

## WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

### Defining Plagiarism

It is your responsibility as a student to make sure you understand what plagiarism is and to develop habits and skills that will help you recognize and avoid plagiarism. One of the chief goals of higher education is to help students develop their own voices. Plagiarism is the enemy of original thinking!

The first step in avoiding plagiarism is to have a clear understanding of what plagiarism is. Plagiarism is using another person's words or ideas – published or unpublished – and passing them off as your own by not properly citing the original source. I expect you to use other people's words and ideas in your own work, but I do not want you to steal them. The work you submit must be your own. All paraphrases and quotations must be cited appropriately. The Skyline College student handbook has a complete statement defining cheating and plagiarism, available online. These are most common types of plagiarism:

1. The most obvious form of plagiarism is copying directly from print or Web-based materials without using quotation marks or other appropriate forms of attribution.
2. A less obvious form, but equally as serious, is summarizing or paraphrasing the ideas of an author without citing that author as the original source.
3. A third and often overlooked type of plagiarism is using an editor – a friend, family member, or tutor – beyond a reasonable level.

In each of these instances, your work no longer reflects your own knowledge, voice, style, or comprehension of the given material. Plagiarized work is quite easy to spot, and anyone caught intentionally plagiarizing will receive an automatic "F" on the assignment. Subsequent infractions may expose you to a lowered or failing course grade because of failed coursework, and it may also invite further disciplinary measures ranging from a warning to a penalty grade to expulsion from the College, as outlined in the Skyline student handbook. If you have questions regarding how to properly cite your sources, ask me, ask a research librarian at our school library, or refer to the "MLA" source materials on the companion course website. The Skyline College student handbook may be accessed here: <http://www.skylinecollege.edu/future/aboutskyline/studenthandbook.html>.

### Plagiarism is often divided into two categories

**Intentional plagiarism** is intentionally misrepresenting someone else's work as our own.

#### *Examples:*

1. Taking an essay or part of an essay from the Internet and submitting it as your own.
2. Incorporating someone else's ideas, paragraphs, sentences, or words into your paper, with the intention of representing them as your own.
3. Turning in any writing that you yourself did not do.

**Unintentional plagiarism** is failing to give credit to any author whose ideas or words you use in writing.

#### *Examples:*

1. "Borrowing" paragraphs, phrases or specific words from an author without giving proper credit to that author.
2. Failing to give the name of the author whose ideas you are using in a paper.
3. Failing to put quotation marks around phrases or passages that you have take directly from a source.

## **Practical Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism**

### **Our Old Friend Procrastination**

The temptation to plagiarize is very strong if you are in panic mode. Don't wait until the night before a research paper is due and expect Google to save you. It takes time to develop your ideas and gather information. Start your research early and ask for help along the way. Take advantage of instructor office hours to clarify your assignment and make sure you are on the right track. Librarians on campus are available to help you find the best sources of information on your topic and get you going in the right direction.

### **Good Habits**

Develop good research habits. As you gather sources of information for your research, take clear notes that include where you got the information. Clearly indicate in your notes words and phrases that belong to someone else.

### **Rule, Rules, Rules**

Learn the rules of academic writing. Writing a documented essay or research paper requires that you integrate the words and ideas of other writers into your own writing. In English 110 you are practicing skills you've already learned regarding how to paraphrase and use quotations using the *Modern Language Association* (MLA) style. A clear understanding of how to use MLA style to integrate outside information into your writing and how to quote information correctly will help you avoid intentional and unintentional acts of plagiarism.