**What is plagiarism?**

The University applies the following definition of plagiarism:

‘Using or copying the work of others (whether written, printed or in any other form) without proper acknowledgement’.

**How can you avoid plagiarism?**

To avoid plagiarism, most importantly you need to have a firm understanding of what exactly it is and feel confident in that knowledge; otherwise, you’re always going to be at risk of plagiarising accidentally. It’s also worthwhile understanding why plagiarism is frowned upon: one of the main reasons being that passing someone else’s work off as your own for credit is regarded as ‘academic dishonesty’. Learning is based on integrity and ultimately should not be easy.

In academic assignments, you are expected to read around the specified subject and then refer to your research in your writing. This shows a developed understanding of the topic and enables you to support or challenge your own points with the recognised work of others. You might do this by paraphrasing or directly quoting, but either way, you need to make the source of the information clear. You should reference your sources using the style required by your department.

**What are essay mills?**

It is no secret that there are organisations and individuals out there that write assignments for struggling students at a fee; these are collectively known as ‘essay mills’.

There are severe consequences for submitting an assignment produced by an essay mill including exclusion from the university. Not only are you cheating yourself, but you are devaluing the value of your qualification, and ultimately you will not hold the skills associated with possessing a degree. For example, a dentist or a nurse may have purchased several assessments in order to complete their degree, but essentially not be qualified having not demonstrated all the learning required.

Essay mills will often advertise their work as being 100% plagiarism free or with the caveat that the work should not be submitted without the student making changes, but they are aware that most students are submitting the work as their own. This is also referred to as contract cheating.

**Working with integrity**

It is clear that we all need to work together to uphold the integrity of the UK higher education system. The education secretary Damian Hinds, has “called on university students to report their peers if they suspect them of cheating as part of a government crackdown on essay writing services” (Weale, 2019). Cheating is not okay, and it is important that both students and academic staff work together to uphold academic honesty.

The approach towards essay mills and plagiarism in general is constantly developing. In the past week PayPal have confirmed that they will no longer be working with essay-writing services acting on pressure put on them by the QAA. [Universities UK](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/) have called for essay mills to be made illegal in the UK following other countries, such as Ireland, New Zealand and Australia.

Today, he runs what’s known as an ‘essay mill’ – a highly lucrative business writing assignments for students struggling to complete them on their own.

### **4: Plagiarism Detection Technology is Evolving**

While plagiarism detection may seem to be nothing more than text matching, at its top tiers, it’s much more than that.

In January 2012, [Turnitin announced that it was expanding to include detection of translated plagiarism](https://thejournal.com/articles/2012/01/17/turnitin-adds-translated-plagiarism-detection.aspx), filling a widely-known gap in its detection tools. In February 2018, Turnitin made a similar announcement, this time that [it is working with several University partners to go beyond text matching and into authorship detection](https://turnitin.com/en_us/authorship-investigation).



1. **Copyright Act was modified to define plagiarism.**

In 1989, several modifications were made to the legal requirement for copyright infringement. It defined that authentic works are no longer needed to be marked with a copyright symbol to have copyright protection. So, the use of already published papers, whether online or in print, would be taken as plagiarism if it is used without permission and proper citations.

Contract cheating is defined as the submission of work by students for academic credit which the students have paid contractors to write for them

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A paraphrase is a restatement in your own words of someone else's ideas. Changing a few words of the original sentences does NOT make your writing a legitimate paraphrase. You must change both the words and the sentence structure of the original, without changing the content. Also, you should keep in mind that paraphrased passages still require citation because the ideas came from another source, even though you are putting them in your own words.

The purpose of paraphrasing is not to make it seem like you are drawing less directly from other sources or to reduce the number of quotations in your paper. It is a common misconception among students that you need to hide the fact that you rely on other sources. Actually it is advantageous to highlight the fact that other sources support your own ideas. Using quality sources to support your ideas makes them seem stronger and more valid. Good paraphrasing makes the ideas of the original source fit smoothly into your paper, emphasizing the most relevant points and leaving out unrelated information.

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The term “public domain” is one of the most misunderstood terms when it relates to copyright, plagiarism and citation.

The term lends itself to that confusion. It’s a nebulous-sounding phrase that seems like it should represent anything that’s publicly available. After all, anything that is available on the internet is, in a way, in the public domain.

