What You Need to Know About Plagiarism

Do you think you know all about plagiarism? Think again. Below are some common misconceptions:

- Reusing one of your own papers is not considered plagiarism.
- As long as you include a reference page at the end of your paper, you are safe.
- It is ok to use someone else’s work as long as you replace a few of the words and change the sentence around a bit.
- A source is plagiarized only if you forget to use quotation marks.
- Plagiarism counts only if it is intentional.
- “I didn’t mean to” is an acceptable excuse for plagiarism.

All of the above count as plagiarism. Students usually have a good idea of what it means to plagiarize, but there are some things you probably do not know. This short tutorial will tell you exactly what you need to know about plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Frequently Asked Questions: Plagiarism

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism refers to academic dishonesty that can be intentional or unintentional. This can be the result of attempting to recycle your own work from another course or semester, inaccurately citing the work of someone else, failing to give credit to someone else for his or her ideas or writing, failing to summarize or paraphrase a quote in your own words, or anything else that falsely represents any part of your work. In short, be honest with your reader and yourself. Know when and how to use APA formatting and be sure that it is accurately implemented.

What is Kaplan University’s official plagiarism policy?

Kaplan University considers academic honesty to be one of its highest values. Students are expected to be the sole authors of their work. Use of another person’s work or ideas must be accompanied by specific citations and references. Though not a comprehensive or exhaustive list, the following are some examples of dishonesty or unethical and unprofessional behavior:

- Plagiarism: Using another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving proper credit to that person; giving the impression that it is the student’s own work.
- Any form of cheating on examinations.
- Altering academic or clinical records.
- Falsifying information for any assignments.
- Submitting an assignment(s) that was partially or wholly completed by another student.
- Copying work or written text from a student, the Internet, or any document without giving due credit to the source of the information.
- Submitting an assignment(s) for more than one class without enhancing and refining the assignment, and without first receiving instructor permission. In cases where previous assignments are allowed to be submitted for another class, it is the responsibility of the student to enhance the assignment with additional research and to also submit the original assignment for comparison purposes.
- Assisting another student with reasonable knowledge that the other student intends to commit any act of academic dishonesty. This offence would include, but not be limited to, providing an assignment to another student to submit as his or her own work or allowing another student to copy answers to any test, examination, or assignment.

In essence, plagiarism is the theft of someone else’s ideas and work. Whether a student copies verbatim or simply rephrases the ideas of another without properly acknowledging the source, it is still plagiarism. In the preparation of work submitted to meet course requirements, whether a draft or a final version of a paper or project, students must take great care to distinguish their own ideas and language from information derived from other sources.

Sources include published primary and secondary materials, electronic media, and information and opinions gathered directly from other people.

A discussion thread, computer program, marketing plan, PowerPoint presentation, and other similar work produced to satisfy a course requirement are, like a paper, expected to be the original work of the student submitting it. Copying documentation from another student or from any other source without proper citation is a form of academic dishonesty, as is producing work substantially from the work of another. Students must assume that collaboration in the completion of written assignments is prohibited unless explicitly
permitted by the instructor. Students must acknowledge any collaboration and its extent in all submitted coursework. Students are subject to disciplinary action if they submit as their own work a paper purchased from a term paper company or downloaded from the Internet.

**How can I integrate outside sources into a paper?**

There are three ways to use a source within an essay. Understanding each of these will help you accurately integrate the ideas of others without plagiarizing:

1. **Directly quoting:** This refers to using a source without altering it in any way; the work is used word-for-word. It is critical that all directly quoted passages are enclosed in quotation marks.

2. **Paraphrasing:** You can also use a source by placing it in your own words. Paraphrasing simplifies or restates the main ideas of an author and is generally the same length as the original.

3. **Summarizing:** Like paraphrasing, you can summarize a source by placing it in your own words. The difference is that it is a shortened version of the original; the author’s main ideas are abbreviated for the sake of length.

**How do I give appropriate credit to sources I use in my paper?**

Anything that you borrow from an outside source must be cited in two places: in the body of the text and on a references page. Additionally, direct quotes must be enclosed in quotation marks. Failure to do any of these things constitutes plagiarism.

