

Why Worry about Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is defined as (1) “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own” (2) to “use (another’s production) without crediting the source,” (3) to commit literary theft: or present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source”(Merriam-Webster, 2007). Why is plagiarism such a big deal? Because committing plagiarism means:

- ◆ Taking credit for another’s work.
 - ◆ Instructors are unable to evaluate a student’s actual work.
 - ◆ Violating California Lutheran University policies.
 - ◆ Breaking law (especially copyright law).
 - ◆ Breaching ethical standards of trust honesty and respect.
- (Jones & Scott, 2007).

1 Outright Plagiarism

Some acts of plagiarism are obvious—Buying a paper from an Internet site; “stealing” someone’s work and claiming that it is your own; hiring someone to ghost write a paper for you or copying large sections of text from a source without providing credit through the use of quotation marks or proper citation. (Notice how credit is given throughout this pamphlet to various sources of information).

Yet plagiarism can also be subtle. Is reusing a high school paper considered plagiarism if you are the author? You bet it is! Submitting the exact work you did for a previous class is still plagiarism even though it is your work. Stress, poor time management, insecurity about writing and plain laziness are a few reasons some students commit brazen acts of outright plagiarism.

2 Unintentional Plagiarism

At other times, plagiarism is unintentional or accidental or occurs as a result of carelessness or ignorance. Still, ignorance is not an excuse and you can still face disciplinary action and even legal headaches (Do you really want to be sued by an author?) Here are some examples of unintentional plagiarism:

- Not attributing information to a source.
- Not properly paraphrasing information, e.g. not completely rewriting information in your own words
- Paraphrasing information from a source but not citing the source
- Forgetting to create a works cited page or omitting a needed citation in a works cited page.
- Omitting quotation marks that would indicate to the reader indicate words in a paper are taken exactly from a source.

3 What Can You Do ?

When you get a research assignment, imagine yourself writing an article for publication and how important it is to do thorough research and properly document your research. Here are some specific tips:

- Always attribute information you use to a source
- Paraphrase information from others and attribute the information to that source
- Cite your sources using APA, MLA or Chicago Style
- Use quotation marks and properly cite any information you are quoting in exact wording from a source

How Will Anyone Know?

4 Plagiarized work is easier to detect today, especially if you buy a paper from a online term paper mill or copy and paste content directly from Web sites. CLU faculty along with faculty at many other universities use Turnitin (www.turnitin.com), software that effectively screens written work. Getting caught just isn’t worth it. You can get a fail for the class, and face disciplinary action from the university. If you are stuck, talk to your professor. If you need help with research, meet with a librarian and you’ll be on the road to success!

Campus Library Resources

Need More Assistance?

- Contact a librarian at the Pearson Library for help with research, citing information and avoiding plagiarism.
- Visit the Writing Center often and have your drafts reviewed by a writing tutor.
- Talk to your professors to clarify any uncertainties about an assignment or the sources you are required to use.

Following these steps will ensure that you will have a successful research and writing experience!

Works Cited

Jones, Ida and Judith Scott. "Cyber-Plagiarism: Is Copying and Pasting Cheating?." Western Association of Schools and Colleges, San Jose, CA. 17 Apr. 2007.

Merriam-Webster.com. 2007. 18 Oct. 2007 <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/plagiarism>>.

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Understanding Plagiarism



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