



The Writing Center @ JSCC

Plagiarism Tutorial

As a student at Jackson State, you will be a member of the academic community through your work inside and outside of the classroom. In high school, you probably learned about documenting sources properly and avoiding plagiarism. At the college level, plagiarism is considered to be a serious violation of academic integrity, even if it is not intentional. Here at Jackson State, we take academic integrity seriously, and we're here to help you learn to document and use sources appropriately in a college setting. In the following pages, you will find information on the different forms of plagiarism, proper scholarly procedure, and links to helpful web sites. Always use the resources available to you as a Jackson State student to avoid violating the academic integrity policy -- your professors, your deans, and your academic support networks, including the Writing Center, a free campus service for all student writers.

Defining Plagiarism

According to the 2008-2009 Jackson State Student Handbook,

"Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited. Students guilty of academic misconduct, either directly or indirectly, through participation or assistance, are immediately responsible to the instructor of the class. In addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions, which may be imposed through the regular institutional procedures, as a result of academic misconduct, the instructor has the authority to assign an "F" or a zero for the exercise or examination, or to assign an "F" in the course." (p. 183)

This definition tells you that, as a student, you are responsible for learning the rules about plagiarism and academic dishonesty at school. It also tells you that there are two types of plagiarism -- direct (intentional) and indirect (unintentional) -- and that both carry the same penalties.

In lay terms, plagiarism happens when a student uses another writer's words or ideas without crediting the original author as a source. Plagiarism may be committed intentionally or unintentionally, and unintentional plagiarism is just as serious an offense as intentional plagiarism. In short, if you copy and paste material from a website into your paper; if you buy a paper online or pay a friend to write a paper for you; if you turn in a paper a friend or parent has written for you; if you get an idea that you use in a paper by reading another source without mentioning that source in your paper; or if you commit other violations of the academic integrity policy, you are committing plagiarism.

Just to drive the point home, here are some definitions of plagiarism from commonly used handbooks and readers you might encounter as a student here at Jackson State:

"Taking even part of someone else's work and presenting it as your own leaves you open to criminal charges. In the film video, music, and software businesses, this sort of theft is called piracy. In publishing and education, it is called plagiarism. [...] Never compromise your integrity of risk your future by submitting the words of a professional or another students as your own." (Glenn & Gray, Hodges Harbrace Handbook, 7th Ed., pp. 546-47)

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“Negligence in citing your sources, whether purposeful or accidental, is called plagiarism, which comes from a Latin word meaning “kidnapper.” [...] Avoiding plagiarism is quite simple: You just need to make sure you acknowledge the sources of ideas or wording that you are using to support your own contentions.” (*The Prose Reader*, 8th Ed., p. 551)

“Plagiarism occurs when you use a source’s words or ideas and fail to give proper credit to the author and/or source of the work. Even if you paraphrase (state someone else’s ideas in your own wording), you must give credit to the original source. Failure to do so is a form of academic theft.” (*Along These Lines*, 4th Ed., p. 668)

“Plagiarism involves two kinds of wrongs. Using another person’s ideas, information, or expressions without acknowledging that person’s work constitutes intellectual theft. Passing off another person’s ideas, information, or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage constitutes fraud.” (*MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th Ed., p. 66)

Intentional Plagiarism

Intentional plagiarism happens when you claim to be the author of work that you know was originally written completely or in part by someone else.

The following are examples of intentional plagiarism:

- purchasing a pre-written paper by mail, online, or in person
- letting someone else write part of all of a paper for you
- turning someone else’s unpublished work as your own
- turning in work done as a group that you participated in as yours alone
- turning in work done by you for another class without documenting that it was previously used
- making up bogus citations

Intentional plagiarism is an especially egregious offense since it, by definition, is committed deliberately, usually with an awareness that it violates academic integrity guidelines. Instructors and administrators take cases of intentional plagiarism extremely seriously, in part because they find this type of blatant cheating offensive to the integrity of their classrooms and the institution.

Avoiding intentional plagiarism is easy: Do your own work at all times, and give co-authors or group members credit for aid they have given you. In short, don't cheat.

Unintentional Plagiarism

Unintentional plagiarism is plagiarism that occurs when a writer fails to follow proper scholarly procedures for citation without an explicit intent to cheat.

