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Presentation on Plagiarism

Purpose

The purpose of this presentation is to teach you what plagiarism is, the causes of it, when to recognize it, and how to avoid it. Plagiarism is most likely a topic you are familiar with; however, this presentation is intended to further your knowledge on the importance of avoiding plagiarism.

Defining Plagiarism

The definition of plagiarism is complex and multifaceted. You may have heard many definitions of plagiarism and are somewhat confused or unsure what plagiarizing entails. The current definition, taken from the WPA Statement on Best Practices is the following:

Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.

This definition, however, fails to include two ideas:
1. Inadequately citing words and ideas from another source
2. Presenting someone else’s work as one’s own or distorting the line between your ideas and someone else’s ideas

Honest writers attempt to fully and appropriately cite any works they have taken quotes or ideas from. However, if a student clumsily and inappropriately uses quotation marks or does not use citation formatting properly, this is not considered plagiarism, but rather the student has failed to cite properly.

Plagiarism has become a major concern among teachers and administrators because of the limitless access to other people’s written work via Internet. Student’s work that does not represent their own efforts effects their development of reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. In order to understand plagiarism, you must understand that all knowledge comes from other knowledge. We share and create ideas and build upon other people’s ideas. When you are putting your ideas onto paper, teachers want to distinguish between the building blocks borrowed from other people and your own ideas. Giving credit for ideas and writing is an imperative rule used in school and the professional world. Any source of information that is used must be sited. This includes all written and electronic forms, such as “Interviews, lectures, performances, recordings, films, television, and radio programs, advertisements, cartoons, maps, and works of art.”

Plagiarism is when someone uses the words and/or ideas of another author, without giving proper credit to that Author. There several ways to properly give credit to another individual for their work, such as using direct quotes and proper citations. The first way to avoid plagiarism is to use a citation. Citations are short, in text references to previously published works. For example, if you wanted to reference something from a text book, you would need to provide the following information after the text:
1. The author(s) of the work you are using.
2. The year in which the work was published.

Here is an example of improper and proper in text citation:

Example:
• **Plagiarized work**: Newton's law of gravity is the reasoning behind the apple falling from the tree.

• **Non-plagiarized work**: Newton's law of gravity is the reasoning behind the apple falling from the tree. (Author – Year)

There is still an issue with this example though; can you tell what it is? If a writer is directly quoting a section from a piece of work, quotations are used. Say a writer was researching Newton’s law and wanted to write about gravity. The original work the like: The apple fell from the tree due to Newton’s law of gravity. If someone typed that line exactly how it is, even with a citation, it would count as plagiarism.

Example:

• **Plagiarized work**: The apple fell from the tree due to Newton’s law of gravity. (Author – Year)

• **Non-plagiarized work**: “The apple fell from the tree due to Newton’s law of gravity” (Author – Year)

In order to avoid plagiarism, the writer must provide quotes so that the reader knows that the text has not been altered in any way. The quotations show the exact text that was used from the original author. The citation provides the authors name, the year the material was published, and the page on which the material was taken from.

**Causes of Plagiarism:**

Some students are fully aware they are plagiarizing. For example, students who copy and paste directly from a published source, or take another student’s work and pass it off as their own, are deliberately plagiarizing. Students who plagiarize in such a manner will be held accountable, no matter the excuse. Understanding some of the reasons why students plagiarize can help you recognize and avoid situations as such.

**Types of Plagiarism:**

Few people know that there are actually several different types of plagiarism. Plagiarism.org has compiled a list of the known types of Plagiarism that may be interesting to read up on.

**Sources Not Cited**

1. "The Ghost Writer"
   The writer turns in another's work, word-for-word, as his or her own.

2. "The Photocopy"
   The writer copies significant portions of text straight from a single source, without alteration.

3. "The Potluck Paper"
   The writer tries to disguise plagiarism by copying from several different sources, tweaking although the writer has retained the essential content of the source, he or she has altered the paper's appearance slightly by changing key words and phrases.

4. "The Labor of Laziness"
   The writer takes the time to paraphrase most of the paper from other sources and make it all fit together, instead of spending the same effort on original work.

5. "The Self-Stealer"
   The writer "borrows" generously from his or her previous work, violating policies concerning the expectation of originality adopted by most academic institutions.
Sources Cited (But Still Plagiarized)

1. "The Forgotten Footnote"
The writer mentions an author's name for a source, but neglects to include specific information on the location of the material referenced. This often masks other forms of plagiarism by obscuring source locations.