**How do instructors check for plagiarism?**

It is important to understand that instructors do not take pleasure in ‘catching’ students plagiarizing. Every attempt is made to ensure the success of each student though educational resources like Kaplan’s Writing Center and this tutorial. One tool that instructors use to prevent plagiarism is a third-party detection service called Turn It In. This extensive database protects your work from being stolen by someone else, and it shows which sources have been used within your paper. As long as you cite any outside sources, the report generated by this service is a testimony to your accuracy and skill in implementing APA formatting standards. On the other hand, accidental and intentional plagiarism is immediately apparent.

**What is the difference between accidental and intentional plagiarism?**

Accidental plagiarism is the result of inaccurately citing a source, while intentional plagiarism is outright dishonesty. However, plagiarism in any form is still plagiarism, and the consequences are the same whether or not it was intended. “I didn’t know that was considered plagiarism” is not a defense.

**What are the consequences of plagiarizing?**

From the University catalog:

*Charges of academic dishonesty brought against a student shall be made in writing by the instructor to the Provost's Office. The Provost’s Office maintains a database of plagiarism offenses and a file of all plagiarism charges. When an offense has been committed, the Provost’s Office sends the student a copy of the plagiarism policy and a letter of the action taken, and informs the Academic Department Chair, the Academic Advisor, and the course instructor of any plagiarism charges.*

*Academic dishonesty is a serious offense and may result in the following sanctions:*

1. **1st offense:** Failure of the assignment in which the action occurred.
2. **2nd offense:** Failure of the class in which the action occurred.
3. **3rd offense:** Expulsion or permanent dismissal from the University.

**Frequently Asked Questions: APA Formatting**

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**What is APA?**

APA stands for the American Psychological Association. The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* establishes a national standard for the layout of an academic paper and gives a universal method for referencing sources used in these types of papers. Generally, APA style is the method used for social science papers. At Kaplan, we find that APA style best suits our overall curriculum. These standards are not suggestions; they are the expectation.

**Why is APA style so important?**

You stop for lunch at the local McDonald’s™, and you order a Big Mac Extra Value Meal™. When you bite into your sandwich, you have an expectation of what a Big Mac™ is supposed to be. It should have two lightly seasoned patties of hamburger; a three-part, sesame seed bun including the crown, the club, and the heel. Also included should be the mysterious “Big Mac Sauce™,” one slice of cheese, two dill pickle wedges, and dehydrated onions. You are on a business trip in Chicago or New York, and you order your infamous Big Mac™ meal. You find that the sandwich is different. They have substituted those little onion bits with larger chunks of onion. Oh, the horror!
The creator of this sandwich has a reputation to uphold. Whether you are in Tokyo or Denver, a Big Mac™ should always be constructed in the same way and made with the same ingredients. This is also true for formatting “academic” papers whether they are created using APA, MLA, or CMS style (at Kaplan, we use APA). By creating papers in the prescribed format as outlined by the American Psychological Association, you are establishing your credibility as a legitimate member of the academic community as a whole. Adhering to this nationally recognized format, marks you as a true academic whose ideas are worthy of the attention of other academics. It makes no difference if your paper is being read by a professor of an Ivy League school or an instructor at a community college in Idaho. Your paper is recognized as “legitimate” by all members of the academic community at large. You are engaging your readers at a level that is as recognized as the Big Mac™.

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What are the main components of an APA-formatted Paper?

There are three major elements in an APA-formatted paper. These include manuscript formatting, in-text citations (also called parenthetical references), and bibliographical references (i.e. a references page).

What is an in-text citation?

The first way to refer to an outside source is using an abbreviated notation in the body of the paper. This is referred to as an in-text citation or parenthetical reference. It provides the reader with a basic understanding of the origin of the information by stating the last name of the author followed by the year of publication. When directly quoted, the page number and quotation marks around the borrowed information must also be included. A good rule of thumb is to ask two questions when writing: (1) “Who said this?” (2) “When was it said?” Following are a few examples:

Example 1: Henry Seidel Canby (1924) captured the process of writing perfectly when he wrote, "Good writing is always a breaking of the soil, clearing away prejudices, pulling up of sour weeds of crooked thinking, stripping the turf so as to get at what is fertile beneath" (p.135).

Example 2: Henry Seidel Canby captured the process of writing perfectly when he wrote, "Good writing is always a breaking of the soil, clearing away prejudices, pulling up of sour weeds of crooked thinking, stripping the turf so as to get at what is fertile beneath" (1924, p.135).

