocation of the degree or diploma, where the offense pertains to the eligibility to receive such a degree or diploma, whether discovered before or after the degree or diploma is awarded;
- inclusion of a statement in the student's transcript pertaining to the suspension or expulsion or to the cancellation or revocation of the degree."

Wilfrid Laurier University uses software that can check for plagiarism. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form and have it checked for plagiarism.

The following is an excerpt from a book entitled Writing Research Papers by James D. Lester<sup>1</sup> which explains the term "plagiarism" in detail. Students are advised to read carefully and abide by the guidelines set out below.

"Fundamentally, plagiarism is the offering of the words or ideas of another person as one's own. While the most blatant violation is the use of another student's work, the most common is the intentional misuse of your reference sources. Since you will be working with the writings of others, it is important that you learn and adhere to certain ethical rules as to the use of reference material. One of the chief reasons for following these rules is that you want to avoid being falsely accused of plagiarism when your only error was unintentionally failing to acknowledge a source.

An obvious form of plagiarism is copying any direct quotation from your source material without providing quotation marks and without crediting the source. A more subtle form, but equally improper, is the paraphrasing of material or use of an original idea if that paraphrase or borrowed idea is not properly introduced and documented. Remember that another author's ideas, interpretations, and words are his or her property; they are protected by law and must be acknowledged whenever you borrow them. Consequently, your use of source materials requires that you conform to a few rules of conduct:

1. Acknowledge borrowed material within the text by introducing the quotation or paraphrase with the name of the authority from whom it was taken.
2. Enclose within quotation marks all quoted materials.
3. Make certain that paraphrased material is written in your own style and language. The simple rearrangement of sentence patterns is unacceptable.
4. Provide a footnote for each borrowed item.
5. Provide a bibliography entry for every book or magazine that appears in the footnotes.

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<sup>1</sup>(2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1971, pp. 48-51). Permission granted for reprinting by Publisher: Scott, Foresman and Company, June 27, 1985.

The examples provided below should reveal the differences between genuine research writing and plagiarism. First, here is the original reference material; it is followed by three student versions, only one of which would not be called plagiarism:

#### ORIGINAL MATERIAL

“I don’t think that black women can afford to be competitive with their men—especially now. Competing with them for jobs would just add to the problem that already exists. Black women have been able to find work when their husbands couldn’t and have often been the head of the family not because they wanted to be but out of economic necessity. Some of these women’s lib girls are asking for jobs that black men haven’t been able to get<sup>2</sup>.”

<sup>2</sup>Marjorie Barnes as quoted by Renee Ferguson, Washington Post, 3 October 1970; rpt. in Black Women in White America, ed. Gerda Lerner (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 589.

#### STUDENT VERSION A (unacceptable)

“Black women have usually been less discriminated against than their male counterparts. For example, black women have been able to find work when their husbands couldn’t and have often been the head of the family not because they wanted to be but out of economic necessity.”

This piece of writing is plagiarism in a most deplorable form. The student has simply borrowed abundantly from the original source, even to the point of retaining the essential wording, and has provided no documentation whatever, which implies to the reader that these sentences are entirely his or her original creation.

#### STUDENT VERSION B (unacceptable)

“Black women have usually been less discriminated against than their male counterparts. For example, most black women have usually been able to find jobs when their husbands couldn’t. And they have sometimes been head of the household out of economic necessity, not because they wanted to be<sup>7</sup>.”

<sup>7</sup> Marjorie Barnes as quoted by Renee Ferguson, Washington Post, 3 October 1970; rpt. in Black Women in White America, ed. Gerda Lerner (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 589.

This student’s version is also plagiarism, even though the citation is carefully documented. He or she has obviously copied almost directly from the source, changing only a few words and phrases. The student also fails to introduce the borrowed materials; thus, the reader is uncertain about the footnote. Does it refer to the entire paragraph or only the final sentence or two? As a research writer, you may avoid these errors by introducing the material as direct quotation or, if you prefer, as a scholarly paraphrase that might include direct quotation of a few significant or well-worded phrases.

#### STUDENT VERSION C (acceptable)

“Black women have usually been less discriminated against than their male counterparts. For example, Marjorie Barnes points out that black women often find employment while their husbands cannot. She added that “economic necessity” has forced some of these women to be heads of households even though they did not seek the role<sup>7</sup>.”

<sup>7</sup> Marjorie Barnes as quoted by Renee Ferguson, Washington Post, 3 October 1970; rpt. in Black Women in America, ed. Gerda Lerner (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 589.

This version represents a satisfactory handling of the source material. (...) The authority is acknowledged at the outset, and the substance of the commentary is well expressed in the student’s own language with one phrase directly quoted, so as to give full credit where the credit is due. The student has been wholly honest to the source material while effectively using that source for a particular purpose.”