But the term public domain has a very specific meaning. In short, it is used to denote works that have no copyright protection, meaning that they can be used freely without permission from the creator or another rightsholder.

However, most content on the internet is not public domain. Though copyright does expire, it lasts (in the United States) either 95 years from publication for works of corporate authorship or the life of the author plus 70 years for works of individual authorship. In short, it’s mostly very old works that are in the public domain, currently that’s anything published before 1923.

Though there are exceptions, such as works by the federal government or works that lapsed into the public domain due to a technicality, the 1923 date rule is a relatively sound one to follow.

However, even if a work has lapsed into the public domain, that doesn’t change the rules about citation.

Whether a work is in the public domain deals only with its copyright status. That determines whether you can copy and distribute the work. It says nothing about your ethical obligations to cite and attribute it.

A good example is the works of Shakespeare. Since all of his works are in the public domain, you are completely free to post his works on your website, distribute your own books of his plays or print shirts with his sonnets.

However, if you attempt to claim Shakespeare's work as your own, it would not just be highly foolish, but also plagiarism. This is because copyright deals with the right to copy a work and citation deals with the authorship of it. The public domain only removes your obligations to the former, not the latter.

Still, the important thing to remember is that most of the content you find on the internet is not in the public domain, even if it is publicly available, and is not free from copyright protection. However, even if the content you’re using is actually in the public domain, you still need to cite it if you are using it in your work.

The rules of plagiarism and citation apply just as much to works in the public domain as they do works still under copyright. It’s why publishers can release their own collection of Shakespeare’s works but always put his name on the cover

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# Secondary Sources?

**5**

Most students understand that secondary sources are not preferred and should only be used when a primary source is not available. However, there is often a great deal of confusion as to what constitutes a secondary source and, more importantly, how to correctly cite one when it is used.

The reason for the confusion is because the term secondary source is a relative term, specifically, it’s relative to the primary source.

A primary source is any source with firsthand knowledge of the information being discussed. This could be letters and personal accounts from those who witnessed an event, it could be a research paper from someone who performed an experiment, a newspaper article from the time the event took place, a government report analyzing the event or a even a photograph from a moment of history.

Secondary sources are simply sources that use primary sources to discuss or interpret what the primary sources are commenting upon. These include everything from biographies, history books, news reports from after the event and even textbooks.

In short, where a primary source has direct knowledge of an event or an area of study, a secondary source tries to build upon those primary sources with added context or information. While both primary and secondary sources are important in scholarship, primary sources are considered the better sources for research as they are the most direct and aren’t filtered by the author of the secondary source.

As such, the best way to cite a secondary source is to not use one. Secondary sources can be valuable for pointing the way to great primary sources, but it’s still best to use the primary source directly.

Still, sometimes it’s not practical to use a primary source. Primary sources may not be in print, may not be translated into a language you can read or simply may not exist anymore. In those cases, it’s important to cite both sources correctly.

That, in turn, can be very difficult. That’s because you can’t just cite the secondary source, you also have to acknowledge the primary source that it’s pulling from.

Generally, this is done through a combination of attribution in the writing itself and works cited. For example, if you want to quote the diary of a historical figure but the diary isn’t available, you could then use a secondary source, such as a biography, to cover it.

In the text of your work, you would say, “In his/her diary, he/she said…” and begin the passage. However, when adding both the in-text citation and the works cited reference, you would refer to the biography, as that is where you got the information.

However, the in-text citation will take a slightly different format. Instead of simply listing the source, you would add “as cited” or “as quoted” to indicate that it is a secondary source. The works cited entry at the end is the same as normal, save in the case of Chicago style where both documents must be cited.

(Note: Since each style has slight differences in the formatting of citations, [see this guide for details on formatting secondary source citations in APA, MLA and Chicago](https://umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/media/Citing_Secondary_or_Indirect_Sources_REVISED_2014.pdf).)

When you’re done, it should be clear to the reader that you’re quoting or paraphrasing from the primary source but pulling the information from a secondary source.

That transparency, in the end, is what is important. Hiding either of your sources is a form of plagiarism, so it’s important to be abundantly clear about what you’re quoting/paraphrasing and where you’re pulling that information from

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# **Am I Plagiarizing if I Cite a Plagiarized Source?**

**2**

In general, as long as you do so unknowingly, you won’t be held liable for citing a plagiarized source.

