

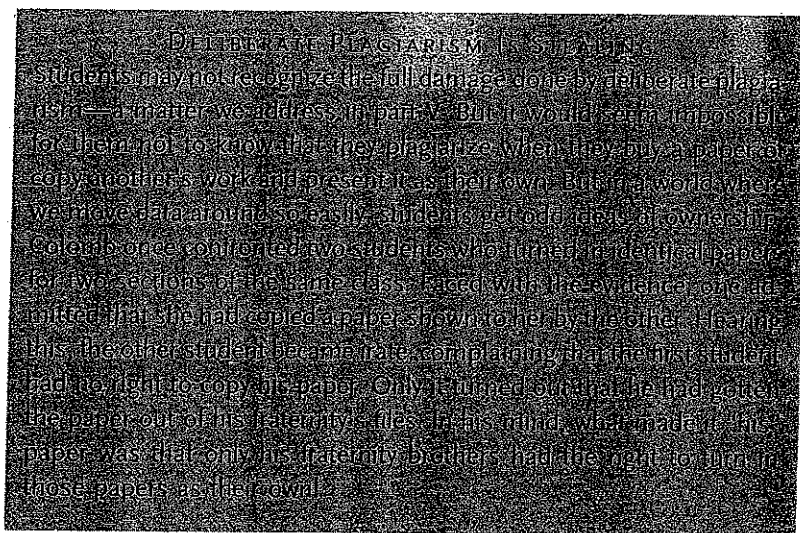
Booth, The Craft of Research

Planning and Drafting 201

12.4 THE PITFALL TO AVOID AT ALL COSTS: PLAGIARISM

It will be as you draft that you risk the worst that can happen to a researcher. You are filling up pages or your screen with lots of good words *and you forget that you collected those words from someone else.* Few researchers intentionally plagiarize, but every honest one still needs to give it serious thought, because most plagiarism is inadvertent. Sometimes it happens when a writer is not clear about what to cite or when. (If you're not sure, ask your teacher for guidance.)

Most writers who plagiarize inadvertently do so because they took notes carelessly (review pp. 91–104). The eminent historian Doris Kearns Goodwin was publicly humiliated when it was discovered that she had copied into her books hundreds, maybe thousands of words written by others. In defense, she claimed that in her note taking, she had neglected to identify the quotations as quotations. A few accepted her defense; many did not. If someone as celebrated as Goodwin can plagiarize inadvertently, every writer should strive to avoid it.



12.4.1 Plagiarism Defined

You plagiarize when, intentionally or not, you use someone else's words or ideas but fail to credit that person, leading your readers

202 PREPARING TO DRAFT, DRAFTING, AND REVISING

to think that those words are yours. There are, however, complications, because different fields draw the line between fair use and plagiarism in different places. In all fields, you plagiarize when you use a source's words or ideas without citing that source. In most fields, you plagiarize even when you *do* credit the source but use its exact words without using quotation marks or block indentation. But in the law, it is acceptable to use the exact words of a court's ruling without quotation marks, if you cite it. In other fields, you plagiarize when you paraphrase a source so closely that anyone putting your work next to it would see that you could not have written what you did without the source at your elbow. But in many sciences, researchers commonly report another researcher's results using words very similar to the original. So, if you don't know the standards for plagiarism in your field, play it safe and credit the original as fully as possible.

12.4.2 Avoiding the Straightforward Plagiarism of Words

Every time you use the exact words of a source, stop. Then

- type quotation marks before and after them, or create a block quotation (see the Quick Tip at the end of this chapter);
- record the words *exactly* as they are in the source (if you change anything, use square brackets and ellipses to indicate changes);
- cite the source.

If you omit the first or last step, intentionally or not, you plagiarize.

12.4.3 Avoiding the Plagiarism of Ideas

You also plagiarize when you use someone else's ideas but do not credit that person. You would plagiarize us, for example, if you wrote about problems using our concepts from chapter 4 but did not credit us, even if you changed our words, calling conditions; say, *predicaments*, and costs, *damages*. If you base several pages on the work of another, don't just mention that fact in a

footnote at the end (as one researcher did with some of Williams's and Colomb's work): attribute their work up front.

A tricky situation arises when you get an idea on your own, then discover that someone else thought of it first. In the world of research, priority counts not for everything, but for a lot. If you do not cite that prior source, you risk having people think that you plagiarized it, even though you did not.

An even trickier situation is when you use ideas that are widely known in your field, as we inevitably do here. (How could we cite the thousands of sources for our commonplace claim that your essays should be well organized?) Sometimes the idea is so familiar that everyone knows who gets credit for it, and you would be thought naive if you cited it. For example, you might mention Crick and Watson when you talk about the helical structure of DNA, but you would not cite their article announcing that discovery. At other times, you might know that an idea is common knowledge, part of the background in your field, but not know who first published it. Since you can't cite, much less track down everything you write, these are cases where even scrupulous students can misstep. All we can say is *When in doubt, ask your teacher and give credit where you can.*

12.4.4 Indirect Plagiarism of Words

It is trickier to define plagiarism when you summarize or paraphrase. They are not the same, but they blend so seamlessly that you may not be aware when you drift from summary into paraphrase, then across the line into plagiarism. No matter your intention, close paraphrase may count as plagiarism, *even when you cite the source.*

For example, this next paragraph plagiarizes what you just read, because it paraphrases it so closely:

It is difficult to define plagiarism when summary and paraphrase are involved, because while they differ, their boundaries blur, and a writer may not know when she is summarizing, paraphrasing, or plagiarizing. Regardless, too close a paraphrase is plagiarism, even when the source is cited.

