



Victor Valley College Library

Understanding Plagiarism

What is Plagiarism and Why is it Important?

In college courses, we are continually engaged with other people's ideas; we read them in texts, hear them in lectures, discuss them in classes, and incorporate them into our own writing. As a result, it is very important that we give credit where it is due. Plagiarism is using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. The most common way to give credit is to cite the sources in your paper using one of the standard citation formats (MLA, APA). See: Research Tools: http://www.vvc.edu/library/research_tools.htm

How Can You Avoid Plagiarism?

To avoid plagiarism you need to recognize when credit is due. Types of plagiarism include direct copying, paraphrasing, and using another person's idea, opinion, or theory. Take a look at the table below:

You Must Give Credit When Using:	Credit Is Not Needed When Using:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summaries, paraphrases, or direct quotations from a source ▪ Reprints of diagrams, charts, illustrations, or pictures ▪ Little-known facts ▪ Other people's opinions ▪ Results of other people's research (opinion polls, case studies, statistics, etc.) ▪ Quotations or paraphrases from people you interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common knowledge (facts that can be found in many places and are likely to be known by many people) ▪ Your own ideas, opinions, experiences, and conclusions ▪ Your own research (surveys or observations)

Examples of Plagiarism

Example One: *Paraphrasing* from the original source.

<p>Original Text (from <i>Democracy in America</i> By Brian P. Janiskee and Ken Masugi, 2003).</p>	<p>The influence of the entertainment industry on state politics is limited. Because the federal government has jurisdiction over the entertainment industry via the Federal Communications Commission, most of the entertainment industry's lobbying efforts focus on federal issues. Also, many Hollywood stars parlay their high visibility into elected office or positions of political influence.</p>
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<p>Plagiarism <i>Unacceptable Paraphrase</i></p>	<p>The <i>power</i> of the entertainment industry on state and local politics is <i>inadequate</i>. <i>The reason why</i> is that the federal government has jurisdiction over the entertainment industry <i>through</i> the <i>FCC</i>, most of the entertainment industry's lobbying efforts look at federal issues. Also, <i>many Hollywood actors use their fame to move into elected offices or influence politicians</i>.</p>
<p>Why is it Plagiarism?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only a few words were changed or the order of words was altered. 2. The source of the text is not cited at the end.
<p>Acceptable Paraphrase</p>	<p>The influence the entertainment industry has on state politics is narrow. The entertainment industry however tends to have more of an impact on federal issues due to the fact that the entertainment industry has oversight from the Federal Communications Commission. "Hollywood stars parlay their high visibility into elected office or positions of political influence. The late Sonny Bono became mayor of Palm Springs and then was elected to Congress" (Janiskee 36).</p>
<p>Why is it Acceptable?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The passage was rewritten in the writer's own words while maintaining the meaning of the original text. 2. The source of the text is cited. <p>Note: You can use paraphrase and quotations together. This is particularly useful for phrases which you don't wish to reword because that would alter the meaning.</p>

Example Two: *Quoting* from the original source.

<p>Original Text (from <i>Conservatism an Anthology of Social and Political Thought</i> from David Hume to the Present by Jerry Z. Miller, 1997).</p>	<p>Both American liberals and conservatives in the 1960s embraced the notion of a "culture of poverty," a phrase coined by the anthropologist Oscar Lewis. To liberals, the concept suggested that the culture of the poor, which limited their upward social mobility, could be transformed by government agencies such as schools, enrichment programs for pre-school children, and job training programs.</p>
<p>Plagiarism <i>Unacceptable Quote</i></p>	<p>"Both American liberals and conservatives in the 1960s embraced the notion of a culture of the poor. To the liberals, the concept suggested that the poor, who had limited social mobility, could rely on government programs to transform their social class."</p>
<p>Why is it Plagiarism?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The passage has not been quoted accurately. 2. The source of the quotation is not cited at the end.
<p>Acceptable Quotation</p>	<p>It is believed that American liberals during the 1960s embraced the phrase "a culture of poverty." "To liberals, the concept suggested that the culture of the poor, which limited their upward social mobility, could be transformed by government agencies such as schools, enrichment programs for pre-school children, and job training programs" (Miller 336).</p>

Why is it Acceptable?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The first sentence is an acceptable paraphrase.2. The second sentence is quoted accurately.3. The whole passage is cited.
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Further Assistance

- Test your understanding. An excellent tutorial is available through the Indiana University Bloomington School of Education that is designed to test your understanding of plagiarism: (<http://education.indiana.edu/~frick/plagiarism>)
- Further information on understanding plagiarism can also be found on the *Turnitin* resources page. *Turnitin* is an online plagiarism detection program that is utilized by many departments at VVC. (http://www.turnitin.com/research_site/e_home.html)
- The **VVC Writing Center** (located in Building 21) also provides assistance with citation formats and many other aspects of writing assignments.

Note: VVC Students should be aware that plagiarism violates the proscribed student conduct code and may result in possible consequences as stated in the VVC Student Handbook (p.38 D). (http://www.vvc.edu/Student_Handbook_2009.pdf)