

IHS Literature and the Arts

Best Practices for Avoiding Plagiarism

*adopted from OWL Purdue

Safe Practices

Most students, of course, don't intend to plagiarize. In fact, most realize that citing sources actually builds their credibility for an audience and even helps writers to better grasp information relevant to a topic or course of study. Mistakes in citation and crediting can still happen, so here are certain practices that can help you not only avoid plagiarism, but even improve the efficiency and organization of your research and writing.

Best Practices for Research and Drafting

Reading and note-taking

- In your notes, always mark someone else's words with a big Q, for quote, or use big quotation marks
- Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources with a big S, and which are your own insights (ME)
- When information comes from sources, record relevant documentation in your notes (book and article titles; URLs on the Web)

Interviewing and conversing

- Take lots of thorough notes; if you have any of your own thoughts as you're interviewing, mark them clearly
- If your subject will allow you to record the conversation or interview (and you have proper clearance to do so through an Institutional Review Board, or IRB), place your recording device in an optimal location between you and the speaker so you can hear clearly when you review the recordings. Test your equipment, and bring plenty of backup batteries and media.
- If you're interviewing via email, retain copies of the interview subject's emails as well as the ones you send in reply
- Make any additional, clarifying notes immediately after the interview has concluded

Writing paraphrases or summaries

- Use a statement that credits the source somewhere in the paraphrase or summary, e.g., According to Jonathan Kozol, ...).
- If you're having trouble summarizing, try writing your paraphrase or summary of a text without looking at the original, relying only on your memory and notes
- Check your paraphrase or summary against the original text; correct any errors in content accuracy, and be sure to use quotation marks to set off any exact phrases from the original text
- Check your paraphrase or summary against sentence and paragraph structure, as copying those is also considered plagiarism.
- Put quotation marks around any unique words or phrases that you cannot or do not want to change: e.g., "savage inequalities" exist throughout our educational system (Kozol).

Writing direct quotations

- Keep the source author's name in the same sentence as the quote
- Mark the quote with quotation marks, or set it off from your text in its own block, per the style guide your paper follows
- Quote no more material than is necessary; if a short phrase from a source will suffice, don't quote an entire paragraph
- To shorten quotes by removing extra information, use ellipsis points (...) to indicate omitted text, keeping in mind that:

In longer quotes where you have omitted a sentence in between other complete sentences, maintain terminal punctuation in between the ellipses.

Example: "None of the national reports I saw made even passing references to inequality or segregation. . . . Booker T. Washington was cited with increasing frequency, Du Bois never, and Martin Luther King only with cautious selectivity." (Kozol 3).