Academic Support Center
Writing Center

Plagiarism and Citing Sources

**Citing** is giving credit for information from a source that you use in the body of your paper. Failure to cite constitutes **plagiarism**.

According to the *LB Brief* book by Jane Aaron from page 425, **plagiarism** “is the presentation of someone else’s work as your own. Whether deliberate or accidental, plagiarism is a serious offense. It breaks trust, and it undermines or even destroys your credibility as a researcher and writer. In most colleges, a code of academic honesty calls for severe consequences for plagiarism: a reduced or failing grade, suspension from school, or expulsion.”

The *LB Brief* book, pg. 426, describes the following forms of plagiarism as:

**Deliberate plagiarism**
- Copying or downloading a phrase, a sentence, or a longer passage from a source and passing it off as your own by omitting quotation marks and a source citation.
- Summarizing or paraphrasing someone else’s ideas without acknowledging your debt in a source citation.
- Handing in as your own work a paper you have bought, copied off the Web, had a friend write, or accepted from another student.

**Accidental plagiarism**
- Reading a wide variety of print or Web sources on a subject without taking notes on them, and then not remembering the difference between what you recently learned and what you already knew.
- Forgetting to place quotation marks around another writer’s words.
- Carelessly omitting a source citation for a paraphrase.
- Omitting a source citation for another’s idea because you are unaware of the need to acknowledge the idea.
In addition, another form of plagiarism is called **self plagiarism**, which is using an essay or research paper from a previous course assignment, changing the date and course name, etc., then turning it in for another course.

In order to prevent plagiarism, **ALWAYS** cite your sources.

**What sources must be cited?**

- ideas that are not your own
- researched information
- statistics, graphics, etc., that you did not experimentally compile or personally create
- direct quotes
- information that you chose to paraphrase or summarize
  - Even though you are using your own words, you are using someone else’s ideas; therefore, you still have to cite that source.

**What sources need not be cited?**

- one’s own independent material
  - observations
  - thoughts
  - compilations of facts
  - experimental results

- common knowledge
  - standard information
    + example: facts of history, dates, and corresponding major events
    * non-example: historian’s interpretation/analysis of events

- common sense observations most people know about
  + example: humans must breathe in and out to survive
    * incorrect example: The process of breathing in is called inhalation and the person inhales oxygen; whereas, the process of breathing out is called exhalation and the person exhales carbon dioxide.