**AVOIDING PLAGIARISM: A Guide for Students**

**A PLAGIARISM STORY FOR STUDENTS**

*Imagine creating a video.*

We invested a lot of time and work: countless hours devoted to shooting original footage, editing the results, and then adding music. Our video was so good that we posted it online.

A few months later, a friend sends a link to a viral video. We click on it and see our own video. However, no one has given us credit or asked us if it was OK to use our work. **This is plagiarism!**

***What is plagiarism?*** It is natural to incorporate into our own work the ideas and creations of other people, which can take the form of writing, images, video, and music. We sometimes borrow and reuse words, designs, and sounds. When we do this and do not give credit to the source from whom we borrowed them, we are plagiarizing! **The CUNY Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “The act of presenting another person’s ideas, research, or writing as your own.”** More broadly defined, **plagiarism** is using another’s **work** without giving credit.

**A work** can be text or ideas but can also take the form of computer code or programs, graphic design, data, graphs, images, videos, musical compositions, podcasts: you name it!

Plagiarism arises mostly in the context of college writing: this handout will focus chiefly on academic writing. At the end of the handout, you will find guidance on reusing images, videos, and music.   
  
***Why plagiarism is bad.*** Plagiarism is cheating oneself. It is important to learn how to express our ideas, especially in writing, on our own and in our own voice. Plagiarism is also unethical and dishonest. It violates CUNY and City Tech’s Code of Conduct. It is also unfair to our classmates who make an honest effort. Moreover, we may also be violating copyright when we use the work of others’ without giving credit. Submitting a purchased term paper or a paper written by another student is an extreme form of plagiarism and easily detected by a professor.

***Giving credit is good for everyone!*** Giving credit to your source is expected in academic as well as professional life. It benefits *everyone*. Giving credit adds credibility to our papers, reports, and presentations. When we give credit, it proves we have done our research and this supports our academic and professional success. Another key reason we give credit is that it helps professors or colleagues find the source that we used. Lastly, giving credit acknowledges the labor of the individual whose work we are using. Giving credit to a **source** is **citation**. Essentially, a citation points back to the source and provides rich details about the source.

***What is a source?*** A source is the place where we found the information, image, etc. that we used. It can be formally published material including books, articles, websites, movies, or photos as well as informal, unpublished sources (for example, social media posts or computer code). Any time we use information from a source, of any kind, we must cite it. If it is text, and we are using the exact words of an author, in addition to citing the source we must always use proper quotation [“”] marks.

***What does it mean to cite a source?*** Citing a source for written material means providing specific information so professors and others can locate the source of the information.

***Quotation, paraphrasing, and patchwriting.***When we write, if we use someone’s words verbatim (word-for-word), we put the text in **quotation marks** and cite the source. When we do not use the words verbatim or we are explaining others’ ideas, we paraphrase, which means writing in our own words. When we paraphrase or otherwise use someone’s ideas, we must still cite the source. Rearranging someone’s words into new sentences (lightly reworking the text) is a form of plagiarism called patchwriting.

***In-text citations and the bibliography*.** In-text citations in a research paper provide brief information including the author, year of the source (APA) and the paper number(s). The bibliography at the end of a paper (also called References or Works Cited) includes detailed, full citations. A full citation includes the author (creator of the work), the title of the source, the date, and more information about where to find the source including publisher and the URL for the source. The pieces of information and the order of the information in a full citation will vary according to the citation style (e.g. APA or MLA) required by an instructor.

**Examples: Paraphrasing vs. Plagiarism\***

Original Source: ‘[A totalitarian] society … can never permit either the truthful recording of facts, or the emotional sincerity, that literary creation demands. … Totalitarianism demands … the continuous alteration of the past, and in the long run … a disbelief in the very existence of objective truth.’ 3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Student Version A – Plagiarism ☹** *A totalitarian society can never permit the truthful recording of facts; it demands the continuous alteration of the past, and a disbelief in the very existence of objective truth.* | The student has combined copied pieces of the author’s language, without quotation marks or citations. |
| **Student Version B – Improper paraphrase, also plagiarism ☹**  *A totalitarian society can’t be open-minded or allow the truthful recording of facts, but instead demands the constant changing of the past and a distrust of the very existence of objective truth* (Orwell). | The student has woven together sentences and switched a few words (“open-minded” for “tolerant,” “allow” for “permit”) has left out some words, and has given an incomplete and inaccurate citation. |
| **Student Version C – Appropriate paraphrase, not plagiarism** **☺**  *Orwell believed that totalitarian societies must suppress literature and free expression because they cannot survive the truth, and thus they claim it does not exist* (Bowker 336-337). | This student has paraphrased using her own words, accurately reflecting and citing the author’s ideas. |
| **Student Version D – Quotation with cite, not plagiarism ☺** *In his biography of George Orwell, Gordon Bowker discusses the themes of 1984, quoting a 1946 essay by Orwell: “‘Totalitarianism demands … the continuous alteration of the past, and in the long run … a disbelief in the very existence of objective truth’” (337).* | The student introduces the source. Verbatim words are in quotation marks, omitted words are marked by ellipses, and both the book used and the original source of the quote are cited. |

*3Bowker p. 337, quoting Orwell, G., “The Prevention of Literature,” Polemic, No. 2, January 1946*

**Images, music, video: Use Creative Commons.** If we want to use or incorporate images, music, or video into our work, look for Creative Commons licensed material. Creative Commons is a form of copyright that allows others to remix and reuse. Google Image Search lets us filter results by Creative Commons license using the TOOLS > USAGE RIGHTS option. [creativecommons.org](http://Creativecommons.org) provides search engines and guidance on how to give credit to the source including providing the specifics of the Creative Commons license.   
  
***Get help:*** Read the syllabus and review the details of the assignment. If the professor has not provided instructions or guidelines regarding how to cite sources, ask for clarification. City Tech’s Atrium Learning Center (G level, Atrium) provides tutoring for all aspects of writing and more. Ursula C. Schwerin Library is another great resource. Get help in person or visit the library’s website [cityte.ch/citation](http://cityte.ch/citation). The library offers 24/7 support via ASK A LIBRARIAN [cityte.ch/askus](http://cityte.ch/askus). Another great resource is Purdue OWL’s Research and Citation Resources. Tools in Blackboard allow students to check their work for plagiarism before submitting a paper or other project.

**QUICK TIPS TO AVOID PLAGIARISM**

\*Take notes on a source in one’s own words  
\*Keep track of citations in the writing process   
\*It does not matter if the work is freely available on the Internet. Cite it  
\*Err on the side of presuming that something is *not* common knowledge. Cite it

\*This section uses verbatim text from “Avoiding PLAGIARISM: Mastering the Art of Scholarship,” Student Support and Judicial Affairs Office of the University of California, Davis, [sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf](http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf) and has been used with permission.  *Prof. Monica Berger, Ursula C. Schwerin Library, created this handout for the NYCCT Academic Integrity Committee, March 2018*