The reason for this is fairly simple: You only have control over what you do with your writing. You can not be held responsible for what others did in their writing. As long as you cite your sources correctly and choose your sources in good faith, you shouldn’t be held responsible.

That being said, this points to one of the reasons it is important to cite your sources. If one of the sources you use turns out to be plagiarized, inaccurate or otherwise invalid, it has an impact on your paper and your arguments.

However, it is only with full and complete citations that a reader can make that determination. Though it’s never pleasant to have your work damaged because a source you used turns out to be less-than-stellar, if you use multiple sources and vet them well, your argument and research should remain largely intact.

That being said, when you are researching a topic, you still have an obligation to find the best sources that you can. This means, among other things, evaluating your sources critically to make sure that they are free of biases, fabrications or other ethical issues.

While there are many tests one can use for evaluating sources, [one of the most popular is the CRAAP test](https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf), which looks at five different variables.

1. Currency: How recent is the information?
2. Relevance: How pertinent is the information to what you are discussing and is it aimed at the correct audience?
3. Authority: Who is the author of the piece and how qualified are they to speak on it?
4. Accuracy: How accurate is the content and can it be verified with other sources?
5. Purpose: Why was the information published and what potential biases might that purpose inject into the material?

But while the CRAAP test, and ones like, are useful, the main key is to think critically about your sources and not just accept them because they reflect your preconceived notions or even your earlier findings. Looking at sources objectively means seeking out reasons they may be flawed and then seeing if those flaws outweigh their strengths.

Despite that, it’s possible to do your best due diligence with your sources and still put faith in one that turns out to be plagiarized. Such stories should be incredibly rare occurrences, but they can and do happen.

As a researcher, your best bet is to focus on vetting your sources carefully and selecting the best ones possible. If, despite your best efforts, plagiarism is found in one of those sources you can’t be held responsible.

However, if you’re doing the vetting properly, such issues should be extremely unlikely

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# **What Is Creative Commons Anyway?**

Jonathan Bailey ,
Contributing Editor

Published July 24, 2018

**10**

[Founded in 2001 and releasing its first set of licenses in 2002](https://creativecommons.org/about/history/), Creative Commons (as an organization) aims to help “You legally share your knowledge and creativity to build a more equitable, accessible, and innovative world.”

The work of the Creative Commons Organization is everywhere. It is the default license of [Wikipedia](https://www.wikipedia.org/), covers [over 300 million images on Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/) and [millions of videos on YouTube](https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2797468?hl=en).

But for all of its popularity, there’s a lot of confusion with exactly what Creative Commons is. That’s because Creative Commons is meant to solve a challenging and misunderstood problem with copyright law, not with plagiarism.

To understand what Creative Commons is, we first have to look at the problem it’s addressing and how it works to fix it.

The Problem Creative Commons Addresses

Under copyright law in most of the world, a work is given copyright protection the moment it is created. This means that others can not copy the work, distribute it, publicly display/perform the work or create derivative works of it without the permission of the creator or rightsholder.

However, many creators, including researchers, authors, musicians, photographers and filmmakers, are happy to have their work copied, shared or even used in new works. Unfortunately, those creators do not have an easy way to indicate that they are fine with their work being used.

This is where Creative Commons steps in. The Creative Commons Organization created a series of licenses that creators and rightsholders can place on their work to indicate that they permit certain reuses.

The licenses include three elements: An icon or short text line indicating the license, a “human readable” version of the license ([example](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)) and the full legalese version.

These licenses are made available for free and can even be integrated within a site, such as YouTube or Flickr, to enable the site to make the licenses available to their users.

**About the Licenses**

Currently, there are six different Creative Commons Licenses. When choosing a license, creators can select to allow adaptations of their work (yes, no or only if others share alike) and whether or not to allow commercial use of their work.

For example, if a creator wished to allow adaptations but only for non-commercial use, that would be an Attribution-NonCommercial license. However, if they wanted to only allow adaptations when others share alike (meaning they place the new work under the same license), that would be an Attribution-ShareAlike license.

All Creative Commons Licenses, at the bare minimum, allow for non-commercial copying. However, all Creative Commons Licenses require attribution, meaning that you have to cite the creator of the material you’re using.

