

PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

Department of English

Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas without acknowledgment. It is the equivalent of theft.

Buying term papers is an extreme and willful form of plagiarism. Misusing quotation marks or confusing quotation and paraphrase may arise from carelessness or ignorance. But plagiarism of all kinds should be avoided. This document will explain what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

Common Forms of Plagiarism

1. Buying a paper, having someone else write your paper, or using someone else's paper, however altered. These dishonest practices rob you of the chance to develop skills of critical thinking essential to an educated person.
2. Quoting without acknowledging the exact words of another person.
3. Paraphrasing a text closely (changing words and syntax but not the substance of a passage) without acknowledgment, summarizing the ideas (a shortened paraphrase) without acknowledgment, and confusing paraphrase and quotation.
4. Misusing quotation marks, note numbers, and parenthetical citations, and thereby implying that portions of a paper are yours when they are not.

Acknowledgment through Citation

Some disciplines acknowledge sources by using a note number in the text that refers to a note at the bottom of the page or at the end of the paper. Other disciplines use a parenthetical citation in the text with a Works Cited list at the end of the paper.

This document uses parenthetical citation, but the principles explained apply to footnote documentation as well.

Examples

1. Quoting Without Acknowledgment

Source

And yet no one in the play can be said to be a religious hypocrite in any representative sense. Tartuffe may at times suggest or symbolize the slippery casuist, or the sort of hypocrite denounced by Cleante, but he is not himself such a person. He is a versatile parasite or confidence man, with a very long criminal record, and to pose as a holy man is not his only modus operandi: we see him, in the last act, shifting easily from the role of saint to that of hundred-percenter.

Plagiarized Version

Tartuffe cannot be said to be a religious hypocrite in any specific sense. As attacked by Cleante, he is a versatile parasite or confidence man. He can pose as a holy man but then shift easily from the role of saint to that of hundred-percenter.

(Underlining indicates phrases and a clause copied exactly from source.)

(From Richard Wilbur's introduction to his translation of Moliere's Tartuffe, page 169. Underlining added.)

Explanation

The writer has failed to acknowledge Wilbur as the source; there is no mention of Wilbur, no footnote number, no parenthetical citation. But the student has clearly used the source as the pattern of borrowing indicates. The underlined portions in the plagiarized version indicate words copied exactly from the source.

You must acknowledge the source of borrowed ideas by appropriate citations. Words and phrases copied from the source must be enclosed in quotation marks. In order to distinguish between your idea and the source, you should preface your borrowing with a phrase such as “Richard Wilbur points out in his introduction....”

Corrected Version

[Student is making own point.]

Tartuffe has many sides to his character. As Richard Wilbur points out in his introduction to the play, Tartuffe is “not a religious hypocrite in any representative sense,” but he changes masks easily from “versatile parasite or confidence man” to “holy man” and “hundred-percenter” (169).

[Note that distinction between student’s idea and the source is made clear.]

[Quotation marks enclose Wilbur’s exact words.]

[The page number in parentheses refers to Wilbur’s book in the Works Cited list.]

2. Confusing Quotation and Paraphrase

Source

Today, television has become our monarch. It determines more and more our choice of candidates for office and the persons we now elect to exercise the government we live under.

(Barbara Tuchman, “A Nation in Decline?” The New York Times Magazine 20 Sept 1987, 58. Underlining added.)

Plagiarized Version

Barbara Tuchman argues that TV today has become our nation’s monarch. She feels that, as a result of TV, our choice of candidates for office and people we choose to exercise the government we live under has come under attack (58).

(Underlined portions indicate actual quotations from source.)

Explanation

Although Mrs. Tuchman has been appropriately acknowledged, the writer has assumed falsely that adding the word “nation’s” before “monarch” and changing “the persons we now elect” to the “people we choose” make the whole into a paraphrase. The writer is actually quoting most of the material and must use quotation marks. Not to use quotation marks is to plagiarize. To correct this, the writer should be sure to place all quoted material within quotation marks or to make an appropriate paraphrase.

Corrected Version

[“has become our monarch” are her exact words.]

In “A Nation in Decline?” Barbara Tuchman argues that TV “has become our monarch” because it increasingly controls our election process (58).

[This is an accurate paraphrase of her second sentence.]

3. Misusing Citations.

Source

We are told that Owen Warland succeeded in his effort to create an image of the beautiful. Yet we see at once there is no Carlylean “hero as poet,” for Owen is unable to communicate his discoveries to those around him. Hawthorne concludes that the idealist artist will be misunderstood and un-appreciated:

It is requisite for the ideal artist to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its delicacy; he must keep faith in himself while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief.

(Millicent Bell, Hawthorne’s View of the Artist, page 107. She is referring to the story, “The Artist of the Beautiful” and is quoting from the story.)

Plagiarized Version

In “The Artist of the beautiful,” we see that Owen Warland cannot share his skill or knowledge with others (Bell 107). Owen is basically an alienated idealist as Hawthorne indicates: “He must keep faith in himself while the incredulous world assails him with utter disbelief.”

Explanation

The parenthetical citation (Bell 107) is inappropriately placed. It suggests that only the first sentence is borrowed from Bell when, indeed, the whole passage has been borrowed. Citations must indicate the full extent of the borrowing. A reader of the plagiarized version might think the student had found the quotation in the text of the story when it is clear the student found the quotation in Bell.

Corrected Version

[Note the appropriate introduction for borrowed material]

Millicent Bell points out that Owen Warland cannot share his skill or knowledge with others and that he is basically an alienated idealist as Hawthorne indicates: “He must keep faith in himself while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief” (Bell 107).

[Repeating the name in the citation makes it clear that the quotation from Hawthorne has also come from Bell.]

5. Common Knowledge

We do not need to document facts that are widely known or can be easily found in a commonly used source. However, very specific facts that are clearly not widely known, or interpretations and opinions of facts, need citations. The following chart can serve as a rough guide to what is common knowledge and what is not.

Do not cite a source for:

- the population of China
- the existence of a disease syndrome called AIDS
- the fact that Dickens visited America

Cite a source for:

- the Chinese balance of payments in 1987
- a possible connection between AIDS and the virus that carries cat leukemia
- the supposed effect of Dickens’s American visit on his subsequently written novels.

- the fact that huge sums are wagered illegally on professional football games

- an alleged “fix” of a certain football game

- a line from a nursery rhyme

- a line from a poem by Elizabeth Bishop

(From Frederick Crews, The Random House Handbook, page 504.)

Note that the items on the right, which need to be cited, are much more specific than the ones on the left. The ones on the left can be considered common knowledge. In a specific field of study, or in a specific class, certain facts may be considered common knowledge. If you have any questions about acknowledging sources, ask your professor.

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