Plagiarism (from a Latin word for “kidnapper”) is the presentation of someone else’s ideas or words as your own. Whether deliberate or accidental, plagiarism is a serious offense.

- **Deliberate** plagiarism:
  
  Copying or downloading a phrase, a sentence, or a longer passage from a source and passing it off as your own by omitting quotation marks and a source citation.

  Summarizing or paraphrasing someone else’s ideas without acknowledging your debt in a source citation.

  Handing in as your own work a paper you have bought, copied off the Web, had a friend write, or accepted from another student.

- **Accidental** plagiarism:
  
  Forgetting to place quotation marks around another writer’s words.

  Carelessly omitting a source citation for a paraphrase.

  Omitting a source citation for another’s idea because you are unaware of the need to acknowledge the idea.

In most schools a code of academic honesty calls for severe consequences for deliberate or accidental plagiarism: a failing grade, suspension from school, or even expulsion.

The way to avoid plagiarism is to acknowledge your sources by documenting them.

Checklist for avoiding plagiarism

Type of source

Are you using
  • your own independent material,
  • common knowledge, or
  • someone else’s independent material?
*You must acknowledge someone else’s material.*

Quotations
  • Do all quotations exactly match their sources? Check them.
  • Have you inserted quotation marks around quotations that are run into your text?
  • Have you shown omissions with ellipsis marks and additions with brackets?
  • Does every quotation have a source citation?

Paraphrases and summaries
  • Have you used your own words and sentence structures for every paraphrase and summary? If not, use quotation marks around the original author’s words.
  • Does every paraphrase and summary have a source citation?

The Web
  • Have you obtained any necessary permission to use someone else’s material on your Web site?

Source citations
  • Have you acknowledged every use of someone else’s material in the place where you use it?
  • Does your list of works cited include all the sources you have used?
  • You can download this checklist from this book’s Web site: see the box opposite.