**What Does This Mean?**

What this means is that, when you encounter a Creative Commons License, the creator is giving you permission to use the work in certain ways beyond what copyright law already allows. However, you’ll need to read the specific license to see what the terms of that use are and always attribute the source.

Bear in mind that a Creative Commons License is not the same as placing a work in the public domain (though Creative Commons has a CC0 License that does this). There are still restrictions with using Creative Commons-licensed works.

Also bear in mind that, while Creative Commons is a powerful tool for dealing with copyright, it does not address issues of citation and plagiarism. It may be possible to use Creative Commons works in a manner that is legal under the license, but may still be plagiarism.

For example, pasting a large amount of Creative Commons-licensed text into an essay and attributing it in a footnote but not quoting it may comply with the license, but not does not comply with an academic standard for attribution.

In short, Creative Commons is a powerful tool but it is important to use it well. Pay attention to the terms of the license and continue to follow all attribution rules required by your school and you should be fine

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# How to Find Good Sources

Determining good sources from bad sources is an important skill for a researcher at any level to have.

The reason for this is very simple: Bad sources often provide incorrect or incomplete information. Incorrect or incomplete information invalidates any conclusions that might be drawn from the paper or work in it. This means that, with bad sources, the research is wasted.

While the importance of finding good sources is easy to understand, it’s something that is much harder to do in practice than in theory. With most research taking place on the internet, there’s a very serious problem with fake news and misinformation that risks working its way into your research.

As such, the most important thing for any researcher to do is to think critically about their sources. Treat every source as if it has the potential to either be intentionally misleading or accidentally wrong. Even the best sources can have incorrect or outdated information.

That means one of the most important things to do is verify the information, especially if it is critical to your research. Look for the same facts and information in other sources and specifically seek out sources that are diverse politically, philosophically, etc. Make sure that the sources are doing original reporting, not merely repeating what others have said, and there is no contradictory information.

But, while thinking critically about your sources is the most important thing you can do, there are several other steps that can help you find high quality sources for your research.

**1: Favor Primary Sources**

Primary sources, such as original research, news articles from the time an event took place, eyewitness accounts, etc. are generally better and considered better quality than sources that are reporting based on those primary sources.

For example, rather than trusting a news article about a new study, look at the study itself. Every step away from the primary source is another opportunity for bias and misinformation to creep in.

**2: Stick to Major Publications**

Check the URL of the site and make sure that you are getting your information from a reputable publisher. There are many sites on the internet that will disguise themselves to appear more legitimate than they are or to even mimic better-known sources. Look at the URL, visit the site’s home page, investigate the source thoroughly.

If all else fails, do a search for the source’s name and see what others have to say about it.

**3: Speak with a Librarian**

If you have questions about the veracity of a source, simply speak with a librarian. Even if a source is accurate and has good information, it may still not be appropriate for research use due to bias or other issues.

Your librarian can help you parse which sources are appropriate for your work and which you should ignore.

**Conclusions**

All in all, finding a good source for your research is more about thinking critically about your sources and demanding evidence for all of the claims you are seeing. This isn’t just a big part of finding a good resource, it’s also the process through which research itself is conducted.

Thinking critically about your sources won’t just help you write a better paper, it will make you a better researcher and thinker overall

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# Can I Be Accused of Plagiarism **Even If I Cite Everything Correctly?**

**1**

As scary as a plagiarism allegation can be, in general, there’s no reason to fear such an allegation if you write an original work and cite your sources correctly.

However, this doesn’t mean that students are never surprised by a plagiarism allegation. This is because there’s often a significant difference between simply citing a source and citing it correctly.

For example, if you use verbatim text from a source but don’t put that text into quotes, you could still be accused of plagiarism even if you did cite it. After all, citation isn’t merely listing the sources that you use, but explaining exactly what text, facts or ideas came from each one.

But, even if you quote and cite all of your sources correctly, there is another issue to consider: Collusion.

Though not the same as plagiarism, it’s a related ethical infraction that applies when two students collaborate improperly on an assignment. In short, if you and another student (or students) have a significant overlap in your work, you can face allegations of collusion, even with proper citations for the sources in your paper.

Some assignments place severe restrictions on the sources students can use or how they can complete the task. In those cases, there may be significant overlap between student submissions. However, in these cases, it’s generally understood that students papers should look alike, meaning collusion allegations should not be a problem.

