

A Quick Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is using another person's words or ideas as if they were your own.

Why is it important to avoid plagiarism?

Plagiarism is a very serious offense that can cause you to fail a paper, fail a course, or even be expelled from the university.

How can I avoid it?

1. Give credit to the original material.

For more information about citing sources, check out our quick guides to MLA, APA, and CMS, or consult your academic librarian.

2. Integrate ideas and discoveries from other sources into your work effectively.

Three ways you can integrate information are: quotations, paraphrases, and summaries.

When should I quote?

A direct quote is using the exact words of a source and enclosing them in quotation marks. Quotations should be used in the following instances:

- The language is distinct and/or particularly useful to your argument.
- The idea of the quotation is difficult to paraphrase.
- The presence of a quotation from an authority on the subject provides support for your thesis or argument.
- The text is slightly ambiguous and therefore difficult to paraphrase.¹

Original Quotation:

"The political situation in Canada has become murky. Politicians are making arbitrary decisions that seem to follow no logical pattern."

- Dena Krieger, Canada News, January 23, 2009

Integrated Quotation:

Krieger's view of the current Canadian political system is exemplified in her statement, "The political situation in Canada has become murky. Politicians are making arbitrary decisions that seem to follow no logical pattern" (Krieger, 2009).

¹Adapted from Troyka and Hesse (2006). *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*. 4th Canadian Ed.

When should I paraphrase?

A paraphrase is the restating of someone else's ideas into your own words. In academic writing, paraphrases are usually used more than direct quotes. It is very important to include a reference to the source.

Original Idea:

“By examining the results of the study, diabetes is a condition that results from both an individual's lifestyle and from a genetic predisposition. Those without a family history of diabetes may still be susceptible to acquiring the disorder.”

- Walsh, Student Journal of Internal Medicine, July 2009

Paraphrased Idea:

An individual who has no genetic history of diabetes within his or her family may still acquire the disease, as both environmental and genetic factors influence an individual's likelihood of developing diabetes (Walsh, 2009).

When should I summarize?

Paraphrasing and summarizing are different. A paraphrase restates the original material in its entirety while a summary only states the main points. **IMPORTANT:** Don't include any interpretations or personal ideas in a summary of another person's work!

Original Passage:

“The actual temperature of the earth is determined by the balance between the rate at which sunlight reaches the earth's surface, and the rate at which the warmed earth radiates infrared radiation back into space. It is well established that the temperatures that make life on earth possible are the direct result of the trapping of the earth's radiant heat by traces of atmospheric water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, and other infrared-absorbing (greenhouse) gases. Now, however, human activities are not only increasing the atmospheric concentrations of these naturally occurring greenhouse gases, but they are adding new and very powerful infrared-absorbing gases to the mix. The rate at which the atmosphere is being changed through human actions has accelerated dramatically in recent decades.”

- Walsh, unpublished, 2010

Summary:

The temperatures of the earth are a balance between the amount of sunlight absorbed by the earth's surface and the amount of heat radiating from the earth's atmosphere. Infrared absorbing gases trap heat inside the earth's atmosphere and thereby maintain current global temperatures. Human activities are now increasing the quantity of these infrared gases within the environment, hastening the speed at which the atmosphere is changing (Walsh, 2010).