

INFORMATION ON PLAGIARISM

The following is a paraphrased, shortened, and slightly modified version of the University of Connecticut Freshman English Program Statement on Plagiarism (Working Document, Last Revised: February 10, 2006).

Key Terms at a Glance

Misuse of Sources: The misuse of sources is the failure to acknowledge properly the source of an idea and/or specific language that is presented in any work submitted for evaluation, including (but not limited to) journal entries, drafts of papers, and final submissions of papers. The misuse of sources is a violation of academic codes of conduct and could result in serious penalty. The severity of the penalty depends on an individual instructor's assessment, in consultation with the Director of Freshman English.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the theft of another's ideas, specific language, or other media, and the presentation—for the purposes of evaluation—of that material as one's own, at any stage of the writing process, including (but not limited to) journal entries, drafts of papers, and final submissions of papers.

To avoid misusing sources or committing plagiarism, a student must include all of his sources with full and proper acknowledgment.

Full and Proper Acknowledgement: The unambiguous identification of the sources of all ideas, language, and other materials that are not one's own. There are many different methods of identifying a source [MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.], depending on the discipline's academic conventions. Students must consult with their instructors to determine which method is appropriate for the course. [English courses use MLA Style.]

Background Statement

Mike Rose, in his description of academic writing, touches on an important dynamic in the ongoing study of plagiarism:

Virtually all the writing academics do is built on the writing of others. Every argument proceeds from the texts of others. [Students are] only partially initiated to how this works: [They are] still unsure as to how to weave quotations in with [their] own prose, how to mark the difference, how to cite whom [they use], how to strike the proper balance between [their] writing and someone else's—how, in short to position [themselves] in an academic discussion. (180)

Until very recently, scholars have labeled any failure to attribute the source of an idea properly as “plagiarism.” Yet in light of what Rose observes about the difficulty students may have while “position[ing] themselves in an academic discussion,” the ubiquitous term “plagiarism” is too vague to encompass the many different degrees to which a person might fail to acknowledge another's ideas. It also fails to acknowledge a student's intent, her varying degrees of proficiency in incorporating source materials, or the way her proficiency evolves as she develops as an academic writer. In light of these observations the Council of Writing Program Administrators makes a distinction between the misuse of sources, and plagiarism (2).

Plagiarism completely undermines the academy's ongoing efforts to share and develop ideas, and it cannot be tolerated under any circumstances.

Types of Plagiarism

For the sake of clarity we have listed possible scenarios for plagiarism. A student is guilty of plagiarism if she does ANY of the following:

- “Cuts and pastes” printed or electronic text (**from the Internet or elsewhere**) into her paper, and presents it as her own.
- Consults an Internet or print source to “get ideas” that he or she then incorporates into a paper, without proper attribution.
- Retypes material from a printed or electronic source into her own paper, and presents it as her own.
- Submits a paper written by someone else, including a tutor, while claiming to be the author.
- Submits a paper she has written in another course.
- Puts another person’s ideas “in her own words,” without documenting the source.
- Takes another person’s expressions--a key word, a phrase, or a longer passage—without telling the reader precisely what has been done. This is considered plagiarism even when the student’s own ideas are being expressed.

If a student presents ideas/and or specific language as a source as though he has invented the ideas or language himself, he is guilty of plagiarism. **Possible** sources of plagiarized material include the following:

- A web site
- An essay or paper available on the Internet
- A book
- An article
- Another student's writing

Avoidance of Plagiarism

Because “virtually all the writing academics do is built on the writing of others” (Rose 180), and academics need to know an individual writer’s contribution to a subject, they have established certain conventions for attributing the source of an idea. Academic conventions dictate that a writer must provide **full and proper acknowledgment** of all ideas and expressions that are not his own. To provide full and proper acknowledgment, a writer must do all of the following:

- Indicate clearly where direct quotations within a paper begin and end by using quotations and introductory phrases.
- When paraphrasing, make it clear to the reader that the ideas expressed are someone else’s, by using introductory phrases and/or transitions.
- Include internal documentation of the source quoted or paraphrased. (For documentation in English papers, use the most recent MLA guidelines, which can be found in any recent writing handbook.)
- When citing from the Internet or another electronic source, follow citation conventions, as they are articulated in any recent writing handbook.
- Include a “Works Cited” page at the end of the paper. (A Works Cited page alone is useful, but it is not full and proper acknowledgment, since it does not tell the reader precisely what parts of the paper present another person’s ideas.)
- When in doubt about citing sources and documenting them, a student should consult his instructor, as the penalties for the misuse of sources and plagiarism are severe and strictly enforced.

Works Cited

“Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Promising Practices.” *Council of Writing Program Administrators*. 11 Oct. 2004. <<http://www.ilstu.edu/~ddhesse/wpa/positions/WPAplagiarism.pdf>>

Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America’s Educationally Underprepared*. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.