

# PLAGIARISM

*Plagiarism is perhaps one of the gravest of crimes in the academic world. It is stealing; it is misrepresentation of one's self; and it is insulting. This is not to say that everyone who plagiarizes intentionally plagiarizes, but the fact remains, that whenever we write something where we have relied on others for information, we **must give them credit for their thoughts, ideas, and statements.***

*Two popular Virginia universities are very clear about their policies regarding plagiarism:*

## **University of Virginia:**

*As found in the syllabus for ENGL 383:*

The following statement on plagiarism, composed by a University faculty member, appears in a letter from the Chair of the Honor Committee:

Plagiarism is presenting another person's work as your own. Examples of plagiarism include copying another person's paper, restating ideas from a book or article without citing the article as a source, or copying more than seven words from a book or article without quotation marks and a citation of the source of the quotation. These examples do not exhaust the possibilities. Any example of presenting another person's work as your own is plagiarism. Common unacceptable excuses for plagiarism:

1. "I didn't know what I did was plagiarism." If you have serious doubts about requirements for citing other sources, consult a member of the Honor Committee or a faculty member.
2. "I didn't think the assignment was important." Plagiarism is a serious offense in any academic situation.
3. "I was under a lot of pressure." Nothing justifies plagiarism.

This definition of plagiarism should guide your actions in the course. Note also that it is an honor offense to submit the same paper for two different courses, unless you check with the instructor of each course in advance.

Source: <http://ctmtc.virginia.edu/%7eengl1383crsreq.htm>

## **George Mason University:**

*As found in the Honor Code and Plagiarism Statement:*

Plagiarism means using exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. ***Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in any academic setting.***

Source: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

## Guide for Avoiding Plagiarism:

### Materials NOT requiring credit:

- COMMON KNOWLEDGE:

Examples:            *The Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776.*

*William Rehnquist is the Supreme Court's Chief Justice.*

What this means is if most readers would be likely to know something, you do not need to cite it. On the other hand, if you listed the signers of the Declaration of Independence and their motivations for signing, you must cite it. Why? Because the motivation of the signers is either argued by a historian based on his/her research or stated by the signer himself.

- FACTS AVAILABLE IN A WIDE VARIETY OF SOURCES:

If a number of encyclopedias, almanacs, or textbooks include the information, you need not cite a specific source.

Example: *The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor occurred on December 7, 1941.*

You would, however, need to credit a source that argued that the failure of the bombing to destroy the submarines meant that Japan was destined to lose the war in the Pacific. Why? Because this is an argument and can be debatable depending on how one analyzes/interprets the data.

- YOUR OWN FINDINGS FROM FIELD RESEARCH:

If you conduct field research – observations, interviews, surveys – and produce results, simply announce those results as your own.

### Materials requiring credit:

- DIRECT QUOTATIONS:

This holds true for all or parts of another's words.

- ASSERTIONS THAT ARE ARGUABLE OR FACTS THAT ARE NOT WIDELY KNOWN:

If your readers would be unlikely to know a fact, or if an author presents an assertion that may or may not be true, cite the source. To claim for instance, that Israel has built atomic weapons, you would need to cite the source of your claims, because Israel has denied doing so.

- JUDGMENTS, THEORIES, OPINIONS, AND CLAIMS OF OTHERS:

Whenever you summarize or paraphrase anyone else's opinion, give the source for that summary or paraphrase. Even though the wording may be completely your own, you need to give credit for the idea.

- STATISTICS, CHARTS, TABLES, AND GRAPHS FROM ANY SOURCE:

Credit all graphic material, even if you, yourself, created the graph from data in another source.

- INFORMATION OR HELP PROVIDED BY FRIENDS, INSTRUCTORS, OR OTHERS:

A conference with an instructor may give you just the idea you need to clinch an argument. Give credit. Friends may help you conduct surveys, refine questionnaires, or think through a major problem. Give them credit, too. (*Note: You typically see this credit given on an "Acknowledgements" page.*)

***Please remember, even when you PARAPHRASE a direct quotation, you need to cite the source.***

\* All criteria and most of the examples listed above found in the following:

Lunsford, Andrea and Robert Connors. *The St. Martin's Handbook*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. p. 566-567.