

The following information is from <http://www.plagiarism.org>

Please feel free to visit the site for more information.

What is Plagiarism?

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

What is plagiarism?

Simply put, plagiarism is the use of another's original words or ideas as though they were your own. Any time you borrow from an original source and do not give proper credit, you have committed plagiarism.

Do I have to cite sources for every fact I use?

No. You do not have to cite sources for facts that are not the result of unique individual research. Facts that are readily available from numerous sources and generally known to the public are considered "common knowledge," and are not protected by copyright laws. You can use these facts liberally in your paper without citing authors. If you are unsure whether or not a fact is common knowledge, you should probably cite your source just to be safe.

If I change the words, do I still have to cite the source?

Changing only the words of an original source is NOT sufficient to prevent plagiarism. You must cite a source whenever you borrow ideas as well as words.

If I cite the source, can I still be accused of plagiarism?

You are allowed to borrow ideas or phrases from other sources provided you cite them properly and your usage is consistent with the guidelines set by fair use laws. As a rule, however, you should be careful about borrowing too liberally -- if the case can be made that your work consists predominantly of someone else's words or ideas, you may still be susceptible to charges of plagiarism. Also, if you follow the words of a source too closely, and do not use quotation marks, it can be considered plagiarism even if you cite the source.

If I write something somebody else already wrote, but I didn't know they wrote it, is that still plagiarism?

While it is possible that you might write on the same topic as someone else, odds are that you will not have exactly the same ideas or express them in exactly the same way. It is highly unlikely that you would be accused of plagiarizing a source you have never read. Be careful, however, of "accidentally" plagiarizing from sources you have read and forgotten -- if your ideas turn out to have been influenced by a source that you read but failed to cite for any reason, you could be guilty of plagiarism.

Academic Punishments

Most colleges and universities have zero tolerance for plagiarists. In fact, academic standards of intellectual honesty are often more demanding than governmental copyright laws. If you have plagiarized a paper whose copyright has run out, for example, you are no less likely to be disciplined than if you had plagiarized copyrighted material.

A plagiarized paper almost always results in failure for the assignment, frequently in failure for the course, and sometimes in expulsion.

What is citation? (Verwysing)

A "citation" is the way you tell your readers that certain material in your work came from another source. It also gives your readers the information necessary to find that source again, including:

1. information about the author
2. the title of the work
3. the name and location of the company that published your copy of the source
4. the date your copy was published
5. the page numbers of the material you are borrowing

Why should I cite sources?

Giving credit to the original author by citing sources is the only way to use other people's work without plagiarizing. But there are a number of other reasons to cite sources:

1. citations are extremely helpful to anyone who wants to find out more about your ideas and where they came from.
2. not all sources are good or right -- your own ideas may often be more accurate or interesting than those of your sources. Proper citation will keep you from taking the rap for someone else's bad ideas.
3. citing sources shows the amount of research you've done.
4. citing sources strengthens your work by lending outside support to your ideas.

Doesn't citing sources make my work seem less original?

Not at all. On the contrary, citing sources actually helps your reader distinguish your ideas from those of your sources. This will actually emphasize the originality of your own work.

When do I need to cite?

Whenever you borrow words or ideas, you need to acknowledge their source. The following situations almost always require citation:

1. whenever you use quotes
2. whenever you paraphrase
3. whenever you use an idea that someone else has already expressed
4. whenever you make specific reference to the work of another
5. whenever someone else's work has been critical in developing your own ideas.