Examples of unintentional plagiarism include the failure to...

- cite a source that is not common knowledge
- quote an author’s exact words, even if documented
- paraphrase or summarize in your own words, even if documented
- be loyal to a source’s tone, intentions, or words

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Unintentional plagiarism is a violation of Jackson State's academic integrity policy, and ignorance of the rules is no excuse for committing plagiarism. Among your responsibilities as a student at Jackson State is to know how to cite sources properly according to current scholarly procedures. On the following pages, we'll explain how to navigate the rules that guide plagiarism practices.

The Rules

The good news about the rules regarding plagiarism is that there are lots of ways to do the right thing. To follow academic procedures, you'll need to understand several concepts: common knowledge, incorporating sources, and citing sources.

What is common knowledge?

For writers, common knowledge is an important concept because material that can be considered common knowledge does not need to be cited in a text. Unfortunately, determining what counts as common knowledge can be confusing if you don't understand how to assess the information.

Common knowledge is knowledge that is shared between the writer and the readers. If you can assume that your readers will already know a fact, it is likely common knowledge. It is important to remember your readers in your thinking about common knowledge; if they are not likely to know something as common knowledge, you should cite it even if the fact is already familiar to you.

Some common knowledge is widely known. The examples below could almost always go uncited because you could assume that all readers of your college-level essays would know these facts just by living in the United States in the 21st Century:

- China is the most populous country in the world.
- Hawaii was the 50th state.
- The Olympics are played every four years.
- The current U.S. president is Barack Obama.

Some instances of common knowledge are more specialized, depending on your audience. Some audiences will share specific knowledge that a writer could consider common, but if the same information was written in an essay for a different audience, it would no longer be considered common knowledge. The facts in the examples below could go uncited for members of the common-knowledge group but should be cited if you are writing for another audience.

- The JSCC mascot is the General. (Common knowledge to all JSCC students and to most people in JSCC's service area. We hope!)
- The mockingbird is the state bird of Tennessee. (Common knowledge for the people of Tennessee.)

Always remember your readers when deciding what common knowledge is. Would they need to find more information to trust that your statement is accurate? If so, provide a source. Similarly, if a fact was new to you when you read it during your research, it is obviously not common knowledge, and you should cite it when you use it in your own work.

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How can I incorporate sources?

Whenever you find information that you use in your own work – whether you use the information you read word-for-word or put someone else's ideas into your own words to support your points – you'll need to incorporate those sources smoothly into your paper while following the rules of academic integrity.

You have several ways to incorporate someone else's work into your own – quote, paraphrase, or summarize. Each option requires you to cite the sources properly and to remain loyal to every original source's tone and intention. Information on citing sources comes later on this page.

Quote – A quote is an exact reproduction of an author's exact words in your own text. Be sure to use quotation only sparingly. It should be used to fill in gaps or provide authority for your essay and should never comprise the bulk of your paper. If you have more than a few sentences quoted per page, you are likely quoting too much and might be violating academic integrity guidelines, even if you cite properly.

Think about it: Your professor wants you to prove that you have ideas about your topic, with support from established authors and researchers. S/he doesn't want to just read another person's ideas; otherwise, s/he'd just go to the Library and read your source material instead of assigning you the paper!

The rules about citation require some special formatting for quotations:

- Enclose the word-for-word quote in quotation marks (" ") to show that the source author's exact words appear in your paper.
- If you change anything about the original material to make it fit more neatly or clearly into your essay, use square brackets ([]) to indicate that material has been added or changed.
- Use ellipses (. . .) to show that material is left out.
- If the material you are quoting is longer than four lines, use block quote format, which means that you should not use quotation marks but instead indent the whole quoted bit one inch from the left margin so that it is clear what is your original work and what is quoted.

Paraphrase – A paraphrase is your restatement of an author's ideas in your own words that conveys the same meaning as the author's original. Paraphrases are usually about the same length as the original material. If you paraphrase a whole article, for example, you'll have quite a bit of material to write to accurately paraphrase the source. Inside a paraphrase, you might use quotes sparingly.

To understand paraphrase better, think of a television show or movie you recently watched. If you tell a friend about it scene-by-scene and give him/her enough information about the episode that s/he doesn't need to see it for him/herself to know what happens, you've paraphrased the film or show. You'll have put the content into your own words but included all of the characters, the major events, the minor events, and maybe even some dialogue (quoted directly). That's different from summary, which you'll read about below.

