

Avoiding Plagiarism

Definition: Plagiarism is using another person's words, phrases, or sentences or another person's ideas, strategies, and research without **clearly** distinguishing the borrowed material and/or without acknowledging the source. There are three types of plagiarism:

Theft of words: failing to enclose in quotation marks any directly quoted words, phrases, or sentences

Example: Original wording: "The mountain stood before him: ominous and foreboding."

Plagiarized wording: The man looked on at the ominous and foreboding cliff.

Theft of prose style: failing to change the sentence structures and word choices of an original source

Example: Original wording: "The mountain stood before him: ominous and foreboding."

Plagiarized prose style: The cliff rose above the man: threatening and sinister.

Theft of ideas: failing to include an in-text citation to show where the ideas were taken from.

When do you need to acknowledge a source? When you use . . .

1. An original idea from someone else, **whether you quote it directly, paraphrase it, or summarize it.**
2. Any exact wording copied from a source.
3. Factual information that is not common knowledge (e.g., common knowledge information: Illinois is known as the "Land of Lincoln"; Chicago is its largest city; Springfield is its capital city).

****Checklist for Common Knowledge Exceptions (Lester's Writing Research Papers (11th ed.), p. 94):**

- Would an intelligent person know this information?
- Did you know it before you discovered it in a source?
- Is it encyclopedia-type information?
- Has this information become general knowledge by being reported repeatedly in different sources?

How can you avoid plagiarism? By . . .

1. Introducing the quotation or paraphrase with the name of the author.

• **Poor acknowledgment of source:**

Children who use video games actually improve their hand and eye coordination. They also exercise their minds by working their way through various puzzles and barriers. "The mental gymnastics of video games and the competition with fellow players are important to young children and their development physically, socially, and mentally" (Norfleet. 45).

****In this excerpt it is difficult to know when the borrowed source material begins.**

• **Proper acknowledgement of source:**

Video games for children have opponents and advocates. Norfleet (45) defended the use of video games by children. He claimed that it improves their hand and eye coordination and that it exercises their minds as they work through various puzzles and barriers. Norfleet stated, "The mental gymnastics of video games and the competition with fellow players are important to young children and their physical, social, and mental development" (45).

****In this excerpt one can clearly see where the borrowed material begins and ends in the paragraph.**

2. Enclosing all quoted key words, phrases, or sentences in quotation marks.
3. Paraphrasing accurately and correctly, changing the original words and sentence structure.
4. Providing an in-text citation for every quoted, paraphrased, or summarized item.
5. Providing a bibliographic entry in the reference page for every source cited in the paper.