But what if there are no issues at all. What if everything in the paper is fully cited and there is no collusion nor significant overlap with other student papers. Can a paper still get its author accused of plagiarism?

Generally speaking. No. At least as long as the paper is properly examined.

Any original paper is likely to have some text that overlaps with other sources. Plagiarism detection tools often pick up cliches, common phrases, long titles, etc. that are not examples of plagiarism.

Because of this, a 0% matching score is often as suspicious as a high percentage, simply because it’s difficult to ensure that a paper has no overlapping text at all.

Instructors have to be careful not to rely solely on percentages when determining if a paper is plagiarized. It’s important to look at the content of the paper to determine what text is matching, if it’s fully cited and whether it’s actually an issue.

Plagiarism detection software is powerful tool for helping spot potential plagiarism, but it can not make the final determination on its own.

The relatively small number of cases where a wholly original paper is accused of plagiarism usually stem from this issue and can generally be corrected pretty easily.

Still, the most common way for a student to get hit with a surprise plagiarism allegation is by failing to completely cite their work, despite their best efforts. If you have questions or concerns about citation, it’s important to take them up with your teachers before you submit a paper.

If you communicate and work with your teacher on these issues, you’re unlikely to face a plagiarism allegation, even if you do happen to make a mistake

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# **How similar is too similar?**

**69**

When many students first start learning about plagiarism and citation, one of the first questions they often ask is “How similar is too similar?”

Unfortunately, this question, while understandable, isn’t very helpful when trying to understand plagiarism. Plagiarism is about citation, not duplication, and it’s possible to use passages of text verbatim without plagiarism as long as it is quoted and cited correctly.

Often times, the question is asked with reference to paraphrasing: When is a work changed enough so that it doesn’t need to be quoted but can be considered original?

However, once again, the question isn’t very helpful. Paraphrasing isn’t about changing the words of the original source, but about writing the ideas in your own words. If you’re paraphrasing correctly, none of the original verbiage should be present.

In short, when writing an essay, there’s no time in which you should be altering the words of a source in hopes of making them original. Anything copied from the source should be quoted and cited accordingly and all other writing should be as original as possible.

But that doesn’t mean that any matching text is automatically a case of plagiarism. In fact, a 0% matching score is often as suspicious as a high percentage matching.

This is because even if two essays are written completely independently, there’s a good chance that they will have some overlapping text between them. This is especially true if they are written on the same topic.

This includes common phrases, relevant expressions, cliches and even some passages that may only have one way to say it properly.

In short, matching text, by itself, is not an indication of plagiarism. To determine if matching text is plagiarism a human needs to evaluate that the text was copied inappropriately and not cited correctly.

Plagiarism detection services are powerful tools, but they are meant to aid human evaluation, not replace it.

That being said, it’s also possible to plagiarize without copying text at all. One can plagiarize ideas and information just as easily as they can text. So having information and ideas that are not common knowledge but not cited can also be plagiarism.

What that means is that, even if your words are original, your work can still be a plagiarism if your ideas and information are not and are not cited.

While this may seem frightening and like there are infinite ways to fall into the “trap” of plagiarism, the solution is actually very simple: Citation.

As long as you do your own writing and cite your information as well as any quotes you use, you should be fine.

After all, the golden rule of avoiding plagiarism is this: When in doubt, cite!

If you follow the golden rule, you should be fine.

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In the classroom, contract cheating is any form of cheating where a student hires another person to do their work for them. This can include everything from using an essay mill to write a paper, hiring another student to take a test for them, or paying someone to complete all or part of a project.

Contract cheating is most commonly associated with essay mills, where students pay writers to create essays for them. However, contract cheating doesn’t necessarily require a formal agreement between the parties nor does it require money to change hands

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# **What is Contract Cheating (ghostwriting)?**

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In the classroom, contract cheating is any form of cheating where a student hires another person to do their work for them. This can include everything from using an essay mill to write a paper, hiring another student to take a test for them, or paying someone to complete all or part of a project.

Contract cheating is most commonly associated with essay mills, where students pay writers to create essays for them. However, contract cheating doesn’t necessarily require a formal agreement between the parties nor does it require money to change hands.

