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**Avoiding Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a concern for teachers and students, but it can be avoided by understanding the issues involved. In the English-speaking academic world, it is essential to use a wide range of sources for your writing and to acknowledge these sources clearly. This lecture introduces the techniques students need to do this.

**1 What is plagiarism?**

In academic work, ideas and words are seen as private property belonging to the person who first thought or wrote them. Plagiarism means taking ideas or words from a source, such as a book or journal, without giving credit (acknowledgement) to the author. It is seen as a kind of theft, and is considered to be an academic crime. Therefore, it is important for all students, including international ones, to understand the meaning of plagiarism and learn how to prevent it in their work.

The main difficulty that students face is that they are expected:

(a) to show that they have read the principal authorities on a subject – by giving citations.

BUT

(b) to explain these ideas in their own words and come to their own original conclusions.

There are several reasons why students must avoid plagiarism:

• To show that they understand the rules of the academic community

• Copying the work of others will not help them develop their own understanding

• Plagiarism is easily detected by teachers and computer software

**2 Acknowledging sources**

If you borrow from or refer to the work of another person (author), you must show that you have done this by providing the correct acknowledgement. There are two ways to do this:

**Summary/ or paraphrase and citation**

Whether we are paraphrasing or summarising we must always identify the source of our information.

Smith (2009) claims that the modern state wields power in new ways.

**Quotation and citation**

According to Smith: “The point is not that the state is in retreat but that it is developing new forms of power” (Smith, 2009, p. 103).

These in-text citations are linked to a list of references at the end of the main text, which includes the following details:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Author(s) or editor(s) | Date | Title | Publisher |
| Smith, M. | (2009) | *Power and the State* | Palgrave Macmillan |

**3 Types of plagiarism**

**1 Complete/ Global plagiarism: Plagiarising an entire text**

This overt type of plagiarism occurs when a writer submits someone else’s work in their own name. For example, paying somebody to write a paper for you, then handing that paper in with your name on it, is an act of complete plagiarism. Or if you find a text online and submit it as your own work, you are committing global plagiarism.

**2 Verbatim plagiarism: Copying words directly**

Verbatim plagiarism, also called direct plagiarism, means copying and pasting someone else’s words into your own work without proper citation or quotation marks. It is essentially presenting someone else's words as your own.

If the structure and the majority of the words are the same as in the original text, this counts as verbatim plagiarism, even if you delete or change few words.

**Note:** *Direct plagiarism* is similar to *complete plagiarism* in that it, too, is the overt passing-off of another writer’s words as your own. The difference between the two is how much of the paper is plagiarised. With *complete plagiarism*, it is *the entire paper which is plagiarised*. With *direct plagiarism*, *specific sections* *or paragraphs* are included *without crediting the author*.

In academic writing, you can and should refer to the words of others. To avoid verbatim plagiarism, you just need to quote the original source by following proper citation and quotation guidelines (short or long quotes).

**3 Paraphrasing Plagiarism:**

Paraphrasing means putting a piece of text into your own words. Paraphrasing without citation is the most common type of plagiarism.

Paraphrasing, like quoting, is a legitimate or authorized way to incorporate the ideas of others into your writing. It only becomes plagiarism when you rewrite a source’s points as if they were your own i.e., without proper citation.

To avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing, cite the source by adding an in-text citation at the end of the paraphrased text.

**4 Patchwork plagiarism**

Patchwork plagiarism, also called mosaic plagiarism, means copying phrases, passages, and ideas from different sources and putting them together to create a new text.

This can involve slightly rephrasing passages while keeping many of the same words and the same basic structure as the original, and inserting your own words here and there to make the plagiarized text together.

Make sure to cite your sources whenever you quote or paraphrase to avoid plagiarism.

**5 Self-plagiarism: Plagiarising your own work**

Self-plagiarism occurs when you reuse your own work (that you have previously submitted or published) without proper citation, presenting it as new or original in a different context. It is important to acknowledge and cite your prior publications or work when using them in subsequent works.

**6 Accidental plagiarism**

This happens when individuals unintentionally commit plagiarism due to carelessness or a lack of understanding of citation rules.

Accidental plagiarism includes the following:

* Forgetting to cite your sources in your work
* Not citing your sources correctly
* Failing to put quotes around cited material

**4 Avoiding plagiarism by summarising and paraphrasing**

Quotations should not be overused, so you must learn to paraphrase and summarise in order to include other writers’ ideas in your work. This will demonstrate your understanding of a text.

* Paraphrasing involves rewriting a text so that the language is significantly different while the content stays the same.
* Summarising means reducing the length of a text but retaining the main points.

Normally, both skills are used at the same time, as can be seen in the examples below.

* Read the following text and then compare the five paragraphs below, which use ideas and information from it. Decide which are plagiarised and which are acceptable, giving your reasons.

