



HELPFUL TIPS TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism means using someone else's ideas, words, content, or images without acknowledging the source. Punishment for plagiarism at Columbia College ranges from failing the assignment or the course to expulsion from the college. Also, when students plagiarize, they fail to learn how to process, analyze, and write about their research, skills required across disciplines.

THIS LIST PROVIDES GENERAL GUIDELINES; ALWAYS CHECK WITH YOUR INSTRUCTORS FOR THEIR SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS.

What to cite:

- You must cite others' work, facts, ideas, diagrams, drawings, music, and words whenever you make use of them. This includes internet sites without authors or copyright dates.
- Whether you quote, paraphrase, or summarize a single phrase or a whole chapter, you must acknowledge the original author no matter how little of it you use or how often you use it.
- You do not have to cite your independent material or common knowledge.

Quoting:

- You must always put quotation marks around an author's exact words and cite your source. Make sure the quoted material is copied exactly.
- Use brackets to add words that clarify the quoted text: "[most students] fear the demands on their time." Use ellipses for material left out of the quote: "Cats [...] have a well-developed sense of smell."
- Even if you use just a few words from an author in a sentence that is mostly your own, you still have to use quotation marks around those apt words and cite your source.

Paraphrasing:

- Even if you paraphrase, or put information from a source in your own words, you still must cite that source within the text of the paper.
- To paraphrase correctly, you must change not only the words of the original source but also the sentence structure.
- Even if your whole paragraph is a paraphrase or summary of one source, it is not acceptable to cite only at the end of the paragraph. Signal where borrowing begins and cite throughout the paragraph.

Academic ethics:

- It is not okay to buy or borrow a paper and pass it off as your own, even if you put its ideas into your own words.
- It is not okay to have someone else write the paper or even parts of it for you.
- It is not okay to submit a paper to one class that you wrote for another class.

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

AN EXAMPLE OF PARAPHRASING from the *Little, Brown Handbook* (Shown in MLA citation format)

Original: “The character and mentality of the keepers may be of more importance in understanding prisons than the character and mentality of the kept” (Mitford 9).

Plagiarism: According to one critic of the penal system, the psychology of *the kept* may say less about prisons than the psychology of *the keepers* (Mitford 9).
This is still plagiarism because it uses some of the original words without quotation marks.

Plagiarism: One critic of the penal system maintains that the psychology of prison officials may be more informative about prisons than the psychology of the prisoners (Mitford 9).
This is wrong because it still plagiarizes Mitford’s sentence structure.

Correct: Mitford holds that we may be able to learn less about prisons from the psychology of prisoners than from the psychology of prison officials (9).

Remember, to paraphrase correctly you must change both the words and the sentence structure of the original and cite the source!

SHOWING WHERE BORROWING BEGINS from James D. Lester’s *Writing Research Papers* (shown in APA citation format)

Norfleet (2001) defends the use of video games by children. He says, “Many educators
[Show where the borrowing begins—at the start of the paragraph discussion Norfleet’s ideas.]

and parents fail to realize there are benefits to children’s development” (Norfleet, 2001, p. 44). He says
[Norfleet’s name was not in this sentence, so the citation for the quote must include his name.]

it improves their hand and eye coordination and that it exercises their minds as they work their way
[This sentence is a paraphrase but acknowledges borrowing with “He says.”]

through various puzzles and barriers. Norfleet (2001) further states, “The mental gymnastics of video
[No page reference needed since there was no quote in this sentence.]

games are important to young children and their physical and mental development” (p. 45). Video
[Only the page # is given because this exact quote is preceded by the author’s name in the sentence.]

games are not harmful things to be banned.

Note: The APA manual states that “within a paragraph you need not include the year in subsequent references to a study” if no other studies are referred to.