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UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

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The Problems of Plagiarism (and How to Avoid Them)

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The purpose of this article is to help students understand the significant problems and consequences created by plagiarism and encourage them to write more ethically.

A Common Problem, a Common Temptation

The midterm paper was assigned weeks ago, but you've only begun working on it now. You've been putting it off because your boss added extra hours at work and other assignments took priority. The paper is worth a big part of your grade, and you're trying to get it done by midnight, but you're not going fast enough. It would be easy to find a paper online, pay another student, or ask ChatGPT to write part of the paper for you – just so long as you change a few things. All you want is to get a good enough grade on this assignment and call it a day. It isn't like you want to plagiarize, but what other choice do you have? Right?

A version of this story exists for nearly every college student at some point in their college career. The temptation to plagiarize feels too strong to pass up. But plagiarizing is like going to the gym and having someone else lift weights for you; you haven't gained anything by showing up. And even if it doesn't cause a problem today, it may tomorrow when you really need the strength and endurance that comes from struggle.

This Article Was Not Written with the Help of A.I.

Plagiarism takes the ideas or words of someone else without giving them due credit and passes off the work as your own. It is both unethical and unfair because it does not give credit to the original author, making it a version of theft. Not only that, but it undermines the work of other students, while entirely bypassing the learning and growth experience. Perhaps worst of all, plagiarism undermines the trust between writer and reader, leaving the reader with a feeling of disquiet. If writing purports to share ideas and present a picture of the world as it is, or as it should be, then not knowing what is real in the text can feel like a violation.

Technology has made plagiarism easier instead of harder, which means it is even more important for students to commit to ethical behavior before plagiarism becomes a temptation. The unauthorized use of artificial intelligence applications also counts as plagiarism, whether a student copies and pastes an entire response from ChatGPT or uses AI writing apps but does not cite them. AI can be a very useful tool for writing when used responsibly, but using it without giving due credit can have serious repercussions. Your audience wishes to hear from *you*, so use your own authentic words to explain your argument.

It is true that writers can commit plagiarism accidentally; and while this usually occurs from negligence rather than malice, it is still the responsibility of the student to ensure that their sources are cited correctly. When researching, write down your citations immediately so that you do not forget where

you found your sources, and when drafting the paper, include in-text citations so your audience knows exactly which parts are your words and which belong to another author. Double-check all your quotation marks, citations, and paraphrases so you can avoid even the appearance of plagiarism.

Examples

Both quotations and paraphrasing require citation because, in both instances, you have borrowed ideas from someone else. When quoting, be sure to include quotation marks in the right places, and when paraphrasing, be sure to significantly change the wording and phrasing to match your own style and substance.

Quoting

Original Text: *The California Baptist University Writing Center is available to students for any assistance they may require to help them develop as writers*.
Quoting: *According to CBU* (2024), *"The California Baptist University Writing Center is available to students for any assistance they may require to help them develop as writers."*

Paraphrasing

Original Text: *The California Baptist University Writing Center is available to students for any assistance they may require to help develop them as writers*.
Paraphrasing: *According to CBU* (2024), *the University Writing Center strives to help students reach their peak writing potential*.

Tips

1. Consider running your paper through a plagiarism checker to avoid plagiarism. Turn-It-In and Grammarly both offer this feature.
2. When taking notes, immediately include the source – often the author, year, and/or page number (depending on your style guide).
3. Make sure to include all the sources used in your paper in your bibliography, continually updating your bibliography as you draft and revise.

Works Consulted

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