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Summary — A summary is a brief restatement of an author's ideas, focusing only on the main ideas. A summary is usually quite a bit shorter than the original source since it addresses only the main points. You may use quotes sparingly inside the summary as well. Summary is often used when you got an idea for an essay or an idea that you use in your essay as evidence, support, or proof of your own points.

To contrast a summary and a paraphrase, let's revisit the television show or movie idea above. From a paraphrase, you've probably spoiled the movie or episode for your friend by giving so much information about the plot, characters, and themes. In a summary, you'll provide much less information. If you give your friend just enough information in your own words to allow him/her to get the gist of the plot, characters, and themes, you'll have summarized it. Summaries contain enough information to allow a reader to understand a concept or article but not much more.

Whatever method you use to incorporate source material into your own essay, you'll need to cite all of your sources at all times to avoid plagiarizing.

How should I cite sources?

The procedure for acknowledging that you have borrowed material from someone else and incorporated into your own work is called citation. Other than common knowledge, all material you incorporate into your papers must be cited.

Most papers require two types of citation — **in-text citations** that give a reader an immediate note about source material and **end references** that lead readers to source materials with detailed citations. The format for each type of citation varies based on the citation style your professor or discipline requires. The two most common are the style guides of the Modern Language Association (**MLA**) and the American Psychological Association (**APA**). Some professors also use Chicago or Turabian formats. Be sure to ask your instructor which style to use if s/he does not specify a format in your assignment. Brief guidelines are available for download at the Writing Center and Library websites, and you can use the full reference books at the Library or in the Writing Center.

In-text citation — An in-text citation informs readers where source/borrowed material is located within your work and directs readers to a reference at the end of the text. Each paragraph of a research paper (except for the introduction and conclusion) should, in general, contain in-text citations. In-text citations should occur as close as possible to the source material in your essay. This way, readers can distinguish where new source material begins easily.

In-text citations may be part of a sentence or parenthetical. If you mention an author's name in your sentence with a phrase like "According to Jeffries, . . .," you've used a sentence-based citation. If you don't mention the author's name in your sentence, you should write his/her name in parentheses at the end of the sentence(s) you wrote about his/her material, like this: (Jeffries). If you're using a direct quotation, add the page number you found the source quote on in the original source [(Jeffries 86) or (Jeffries, p. 86)]. If you've paraphrased or summarized, you usually don't need a page number. If you have an online source that doesn't have page numbers, use a useful heading, like a link name you clicked on to get to the material instead.

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Remember that your goal in providing in-text citations is to get your readers from a specific fact in your paper to the matching entry on the end references page as easily as possible.

End references (works cited or references page entries) give readers detailed information about where they can find the original source of the borrowed material. All of the sources you used in a paper will be collected in one page (or more, depending on how many sources you've used) at the end of your document. Depending on the style your professor requires, the page will be formatted differently. Look in the APA or MLA manuals (or in the manual for the style your professor requires) for specific information on formatting your end reference page(s).

A quick note about online citation software: Remember that you alone are responsible for the final product you turn in. Some online citation software makes mistakes, and you will be graded on the accuracy of your citations. If you choose to use software or an online program to help you create your in-text or end references, be sure to double-check the accuracy of those programs' results before you trust them for a final grade.

Avoiding Plagiarism

We know that most students don't plagiarize intentionally. We know that you want credit for the work you did researching sources, and you know that citing sources helps to build your credibility as the author of an essay. Still, all writers make mistakes occasionally, but the best writers follow some simple steps that can help ensure that they don't plagiarize unintentionally. Here are some of those best practices to help you avoid plagiarism and become a better writer!

Taking Effective Notes

1. In your notes, use a special mark, like giant quotation marks, to indicate that you're quoting someone directly. Be sure your mark is obvious enough that you won't forget later what your original intention was.
2. Differentiate between ideas you got from a source and those you came to on your own using margin notes like MINE and SOURCE, or just M and S.
3. Record everything you'll need in an end reference while you're researching. Jot down the authors' names, the publishers, the dates, the titles, and (for web sources) the date you looked at the webpage and URL. That way, you won't need to hunt this information down again later.

