

## PLAGIARISM

My biggest piece of advice to avoid plagiarism is to take notes on the published paper and then put that paper away when you go to write your own paper. That way you will not be tempted to write a sentence like the author did! A few important things to remember are:

1. Paraphrase (put in your own words) all information that you obtain from another source and cite that source. This does not mean simply changing a few words from someone else's sentence but creating your own sentence and thought.
2. You cannot copy something verba
3. tim from a source without both citing it and putting it in quotations; however, we discourage the use of this type of citation.
4. Paragraph and paper structure must be your own. When writing an argument, the argument must be your own and not someone else's argument reworded.

There are many websites that provide information on plagiarism. However, I found the most informative one to be <http://www.plagiarism.org>. You might also check out [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_plagiar.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html).

Here are some important points from [www.plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org) that I found helpful. Make sure to check out the whole website because there is a lot of information there.

*According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means:*

- 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
- 4) to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

*If I cite the source, can I still be accused of plagiarism?*

You are allowed to borrow ideas or phrases from other sources provided you cite them properly and your usage is consistent with the guidelines set by fair use laws. As a rule, however, you should be careful about borrowing too liberally -- if the case can be made that your work consists predominantly of someone else's words or ideas, you may still be susceptible to charges of plagiarism. Also, if you follow the words of a source too closely, and do not use quotation marks, it can be considered plagiarism even if you cite the source.

*Does intention matter?*

Ignorance of the law is never an excuse. So even if you did not realize you were plagiarizing, you may still be found guilty. However, there are different punishments for willful infringement, or deliberate plagiarism, and innocent infringement, or accidental plagiarism. To distinguish between these, courts recognize what is called the good faith defense. If you can demonstrate, based on the amount you borrowed and the way you have incorporated it in your own work, that reasonably believed what you did was fair use, chances are that your sentence will be lessened substantially.

*Does it matter how much was copied?*

Not in determining whether or not plagiarism is a crime. If even a small part of a work is found to have been plagiarized, it is still considered a copyright violation. However, the amount that was copied probably will have a bearing on the severity of the punishment. A work that is almost entirely plagiarized will almost certainly incur greater penalties than a work that only includes a small amount of plagiarized material.

From: <http://www.plagiarism.org>

**How to Paraphrase Properly**

The following is an excerpt from a 1949 essay by Richard Hofstadter entitled "The Thesis Disputed."

American historical writing in the past century has produced two major theories or models of understanding, the economic interpretation of politics associated with Charles A. Beard, and the frontier interpretation of American development associated with Frederick Jackson Turner. Both views have had a pervasive influence upon American thinking, but Beard himself felt that Turner's original essay on the frontier had "a more profound influence on thought about American history than any other essay or volume ever written on the subject." ...

[But] it became plain, as new thought and research was brought to bear upon the problem, that the frontier theory, as an analytic device, was a blunt instrument.

Let's say you want to communicate ALL of the information above by paraphrasing. You might start by taking out some of the unnecessary words and changing others. For instance, do you need to say "theories or models," or is just "theories" enough for your purposes? Can you rephrase the last sentence to make it fit better with your style of writing? Asking questions like this is a good way to start paraphrasing, but it is only the beginning.

You want to make sure that you are not just changing the appearance of the source while still copying its essential structure. That is, you need to translate the passage into your own voice. Otherwise, you are plagiarizing Richard Hofstadter's **expression**, even if you acknowledge that the **ideas** came from him. For example, the following would be an example of **plagiarism**, not paraphrasing:

In the past century, American writing on history has produced two major theories, Charles A. Beard's economic interpretation of American development, and the frontier interpretation of American development associated with Frederick Jackson Turner. Each view has exerted a pervasive influence on American thinking, but even Charles A. Beard had to admit that Turner's essay on the frontier had "a more profound influence on thought about American history than any other essay or volume ever written on the subject." Yet in time it became plain, as new research was brought to bear upon the problem, that the frontier theory, as a means of analyzing history, was not nearly precise enough. (Hofstadter, 1949)

This would be considered plagiarism because the sentence structure is too close to the original passage. All of the ideas are expressed in basically the same tone, with

only a few changes in grammar and phrasing. In this case, it would have been more honest to retain all of the original words and put the entire passage in quotes -- acknowledging an indebtedness to Hofstadter for the expression of his ideas and not just those ideas themselves.

One way to avoid this is to jot down the main ideas of the original passage in your own words, creating a list like this:

- Two main theories of American History
- Turner = frontier thesis
- Beard = economic interpretation of politics
- Turner was considered more influential -- even Beard admitted the fact
- Recent research has undermined Turner's work

Then try writing a paragraph without looking at the original. In this case, it might turn out to be something like this:

In his 1949 essay "The Thesis disputed," Richard Hofstadter explains that there were two major currents of thought in historical writing about American development. He suggests that one of these, the "frontier thesis" associated with Frederick Jackson Turner, has been thought more influential than the other, the economic interpretation of politics associated with Charles A. Beard. He quotes Charles A. Beard admitting this fact to prove his point. Yet Hofstadter goes on to argue that Turner's frontier theory, influential as it may have been, has been undermined by more recent research developments. (Hofstadter, 1949)

This paragraph more successfully translates Hofstadter's work into an original form of expression. Instead of just changing some words, this paragraph comes up with its own way of organizing and communicating the information. It also avoids plagiarism by clearly giving Hofstadter credit for his ideas. With just a little bit of work, then, you can turn a case of potential plagiarism into a perfect paraphrase!