

# Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism



# What is plagiarism?

- ▶ Using the words or ideas of another person as one's own either on purpose or unintentionally
  - ▶ Mt. SAC policy defines plagiarism as “a direct violation of intellectual and academic honesty. Although it exists in many forms, all plagiarism refers to the same act: *representing somebody else’s words or ideas as one’s own*” (Mt. SAC Catalog)
- ▶ This may include (but is not limited to):
  - ▶ Copying an entire piece from another author, a website, etc.
  - ▶ Copying parts of someone else’s writing, speech, etc. without giving proper credit
  - ▶ Paraphrasing (rewording) passages or information without giving credit to the author or source using an appropriate citation style
  - ▶ Having someone edit your paper for you
  - ▶ Having someone dictate sentences for you to write as your own
  - ▶ Buying or borrowing someone’s paper and turning it in as your own
  - ▶ \*\*\*In some schools, you also cannot turn in the same paper for two different classes since they consider it plagiarism as well (plagiarizing yourself)

# Why do people get so upset over plagiarism?

- ▶ If you plagiarize, you are stealing someone's ideas.
- ▶ In the U.S.:
  - ▶ Originality is highly valued
  - ▶ Respect for others' work is considered an essential characteristic of an ethical society
    - ▶ This means we always make it clear when we borrow words or ideas from someone else
- ▶ If you plagiarize, you are not thinking and writing for yourself. Teachers want to teach you to write. Research is part of writing. If you do not do the work and receive feedback on your own work, you are NOT learning.
- ▶ The main purpose of research is not to summarize the work of others but to build on it to arrive at a better understanding of the subject.

# What are the consequences of plagiarism?

- ▶ Plagiarism can have severe consequences, including (but not limited to):
  - ▶ A failing grade on the assignment
  - ▶ An automatic failing grade on the course
  - ▶ Disciplinary report (which deans and other instructors will have access to) and/or note in student records
  - ▶ Expulsion from a university or loss of a job
  - ▶ Lawsuits
- ▶ Loss of credibility and professional standing

# How can you avoid plagiarism?

## 1. Avoid receiving too much “help” from a tutor and/or friend

- ▶ Ask questions and listen to suggestions, but develop your own ideas and use your own words
- ▶ Don't procrastinate; if you leave papers to the last minute, you are more likely to copy passages and fail to cite them properly

## 2. While researching:

- ▶ Annotate (write notes on) articles using your own words
- ▶ Create note cards or a notes sheet in which you specify:
  - ▶ Whether it is a direct quote or paraphrase
  - ▶ Full citation (with page number(s)—if applicable)

# How can you avoid plagiarism? (continued)

3. Cite your sources appropriately! You can do this by referring to approved formats in the field you are writing for.

- ▶ MLA is one of them!

Let's take a look...

# What is MLA?

- ▶ *MLA format* details a very specific way to format essays, outlines, and outside sources within works to avoid academic dishonesty by clearly defining authorship and outside sources.
- ▶ *MLA format* (typically referred to simply as “MLA”) was developed by the Modern Language Association and is used in the fields of English, modern languages, and other fields within humanities departments.

# What are citations?

- ▶ Citations identify the sources that you use in your paper.
- ▶ You must use citations whenever you borrow information, ideas, opinion, facts, or statistics from others. Citations show that these borrowed elements are not your own.
- ▶ Citations appear in two places: in the text (“in-text citations”) and in the works-cited or bibliography pages at the end of your paper.
- ▶ Citations are **unnecessary** when the information is *common knowledge*.\*

*\*More on this later.*



# Avoiding plagiarism (using MLA formatting guidelines)

Information to include in citations:

- ▶ 1) the quote, paraphrase, or summary
- ▶ 2) the author or organization
- ▶ 3) the credentials of that person or organization, if appropriate
- ▶ 4) where the information can be found (the citation)

## **In-text citation example:**

"Childhood immunizations have reduced dramatically the incidence rates of debilitating and sometimes lethal diseases," states Loren Mell, et al. in the *American Academy of Pediatrics* (461).

**You must include all four at the first citing instance!**

# Avoiding plagiarism (in-text citations)

- ▶ When that author and work is quoted after that, the author's last name and just the cite is used.

## **Example :**

**Mell, et al.** emphasizes that the high levels of immunization in the U.S. are responsible for the dramatic reduction of such occurrences **(465)**.

# Avoiding plagiarism (Works Cited vs. in-text)

Include the full citation in the Works Cited page:

## Works Cited

Mell, Loren, et al. "Compliance with National Immunization Guidelines for Children Younger than 2 Years." *American Academy of Pediatrics* 115 (2005): 461-467. Print.

## In-text citation:

"Childhood immunizations have reduced dramatically the incidence rates of debilitating and sometimes lethal diseases," states Loren Mell, et al. in the *American Academy of Pediatrics* (461).