Writing Paraphrases or Summaries

1. Be sure that you understand the material you are trying to paraphrase or summarize before you begin working. Use the thesaurus, dictionary, and other resources so that you can talk about your source intelligently.
2. Whenever you can, use the source name in the paraphrase or summary. A phrase like "According to Takako Smith," will introduce your source material smoothly.
3. Try to write your paraphrase or summary from memory without looking at the original source while you write. This way, you'll be less likely to plagiarize by accident.

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4. Then, check your paraphrase or summary against the original to correct any errors and place quotation marks around phrases that are exactly the same between your document and the original.
5. Always cite your paraphrased and summarized material properly.

Using Direct Quotations

1. Quote just enough to get the job done. Don't quote a whole paragraph, or even a whole sentence, if only a few important words will do.
2. When you're choosing which quotes to use, select those quotes that will have the strongest effect on your paper. Using too many sources will weaken their impact and will make your paper sound disjointed -- half in your voice, half in other people's voices.
3. Use the source material's author in the sentence, when possible, and cite your quoted material properly.
4. Always try to give a context for the author's authority. (Not-so-good: Takako Smith says, "The most important protector of democracy is the well-informed voter." Better: Takako Smith, an analyst at the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, says, "The most important protector of democracy is the well-informed voter.")

Protecting Your Own Work

The OWL at Purdue has some good advice for students trying to prevent plagiarism of their own work:

"Sometimes innocent, hard-working students are accused of plagiarism because a dishonest student steals their work. This can happen in all kinds of ways, from a roommate copying files off of your computer, to someone finding files on a disk or pen drive left in a computer lab. Here are some practices to keep your own intellectual property safe:

1. Do not save your paper in the same file over and over again; use a numbering system and the Save As... function. E.g., you might have research_paper001.doc, research_paper002.doc, research_paper003.doc as you progress. Do the same thing for any HTML files you're writing for the Web. Having multiple draft versions may help prove that the work is yours.
2. Maintain copies of your drafts in numerous media, and different secure locations when possible; don't just rely on your hard drive or pen drive.
3. Password-protect your computer; if you have to leave a computer lab for a quick bathroom break, hold down the Windows key and L to lock your computer without logging out.
4. Password-protect your files; this is possible in all sorts of programs, from Adobe Acrobat to Microsoft Word (just be sure not to forget the password!)"

Links

At Jackson State, you can find useful resources on campus and online to help you maintain academic integrity and avoid plagiarism. Beyond the institutional support, remember that your pro-

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Professors are always available to answer your questions about finding, incorporating, and citing source material. A citation error is not a violation of the integrity policy until you turn your work in for a grade; until then, you've simply made a mistake that you have the responsibility to correct. Don't be afraid to turn to your professors or the resources below for help fixing errors before they become academic violations!

On-campus help

- The Writing Center at Jackson State offers free, face-to-face or online help for any student at Jackson State on any writing-related issue, including citation and avoiding plagiarism. Call 731.425.8848 for an appointment or to ask questions. The Writing Center has downloadable handouts and an online tutoring request form for off-campus and online students (and for Jackson students whose schedule prevents a face-to-face session).
- The Jackson State Library's librarians can provide top-notch help for any research question you have as a student. Visit <http://library.jsc.edu> for information.

The Web offers plenty of help to students trying to maintain academic integrity. Here are some of the most common and useful websites.

- The Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab) is full of wonderful resources on many aspects of writing, including avoiding plagiarism and paraphrasing practice. Find them at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl>.
- The Indiana University Bloomington's School of Education has an online test that allows you to try recognizing instances of plagiarism yourself. This test for non-IU students gives you the chance to see plagiarism in action so that you can avoid committing it yourself. It's online at http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/plagiarism_test.html.
- Plagiarism.org provides useful information and links on citation, definitions, and support for writers online.
- Some software is available (some for fees) that may help you avoid unintentional plagiarism. If you try or use these self-check programs, you should know that maintaining academic integrity is, in the end, your responsibility and that computer programs should be used only for guidance. Some of the most popular self-check programs include Plagiarism Detect and Write Check by Turnitin.com.

As you can see, you're not alone when it comes to figuring out the ins and outs of citing, using sources, and maintaining academic integrity. Use local and online resources to help make your time at Jackson State productive!