

What Is Plagiarism?

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary explains that to plagiarize is "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source [... or] to commit literary theft: present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source."

MTSU's Judicial Affairs webpage describes plagiarism as "The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper acknowledgment."

Plagiarism can be difficult to understand. Many times students are unsure about whether or not they are plagiarizing and failure to correctly give credit to your sources can result in university-level sanctions with MTSU Judicial Affairs.

The "Plagiarism Statement" form on the MTSU English Department's TA Resources website notes the following when referring to what is considered plagiarism:

- Copying another's entire paper and claiming it as one's own.
- Copying a part of another's paper and claiming it as one's own.
- Copying information from a source and pretending that information is one's own.
- Copying information from a source word for word without putting quotes around those words—whether or not the source is cited there in the paper or on the bibliography page.
- Copying information from a source but changing the words around without providing an in-text citation—whether or not the source is cited on the bibliography page.
- Copying information incorrectly, putting quotation marks around it, including a proper in-text citation, and citing it properly on the bibliography page.
- Copying information correctly with quotation marks, including a proper in-text citation, but no citation on the bibliography page.
- Copying information correctly with quotation marks, but including an improper in-text citation, while providing a correct citation on the bibliography page.
- Copying information correctly with quotation marks, including a proper in-text citation, but providing an incorrect citation on the bibliography page.
- Paraphrasing information incorrectly, including a proper in-text citation, and citing it properly on the bibliography page.
- Paraphrasing information correctly, including a proper in-text citation, but no citation on the bibliography page.
- Paraphrasing information correctly, but including an improper in-text citation, while providing a correct citation on the bibliography page.
- Paraphrasing information correctly, including a proper in-text citation, but providing an incorrect citation on the bibliography page.
- Changing the spelling of a word, changing a letter from upper to lower case, or changing the verb tense in an exact quotation without indicating it as such with brackets or ellipses.

In other words, any time you refer to someone else's work for information, you must always correctly note that source in the text (using either footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical references), as well as in your references/works cited/bibliography area. If you have not put the information from the source

completely into your own words, you must use quotations around the words taken directly from the source. For information regarding how to cite sources, refer to the manual for the citation style you are using (e.g. MLA, APA, Chicago). Even when paraphrasing and summarizing, you must cite the source (using both in-text citation and in the references/works cited/bibliography area).

Paraphrasing and Summarizing

Summarizing is taking information from a source, condensing it, and then putting it entirely into your own words while maintaining the same meaning. Paraphrasing is similar to summarizing; however, it is generally used for shorter passages. This does not mean changing a few words to synonyms and leaving the rest as is; nor does it mean that you can simply rearrange the order of the author's ideas. You must use your own words, sentence structure, and arrangement. When paraphrasing, you may use the author's original words along with your own, as long as you put quotations around the author's original words.

The Purdue Online Writing Lab notes that there are:

three ways of incorporating other writers' work into your own writing [and each] differ[s] according to the closeness of your writing to the source writing. **Quotations** must be identical to the original, using a narrow segment of the source. They must match the source document word for word and must be attributed to the original author. **Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage from source material into your own words. A paraphrase must also be attributed to the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly. **Summarizing** involves putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s). Once again, it is necessary to attribute summarized ideas to the original source. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and take a broad overview of the source material. (Purdue OWL, "Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing")

For additional information regarding plagiarism, please visit www.plagiarism.org.

Works Cited

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<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarize>

Purdue University. "Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing." Purdue Online Writing Lab. 8 January 2010. 19 April 2010.