# Ways to cite in-text (MLA format)

- ▶ In MLA, citations are placed at the end of the source information and usually include the author's last name and the page where the information can be found:

- **Example 1:** In the U.S., before the average child is twelve, he will have witnessed over 8,000 murders on television (Sullivan 677).
- **Example 2:** Romantic poetry is characterized by the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Wordsworth 263).
- **Example 3:** In the article “Kip Kinkel: A Boy’s Life,” *Rolling Stone* reporter Randall Sullivan notes that after the Springfield school shootings “the newspapers trotted out the now-familiar numbers: the 8,000 on-screen murders that the average American child will witness before finishing elementary school” (677).
- **Example 4:** Wordsworth states that romantic poetry is marked by a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (263).

*Note: Since the author is named in the signal phrases that introduce the quotes (examples 3 and 4), the citations only include the page number.*

1. Can you identify the 4 elements of proper citations in these examples? (refer to slide 9 for review)
2. Which ones represent first mentions and which ones represent subsequent mentions?

# Elements of in-text citations

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- **Example 4:** Wordsworth states that romantic poetry is marked by a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (263).

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# Practice: Identifying Plagiarism

- ▶ Which of the following is plagiarism?
  - a. Looking at a friend's essay to get an idea of how to write your essay
  - b. Having a friend help organize your essay
  - c. Having a friend correct your errors in an essay
  
- ▶ Which of the following is not plagiarism?
  - a. Cutting and pasting from an online source
  - b. Using parts of someone's essay
  - c. Copying words and phrases from a reading
  - d. Using ideas from an article which you have paraphrased and cited
  
- ▶ Which of the following is not plagiarism?
  - a. Not using quotation marks on a passage copied from a text
  - b. Forgetting the author's name when paraphrasing
  - c. Using an essay that you wrote and then had your friend rewrite
  - d. Having someone help you with your essay by suggesting changes

# Practice: Identifying Plagiarism (answers)

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# Common knowledge versus material that needs to be cited

## ▶ What is common knowledge?

- ▶ Common knowledge (or general knowledge) is information that is commonly known in its field, so it appears in many sources. It might also include information that is so basic and factual that most, if not all, sources would agree with it.
- ▶ It often includes widely known information about:
  - ▶ current events
  - ▶ famous people
  - ▶ geographical facts
  - ▶ familiar history
- ▶ Some examples of common/general knowledge:
  - ▶ Kurt Vonnegut published *Slaughterhouse-Five* in 1966.
  - ▶ William Henry Harrison had the shortest term of any U.S. president.
  - ▶ "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was the hit that made Nirvana famous.
  - ▶ Stomach pain is a common side effect of aspirin use.
- ▶ Each of the above statements would be considered generally true and accepted in its field, and one can find these same facts in multiple sources. Statements like the above would not need to be cited.
- ▶ Also, feel free to use familiar proverbs ("You can't judge a book by its cover"), well-known quotations ("We shall overcome"), or common knowledge (George Washington was the first president of the United States) without citing.



# How to determine whether information is common knowledge

## ▶ Common Knowledge Questions

▶ To determine whether the information you want to use is common knowledge or not, ask yourself the following three questions:

1. Who is my audience?
2. What do I think they already know?
3. Will I be asked where I found my information?

\*What is common knowledge in one group may not be common knowledge in another. Information on Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs may not need citation in a psychology class but would require citation in an English class.

\*\*You will never get in trouble for citing too much information, so if you are unsure whether or not to cite, do it.

Information in this slide taken from [What is Common Knowledge](https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/citing-your-sources/what-common-knowledge) at <https://integrity.mit.edu/handbook/citing-your-sources/what-common-knowledge>

# Citation is necessary when information is not common knowledge

- ▶ What is **NOT** common knowledge and, therefore, needs to be cited?
  - ▶ Other people's opinions, analysis, interpretations, specific wording or data
    - ▶ For example:
      - ▶ *Slaughterhouse-Five* is the best of Vonnegut's anti-war fiction.
      - ▶ If he had lived, William Henry Harrison would have been a popular president.
      - ▶ "Smells Like Teen Spirit" had a great music video.
      - ▶ People should avoid taking aspirin because it can harm the stomach lining.
- ▶ If the writer of a research paper got the above ideas from a source, they would need to be cited.

## Three ways to use outside sources:

1. Direct quotes
2. Paraphrases
3. Summary

**Come to our “How to Quote and Paraphrase” workshop and/or complete our “Integrating Sources” DLA to learn how to do each of the above!**

# Directed Learning Activity

- ▶ Now complete the exercises in the directed learning activity.
- ▶ When you are done, make a DLA appointment to see a tutor or sign-up on the “DLA Walk-in” list.

## Contact Information:

Call 909.274.5325 for questions and/or help with scheduling appointments