2. "The Misinformer"
The writer provides inaccurate information regarding the sources, making it impossible to find them.

3. "The Too-Perfect Paraphrase"
The writer properly cites a source, but neglects to put in quotation marks text that has been copied word-for-word, or close to it. Although attributing the basic ideas to the source, the writer is falsely claiming original presentation and interpretation of the information.

4. "The Resourceful Citer"
The writer properly cites all sources, paraphrasing and using quotations appropriately. The catch? The paper contains almost no original work! It is sometimes difficult to spot this form of plagiarism because it looks like any other well-researched document.

5. "The Perfect Crime"
Well, we all know it doesn't exist. In this case, the writer properly quotes and cites sources in some places, but goes on to paraphrase other arguments from those sources without citation. This way, the writer tries to pass off the paraphrased material as his or her own analysis of the cited material.

Reasons Why Students Plagiarize and Tips to Prevent them:

Not everyone can be as proactive as they need, especially if it is doing something they consider tedious. Some students may have poor time management skills, and may be incapable of putting forth the time and effort needed to create a research paper. They may be incapable of putting forth time and effort because the student is involved in multiple extracurricular activities, which can be very demanding. Others may need to work in order to support themselves, or their families. Before beginning a project, it can be helpful to create a list of task that need to be completed. This will allow a visual representation of what needs to be done, as well as provide blueprint to map out the amount of time that is available for the project. If no plausible solution to the issue of time management, then something will probably need to be removed in order to accommodate the more important tasks at hand.

Not everyone has the confidence to believe the writing they are doing is quality writing. Students believe their work is inadequate and fear failure, such as when creating a research paper. These feelings of inadequacy can be enhanced when their work is compared to the works of others, such as in a class room or when presenting their work. With these thoughts and feelings in mind, the idea of using work that has already been published is appealing. A common thought might be: Why turn in something that might be good, when I can turn something in I know is good.

Not everyone knows what happens if a writer is caught plagiarizing. Students may view the consequences of cheating as unimportant, or may not realize the severity of the consequences. Depending on the university, a student may receive a failing grade or suspension. On repeat cases, the student may even be expelled from the University for plagiarizing. Plagiarism is stealing, period.
On the other hand, some students attempt to appropriately acknowledge and cite sources in good faith, but fail to do so correctly. This does not constitute plagiarism, but rather incorrect citing. Students may lack the prior teaching and learning that enables them to appropriately cite. The following are situations that may be falsely equated with plagiarizing:

1. Everyone has a unique way of taking notes, but, not everyone knows how to take notes correctly. Students may not understand how to take detailed and documented notes, so they may not write down the important information necessary to cite work properly.
2. Many students feel that paraphrasing allows them to bypass plagiarism but that is not the case. This may be because students may be unable to properly incorporate other people’s ideas into their own. The students do not realize that paraphrasing is not a preventative measure, even if the student simply replaces the words and structure of a sentence. The material must be learned and presented in an original statement.
3. In college, most students doing research are believed to have already been taught these skills previously. Instructors may assume students know how to incorporate other people’s ideas into their own work and cite properly. Some students have not acquired these skills simply from the common belief that they already know those skills. It is easy to see the cycle that is being created. As tragic as this fact may be, it is important to understand that ignorance is not an excuse.

**What is Paraphrasing?**

When you're doing research and you come across a particularly interesting or relevant piece of information, generally you want to use it in your work. The information that has been selected for use may not fit the writing you're doing, so you alter it in a way that supports your topic. You may even alter it in a way that only briefly summarizes the information to one or two sentences from an entire paragraph. Knowing that you cannot take credit for the work as your own, you cite the location of the information for referencing. This art of altering information to fit our needs is known as Paraphrasing.

**Plagiarism through Paraphrasing**

Even if you change certain words, paraphrasing, or changing the order of words in a sentence in order to reflect an idea, it may be considered plagiarism. Most people focus so much on rewording and altering information that they think is important, but they should be spending that time learning. The entire point of doing the research is so that you learn the material. Then, you must show what you’ve learned through your writing. That is the way one conducts research. When you simply rephrase a body of text, you are not showing any new aspects of the work. The result is you copying down the same material in a different way, thus plagiarizing.