**RAILWAY MANIAS**

In 1830 there were a few dozen miles of railways in all the world – chiefly consisting of the line from Liverpool to Manchester. By 1840 there were over 4,500 miles, by 1850 over 23,500. Most of them were projected in a few bursts of speculative frenzy known as the ‘railway manias’ of 1835–1837 and especially in 1844–1847; most of them were built in large part with British capital, British iron, machines and knowhow. These investment booms appear irrational, because in fact few railways were much more profitable to the investor than other forms of enterprise, most yielded quite modest profits and many none at all: in 1855 the average interest on capital sunk in the British railways was a mere 3.7 per cent.

(From The Age of Revolution by Eric Hobsbawm, 1995, p.45)

(a) Between 1830 and 1850 there was very rapid development in railway construction world wide. Two periods of especially feverish growth were 1835–1837 and 1844–1847. It is hard to understand the reason for this intense activity, since railways were not particularly profitable investments and some produced no return at all (Hobsbawm, 1995, p.45).

(b) There were only a few dozen miles of railways in 1830, including the Liverpool to Manchester line. But by 1840 there were over 4,500 miles and over 23,500 by 1850. Most of them were built in large part with British capital, British iron, machines and know-how, and most of them were projected in a few bursts of speculative frenzy known as the ‘railway manias’ of 1835–1837 and especially in 1844–1847. Because most yielded quite modest profits and many none at all these investment booms appear irrational. In fact few railways were much more profitable to the investor than other forms of enterprise (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 45).

(c) As Hobsbawm (1995) argues, nineteenth century railway mania was partly irrational:

because in fact few railways were much more profitable to the investor than other forms of enterprise, most yielded quite modest profits and many none at all: in 1855 the average interest on capital sunk in the British railways was a mere 3.7 per cent. (Hobsbawm, 1995, p.45)

(d) Globally, railway networks increased dramatically from 1830 to 1850; the majority in short periods of ‘mania’ (1835–1837 and 1844–1847). British technology and capital were responsible for much of this growth, yet the returns on the investment were hardly any better than comparable business opportunities (Hobsbawm, 1895, p.45).

(e) The dramatic growth of railways between 1830 and 1850 was largely achieved using British technology. However, it has been claimed that much of this development was irrational because few railways were much more profitable to the investor than other forms of enterprise; most yielded quite modest profits and many none at all.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Plagiarised or acceptable?** | **Reason** |
| (a) |  |  |
| (b) |  |  |
| (c) |  |  |
| (d) |  |  |
| (e) |  |  |

**5 Avoiding plagiarism by developing good study habits**

Few students deliberately try to cheat by plagiarising, but some develop poor study habits that result in the risk of plagiarism.

* **Working with a partner, add to the list of positive habits.**
* Plan your work carefully so you do not have to write the essay at the last minute.
* Take care to make notes in your own words, not copying from the source.
* Keep a record of all the sources you use (e.g. author, date, title, page numbers, publisher).
* Make sure all your in-text citations are included in the list of references.
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Practice**

**1 Revise this lesson by matching the words on the left with the definitions on the right.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Source | Using the exact words of the original text in your work |
| Citation | To gain advantage dishonestly |
| Summarise | Short in-text note giving the author’s name and publication date |
| Quotation | To reduce the length of a text, but keeping the main points |
| Reference | Any text that students use to obtain ideas or information |
| To cheat | Full publication details of a text to allow a reader to access the original |

**2 True or false?**

1 It does not matter about putting an author’s name in your essay ,i.e ., in-textas you have mentioned them in the reference list.

2 The correct form for a citation is name and date in brackets and a page

 number if it is a quote, e.g. (Bloggs, 1990, p.1).

3 Plagiarism is a kind of fraud or cheating and may be treated very seriously.

4 Copying another person’s essay is not counted as plagiarism.

5 It is ok to use someone else’s work without crediting them so long as you re-

 write it in your own words.

**3 Indentify the types of plagiarism in the following texts.**

**Original text:**

You have to tread quite a fine line between being accused, on the one hand, of not making enough use of the writers you have been reading on the course, and, on the other, of having followed them too slavishly, to the point of plagiarising them. One of your early tasks as a student is to get a feel for how to strike the right balance.

 (Northedge, 1990, p. 190)

*Student1 text:*

You have to tread quite a fine line between being accused, on the one hand, of not making enough use of the writers you have been reading on the course, and, on the other, of having followed them too slavishly, to the point of plagiarising them. One of your early tasks as a student is to get a feel for how to strike the right balance.

*Student2 text:*

When you are writing you need to be careful to use the information you have read well. At one extreme you may be blamed for not making enough use of the writers you have been reading on the course. While at the other extreme, you may be accused of having followed them too slavishly, to the point of plagiarising them. Early on as a student you need to balance these two extremes.