

Nine Things You Should Already Know About PLAGIARISM

1. What is the point of writing assignments?

Writing assignments offer an opportunity to improve and demonstrate your own understanding of a topic or problem. This is an essential component of most degrees. How you demonstrate your learning is a central component of your degree completion.

2. What is academic misconduct?

Academic misconduct is any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement. Misconduct occurs when the student either knows or reasonably should know that the act constitutes academic misconduct. When you complete your own academic work, it bolsters the value of your degree and affords you the greatest opportunity for learning. When students commit academic misconduct, the educational value of the work is diminished. It also creates an unfair learning environment for students who choose to complete their assignments with integrity.

3. What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct in which you represent someone else's words or ideas as your own. The basic expectation in every class is that whatever you write is generated from your own understanding of a topic. You should only use the words or ideas of another when you have afforded them credit.

4. What's wrong with plagiarism?

Plagiarism defeats the purpose of writing assignments and constitutes both a form of stealing and lying. It destroys mutual respect within an academic learning environment, and it defeats the purpose of scholarship.

5. How do I avoid plagiarism?

Think! Research your paper topic thoroughly. **Write!** Pull from your own knowledge base, and always give credit to the ideas of others. If you are having trouble getting started or knowing how to properly engage with your sources, ask your professor for guidance or stop by the writing center. **Signal!** Always clearly indicate your use of another's work or ideas by signaling with quotation marks, in-text citations, page numbers, and a reference list.

6. How do quotation marks, block quotations, and references work?

Quotation marks and block quotations are forms of punctuation used to indicate that words were said or written by someone else. You should always clearly indicate when you are including words or information from another source in your work. A comprehensive and detailed reference list at the end of your paper provides your reader with information about the resources you used when researching your topic. Remember to learn and use the citation system indicated by your professor.

7. What does it mean to "paraphrase"?

Paraphrasing means repeating in your own words the thoughts expressed in someone else. Because the ideas expressed when paraphrasing belong to another, you must always give credit to the author with an in-text citation and a full reference. Simply restating someone else's ideas in your own words does not make them yours.

8. What are the most common kinds of plagiarism?

Whole-paper plagiarism – when you replace the entirety of your own work with another's and misrepresent it as your own.

Cut-and-paste plagiarism – when you incorporate portions of another's work (e.g., direct quotes, ideas) and list them as your own without clearly signaling where they came from. Including a reference but no in-text signal (e.g., in-text citations, quotation marks) is also considered plagiarism, as is paraphrasing without a proper citation.

Self-plagiarism – when you recycle your own work from other courses without the express permission of your professor. Unless explicitly told otherwise, reusing your own work counts as plagiarism.

9. What are the penalties for plagiarism?

At OU, acts of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct can result in institutional penalties ranging from a letter of reprimand or required coursework, to suspension or expulsion – the sanction is based on both the severity of the specific act of misconduct, and whether a student has been previously reported for academic misconduct.

"I didn't mean to" is not an excuse for academic misconduct, even though it is a commonly used justification. It is your responsibility as an OU student to be familiar with our university policies and complete all your assignments with integrity. Always ask for help if you are unsure!

Visit integrity.ou.edu for OU's academic integrity policies and other helpful resources.