Now, you may be asking yourself: “How do I know if I am plagiarizing through paraphrasing?” The answer is simple; just ask yourself if you had to look at the research when you were writing it. The Philosophy department guidelines on plagiarism states that, “The writing process should be driven by your own grasp of the issues, something that resulted from your prior research.” This means that you should take what you have learned and create something new with it. Of course there will be similarities in regards to what you write and what has already been written, but the distinction between the two should be clear.

**Tips to fix Plagiarism in Paraphrasing**
The UNLV Writing Center has provided useful tips in order to avoid plagiarism in paraphrasing.
1. The center suggests that you take a look at the information that is being used.
   1. Reword the sentence so that structurally, it makes sense.
2. Another suggestions is that the writer: “rewrite that version using your own phrasing and sentence structure”
3. If you doubt your ability to paraphrase information, you can always quote it directly.
   1. This is much easier and will lead to less trouble down the line, especially if you end up accidentally plagiarizing the information.
   2. However, Kim Barchard says that in academic settings, you should quote sparingly. Only provide direct quotes if the specific words that they used are critical. For example, you might quote a definition of emotional intelligence. You usually should not quote someone’s descriptions of their results or conclusions: paragraph it instead. Most teachers will give you little or no credit for quoting someone else's words: if you cannot rephrase the ideas, there is no evidence that you understand it.

No citation needed

There are, in fact, certain scenarios in which there is no need to provide a citation for a piece of information. Things that can be counted as “common knowledge” do not need to be cited. Say for example, you were writing a paper on Christianity. You decide to write that Christians believe that Jesus arose from the dead. That statement would not be processed as a unique idea you are presenting, since most people know that Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead.

More on common-knowledge

There are professionals in every field who regard some of their knowledge as “common knowledge”. However, as students we are still learning. So, what constitutes our common knowledge then? Ask yourself two questions in order to determine if your ideas constitute your common knowledge:
1. Did I know this information prior to taking this course?
2. Did these ideas come straight from my previous knowledge or new ideas?

If “yes” was answered to both of these questions, then the information that is in question can be considered “common knowledge”. However, if “no” was responded to these questions, then you must indicate where the information came from. Ask yourself these questions anytime you are unsure if your ideas are common knowledge to avoid any instances of plagiarism.

You must cite even if:

1) You put all direct quotes in quotation marks.
2) You changed the words used by the author into synonyms.
3) You completely paraphrased the ideas to which you referred.
4) Your sentence is mostly made up of your own thoughts, but contains a reference to the author's ideas.
5) You mention the author's name in the sentence.

Avoiding Plagiarism
1) Students need to realize that using citations is a good thing, and your teachers will not penalize you for having more than necessary; in fact the general rule is “When in doubt cite it.”

2) Taking good notes is a good way to guard against plagiarism. It may help to think of your notes as a “transition stage between what you are reading and what you are going to write. Another suggestion is to use quotation marks so that you do not need to guess what is in your own words and what isn’t.

3) Kim Barchard recommends the following strategy. First, read the original material until you understand what it means. Then close the book (or turn over the paper) and write it in your own words. If you cannot write down the general idea, without looking at the original source, then (a) you do not really understand what it means and (b) you are almost certain to plagiarize.

**Citations**

There are many types of citations and it can be confusing when you’re trying to determine which types are appropriate for your situation. The most common citation styles are APA, MLA, Chicago, and CSE, and your teacher should be able to tell you which style you need to use. After you determine which style to use it is important to find a good source to consult. There are guide books you can buy or find on the internet to help you with this problem.

**Online Plagiarism: Images**

In order to post something on your website that you have not created, such as a banner or image, you must first contact the creator of that image. Generally, licensing for these images may be purchased from various websites where the author has allowed for the licensing to be sold. In most cases, internet users assume that since they site the photo's original source that they may use the image however they like. This is not the case.

There are a few instances where the author will not charge for the use of their images and/or banners. In these cases, the stipulation is usually that the user must give credit to the author by providing a link to the authors' web page, or allowing the authors name/pen-name to be on the image as well. By not following these stipulations, not paying for the use of the image, or by simply taking the image, you are plagiarizing the image. This is a criminal offense which may result in legal action depending on the circumstances. If you would like to use an image, it is recommended you take the required steps to obtain the image legally. You could also practice your creativity and Photoshop skills to create a unique image yourself.
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