

Avoiding Plagiarism

What is plagiarism?

In a paper or essay, you report and explain information and arguments taken from other sources, present criticisms, some of your own and some from other people, and come to your own conclusion. When doing this, you must be clear on whose ideas you are reporting, so that the reader can check whether you got it right, and on which ideas are your own. In this context, plagiarism is the use of someone else's ideas or words as if they were originally your own. You will find many similar definitions of plagiarism in books and on the Internet. And every one comes with a warning: Avoid it at all costs!

※ Note that this also applies to the 'problem sets' often required in economics courses. While discussion between students in preparation for solving the problems is permitted and actually in some cases encouraged, this does not mean that you can copy from other students' work for your submission.

Plagiarism has two forms.

1. Stealing ideas: Using someone else's ideas, without making that clear.
2. Stealing words: Using someone else's words and expressions, even with minor modifications to express your own ideas.

Both of these forms of plagiarism are serious offences against academic ethics. They are penalized both formally by the university and socially within academia.

Using all or even most of the same words without putting them in quotation marks is plagiarism, even if you provide a correct citation for the source. Thus, when using someone else's writing, you must substantially paraphrase or re-phrase it and include a correct citation, or use quotation marks and a citation and quote the source as it is written.

***Self-plagiarism* is also an offence. You must not submit the same material in more than one essay or paper. This includes reusing significant amounts of previously submitted text, even if the context is different.**

Teachers check for plagiarism using both their own experience and intuition and the electronic tools that are now available. Be aware that it is not difficult for teachers to spot plagiarism.

Any student unwise enough to plagiarize risks getting caught and having severe penalties imposed. Once found, the penalty will be severe, with no exceptions.

Avoiding plagiarism: A dozen tips

1. Re-read this document before you start writing an essay, and before you submit it, to remind yourself of what you should be avoiding.
2. Keep records of what you read, and where you find ideas. Plagiarizing by accident because you forgot about a source you used will still be penalized.
3. Do not write your paper while looking at the phrasing in one of your sources. It is very hard to get away from someone else's "perfect phrasing" if you are looking at it.
4. When you do write, rephrase and paraphrase in your own words, then check that you have an appropriate citation. A citation must include at least the title, the author's name, the publication date, and page number, or URL and date of access for a website, so that other researchers can find the source you used. Use the standard academic style (APA, Harvard, Chicago, MLA) recommended by your teacher.
5. Make sure to use several different sources in your research. If you draw on only one source, it is very difficult to move far enough away from those ideas.
6. Only quote from a source when the precise words used by the author are useful or important. Make sure to clearly indicate that it is a quote by using quotation marks, and add a precise citation (down to the page number) for where you are quoting.
7. If you get an idea from another student in discussion, get that student's permission to use it, and include an acknowledgement in the essay. Note that, with acknowledgement, this is actually good practice.

8. Do not copy from the literature into your paper ready for rewriting later. You might forget that it is just copied and end up with rewriting that is too close to the original.
9. Check paragraph by paragraph. You have probably used one or more sources in every paragraph (except, possibly, the conclusion), so if you do not find at least one reference in a given paragraph, check very carefully to make sure that nothing has been overlooked.
10. Before final submission, go through and check that all quotations have citations, and that all citations are complete, accurate, and in the correct format.
11. Check that your reference list is complete, and if you have something in your reference list that does not have a citation in the text, check to see whether you have forgotten to add a citation to it somewhere.
12. Finally, if you are unsure about how best to deal with citing or quoting something, or with matters pertaining to plagiarism, talk to the teacher responsible for your course. Your teacher will always be happy to advise you on a matter such as this.

Bottom line: If you are found to have committed plagiarism of any sort, you will, at an absolute minimum, fail that course. In almost all cases, the penalty will be more severe, often including suspension of your registration at the university. A claim of ignorance is no defence—we go to great lengths to explain plagiarism and its dangers in detail. Submitting an essay that is poorly written—or very short or very late—is much better than submitting an essay that is guilty of plagiarism. There are no circumstances at all in which plagiarism is something that can do you any good. Steer clear!