We can tell the above are directly quoted, because they tell us who said it and when they said it, they include the page number on which these quotes appears, and they are enclosed in quotation marks. All four of these elements must be included to accurately credit the original author of a passage that has been borrowed word-for-word.

Paraphrased or summarized passages must also include the author and year of publication, but they should not be enclosed in quotation marks or include the page number. As previously noted, they must be written in your own words. Below is an original text followed by two acceptable examples of paraphrasing and citation:

Original Text: “For the retiring "Silent Generation," now in their '60s and '70s, 9/11 is worrisome. Polls confirm that these World War II-era children have aged into the most war- and casualty-averse Americans, the most ardent supporters of the UN, and the biggest advocates of committee-scripted process” (Howe & Strauss, 2002, p. 31)

Example 1: As expected, the generation now in their 60’s and 70’s, who remember World War II from their childhoods, now are violently against war and the casualties it inflicts. They believe in the power of the United Nations and other bureaucracies to solve world conflict (Howe & Strauss, 2002).

Example 2: According to Howe and Strauss, the generation now in their 60’s and 70’s, who remember World War II from their childhoods, now are violently against war and the casualties it inflicts. They believe in the power of the United Nations and other bureaucracies to solve world conflict (2002).

In addition to an in-text citation, a complete listing of a source’s publication information must be included at the end of the paper on the references page. Finally, extensive examples of in-text citations can be found under “Research, Citation, and Plagiarism” on the Writing Center’s homepage.

What is a references page?

Once a writer has given the basic information about a source in the in-text citation, complete information for the source must also be provided. There are a few reasons for this. Most importantly, it indicates that all sources have been accurately researched, which marks the writer as worthy of the reader’s attention. Additionally, it provides a list for further reading and research. Many times a reader will come to an essay looking for information on a given topic. The references page is a good resource for him or her to look more deeply into the topic and to look at the complete sources used in a paper. With the complete publication information, he or she has everything needed to find that article or book. It is also critical to note that a references page is not sufficient by itself. You must also include quotation marks around direct quotations and include in-text citations for all sources used (directly quoted, paraphrased, or summarized).
As with in-text citations, there are many possible types of sources. It is important to use all available resources (e.g. this FAQ and KU’s Writing Center) to be sure that you accurately and adequately represent your sources. Following is a sample section of a reference page that adheres to APA formatting conventions (Please note: More examples of ways to cite various types of sources can be found under “Research, Citation, and Plagiarism” on the Writing Center’s homepage):

Parents, Coaches and Kids’ Sports 7

References


What about programs that automatically format papers according to APA standards?
These programs are helpful with manuscript formatting, but they do not have the ability to accurately recognize and integrate outside sources. Additionally, APA formatting is a complex process that is constantly in flux, and these programs do not update as APA style changes. Because there is no substitute for your own effort and critical thinking skills, these types of tools should be used sparingly and cautiously.

How can the Writing Center help me with APA formatting and avoiding plagiarism?
You can access the Writing Center from your homepage at Kaplan by clicking on the link marked “Writing Center.” It is located under the Academic Support tab. They currently offer four modes of assistance for all Kaplan students:

1. Live Help: You may speak with a live tutor on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 6:00 pm to 11:00 pm ET and Thursday from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm ET.
2. Q & A Center: You may submit a writing question 24 hours a day. Twenty-four to forty-eight hours after your submission, you can retrieve an answer by returning to the Writing Center’s homepage and using the reference number provided when you submitted your question.
3. Reference Library: The Writing Center contains numerous documents that offer very specific help with writing. The main categories include: "The Writing Process," "Writing Types and Tools," Research, Citation, and Plagiarism," and "Writing Mechanics."
4. Net Tutor: You have the option to submit an entire essay for feedback. This service provides grammatical/mechanical advice for essays. It takes about 48 hours for a response.

How can I learn more about properly using APA formatting and avoiding plagiarism?
In addition to this FAQ, Kaplan’s Writing Center is the best place to begin. Specifically, their Reference Library contains a segment called “Research, Citation, and Plagiarism.” Within this link, there are useful documents available for your review such as “APA Manuscript Style” and “Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It.” After reviewing these documents, you are welcome to ask further questions using the Q & A Center or Live Help. Finally, your instructor is always available for assistance by email or during his or her office hours.