



## Avoiding Plagiarism

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Academic writing in American institutions is filled with rules that writers often don't know how to follow. A working knowledge of these rules, however, is critically important; inadvertent mistakes can lead to charges of **plagiarism** or the unacknowledged use of somebody else's words or ideas. While other cultures may not insist so heavily on documenting sources, American institutions do. A charge of plagiarism can have severe consequences, including expulsion from a university. This handout, which does not reflect any official university policy, is designed to help writers develop strategies for knowing how to avoid accidental plagiarism.

Purdue students will want to make sure that they are familiar with Purdue's official academic dishonesty policy (<http://www.purdue.edu/odos/administration/integrity.htm>) as well as any additional policies that their instructor has implemented. Another good resource for understanding plagiarism is the WPA Statement on Plagiarism (<http://www.ilstu.edu/~ddhesse/wpa/positions/WPAplagiarism.pdf>).

### The Contradictions of American Academic Writing

*Show you have  
done your  
research*

**---But---**

*Write something  
new and original*

*Appeal to  
experts and  
authorities*

**---But---**

*Improve upon,  
or disagree with  
experts and  
authorities*

*Improve your  
English by  
mimicking what*

**---But---**

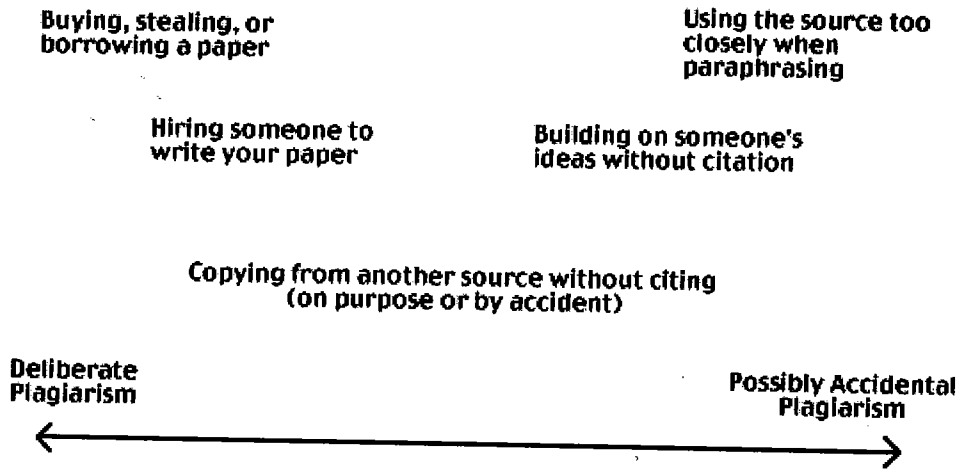
*Use your own  
words, your own*

*you hear and read*  
*Give credit where credit is due*

**---But---**

*voice*  
*Make your own significant contribution*

## ***Actions that might be seen as plagiarism***



Since teachers and administrators may not distinguish between deliberate and accidental plagiarism, the heart of avoiding plagiarism is to make sure you give credit where it is due. This may be credit for something somebody said, wrote, emailed, drew, or implied.

## **Choosing When to Give Credit**

<b>Need to Document</b>	<b>No Need to Document</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you are using or referring to somebody else's words or ideas from a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, Web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you are writing your own experiences, your own observations, your own insights, your own thoughts, your own conclusions about a subject</li> </ul>

<p>other medium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you use information gained through interviewing another person</li> <li>• When you copy the exact words or a "<b>unique phrase</b>" from somewhere</li> <li>• When you reprint any diagrams, illustrations, charts, and pictures</li> <li>• When you use ideas that others have given you in conversations or over email</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you are using "<b>common knowledge</b>" — folklore, common sense observations, shared information within your field of study or cultural group</li> <li>• When you are compiling generally accepted facts</li> <li>• When you are writing up your own experimental results</li> </ul>
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### Making Sure You Are Safe

	Action during the writing process	Appearance on the finished product
<p><b>When researching, note-taking, and interviewing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark <i>everything</i> that is someone else's words with a big <b>Q</b> (for <b>quote</b>) or with big quotation marks</li> <li>• Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources (<b>S</b>) and which are your own insights (<b>ME</b>)</li> <li>• Record all of the relevant documentation information in your notes</li> </ul>	<p>Proofread and check with your notes (or photocopies of sources) to make sure that <i>anything</i> taken from your notes is acknowledged in some combination of the ways listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-text citation</li> <li>• Footnotes</li> <li>• Bibliography</li> <li>• Quotation marks</li> <li>• Indirect quotations</li> </ul>