The next example is borderline:

It is hard to distinguish summary, paraphrase, and plagiarism. You risk plagiarizing when you paraphrase too closely, even when you never meant to plagiarize and you cite a source.

The words in those versions track the original so closely that a careful reader can see that the writer could have written them only while *simultaneously* reading the original. Here is a summary of that paragraph, just on the safe side of the border:

According to Booth, Colomb, and Williams, writers sometimes plagiarize unconsciously because they think they are summarizing, when in fact they are too closely paraphrasing, an act that counts as plagiarism, even when done unintentionally and when sources are cited (p. 203).

In fields that use a lot of direct quotation, such as history and English, close paraphrasing is risky.

Here is a simple way to avoid inadvertent plagiarism: Paraphrase your source, *only after those words have filtered through your own understanding of them*. Then as you actually write, take your eyes away from your source and look at the screen or your own page.

THE NEXT STEP

The biggest difference between experienced writers and beginners is their attitude toward their first draft. Beginners take it as a triumph (which it is): *Done! I'll change that word, fix this comma, run the spell checker, and <Print>!* Experienced researchers take a first draft as a challenge: *I have the sketch; now comes the hard but gratifying work of discovering what I can make of it*. They know that now, more than ever, they have to try to see their report as their readers will. And that means revising that first draft (or second or third . . .), the subject of our next chapter.



QUICK TIP:

Using Quotation and Paraphrase

In every field, researchers have to report what other researchers write. But the practices of your particular field determine how you do that.

HOW TO QUOTE AND PARAPHRASE

In the natural sciences and some social sciences, researchers rarely quote sources directly; they paraphrase and cite them. They make the name of the source a direct part of their own sentence only if the source is important and they want to emphasize it.

Several processes have been suggested as causes of the associative-priming effect. In their seminal study, Meyer and Schvaneveldt (1971, p. 232) suggested two: *automatic (attention-free) spreading activation* and *location-shifting*. More recently, a further associative-priming process has been studied (de Groot 1984).

The writer thought that Meyer and Schvaneveldt were important enough to name directly, but cited de Groot only in parentheses, as a minor reference.

In the humanities and some social sciences, researchers sometimes paraphrase sources, but more often quote them. You have three options:

I. Introduce a quotation with a colon or an introductory phrase.

Plumb describes the Walpole administration in terms that remind one of the patronage system in U.S. cities: "Sir Robert was the first English politician to understand how to use the loyalty of people whose only qualification was his sponsorship" (p. 343).

Plumb describes the Walpole administration in terms that remind one of the patronage system in U.S. cities. He claims that

206 QUICK TIP: USING QUOTATION AND PARAPHRASE

“Sir Robert was the first English politician to understand how to use . . .”

2. Weave the quotation into your own sentence, making sure that the grammar of your sentence fits the grammar of the quotation.

Plumb speaks in terms that remind one of the patronage system in modern U.S. cities when he describes how Walpole was able “to use the loyalty of people whose only qualification . . .”

Jameson was never comfortable with the decisions of the Tribunal, and he often “complain[ed] . . . that something had to be changed” (1984, p. 44).

Note that square brackets indicate insertions and ellipses indicate words dropped.

3. Set off quotations of three or more lines in a “block quote.” When you do, make sure the quotation connects to what has gone before, and that just before or just after the quote, you make clear why you are quoting it.

After 1660 English moralists complained that people were motivated by material goods, which was, of course, nothing new. But they noted a new form of “mercenary virtue” that offered material incentive for good behavior. Shaftesbury wrote:

Men have not been contented to show the natural advantage of honesty and virtue. . . . They have made virtue so mercenary a thing, and have talked so much of its rewards, that one can hardly tell what there is in it, after all, which can be worth rewarding. (p. 135)

WHEN TO QUOTE AND WHEN TO PARAPHRASE

We can't give you rules for when and how much to quote or paraphrase. Quote or cite too often, and you seem to offer too little of your own work; quote too little, and readers may think your claims lack support or may not see how your work relates to that of others. There are, however, some rules of thumb.

The Pitfall to Avoid at All Costs: Plagiarism (From Wayne Booth et al, in *The Craft of Research*) – p. 207

Quick Tip: Using Quotation and Paraphrase 207

Use direct quotations

- when you use the work of others as primary data;
- when you appeal to their authority;
- when the specific words of your source matter because
 - those words have been important to other researchers;
 - you want to focus on how your source says things;
 - the words of the source are vivid or significant;
 - you dispute your source and want to state her case fairly.

Paraphrase sources

- when you are more interested in findings and data than in how a source expresses them;
- when you can say the same thing more clearly.

Don't quote because it's easier or you think you lack the authority to speak for your sources. Make your own argument with your own claims, reasons, and evidence.