In fact, [a recent study found that money usually doesn’t change hands with contract cheating](http://thomaslancaster.co.uk/blog/contract-cheating-and-essay-mills-2017-findings-part-2-inside-the-contract-cheating-industry/). While 10.4% of students admitted to using a professional service, 60.2% admitted to having used a current or former student. Of those who used a fellow student, only 13.2% paid for the service.

In most cases of contract cheating, it’s an informal exchange of favors or a desire to “help” friends out.

But while this practice is heavily frowned upon in the classroom, it is much less so in other areas.

For example, in book publishing, the practice is referred to as “ghostwriting.” With ghostwriting an anonymous (or only loosely attributed) author writes a book for a celebrity, who is given credit as the author.

Ghostwriting is also common with speeches, in particular in politics, and, increasingly, on company blogs and even some personal blogs.

[While the practice of ghostwriting isn’t without controversy](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/02/fashion/noticed-celebrity-books-and-ghostwriters.html), it isn’t frowned upon nearly as heavily as contract cheating. But while the actual act may be very similar, the intent is very different.

For example, with books, there’s little expectation that a celebrity wrote the entirety of their book. If they are not known as a writer, it is widely assumed that they, at the very least, will be getting a great deal of help with their book.

Since there is no audience expectation of originality, there’s no attempt to deceive the audience. Furthermore, with ghostwriting, the person receiving the authorship credit is still very heavily involved in the work. For example, a ghostwritten autobiography is usually written by a ghostwriter working closely with the subject. This is not true with classroom contract cheating.

However, another key difference is that classroom contract cheating defeats the purpose of the assignment. An assignment in a classroom is not just work to be completed, it’s a tool that helps instructors evaluate their students’ understanding of the subject and to help further that understanding through independent work.

By turning to contract cheating, there is no way to for the instructor to fairly evaluate the student’s knowledge and give an accurate grade. Not only does it shortchange the students who did put in the effort, but it shortchanges the cheater by making their education less effective.

So while there may be venues where it’s acceptable to pay someone to write your book or your speech, the classroom is not one of them. Doing so completely defeats the purpose of the assignment.

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# **How do I protect my work from being plagiarized?**

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As anyone who has been the victim of plagiarism knows, being plagiarized can be a very be a very emotional experience.

To have something that you worked on lifted and reused under someone else’s name and without attribution can feel like a robbery and like a form of identity theft.

However, protecting your work from plagiarism is a major challenge. Computers and the internet were basically made for copying and that means anyone who has access to your work can copy it and, if they wish, plagiarize it.

That’s why, when it comes to preventing plagiarism, the first step is often restricting access to it.

Don’t post a work online unless you have a reason to do so and don’t share your work outside of those you trust. This includes not running your writing through an untrusted plagiarism detection service as some of those actually [funnel scanned essays into essay mill websites for the express purpose of letting others plagiarize them](https://www.plagiarismtoday.com/2013/11/18/viper-plagiarism-scanner-stealing-essays/).

However, restricting access to your writing is not always practical. Sometimes you want or need to reach a larger audience and that means posting the work publicly. To that end, the best thing you can do is make your writing as personal to you as possible. Tell stories and include information that only you or those close to you would know. Make it difficult or even impossible for a stranger to claim the work as theirs.

This may or may not deter the plagiarism, but certainly provides verification that the work is yours and will likely raise eyebrows if anyone does try to claim it as theirs.

It’s also wise to [include a proper copyright notice with the work](https://www.plagiarismtoday.com/2011/11/08/how-to-write-a-copyright-notice/). Though such a notice is not legally required, it prevents any confusion about who owns the work and whether or not it is protected. Another possibility is to provide guidance to others at the end of your work on how they can cite it properly.

Beyond that, you can and should attempt to track how your work is used online. This can be done easily using a search engine by taking a passage from your writing and searching for it in quotes. If you choose a sufficiently unique passage, any hits returned should be copies of your paper.

If you wish to automate this, [you can use Google Alerts](https://www.google.com/alerts) to send you an email when new instances of the phrase appear online.

If and when you detect plagiarism, it’s important to keep a cool head and remember that, as the author, you are the copyright holder and you have rights in the work.

How you respond will depend heavily on how the work was used. If it was used in a classroom or a professional publication, you’ll likely want to reach out to either the instructor or the editor and let them know about your findings.

If the work appears elsewhere online, the [stopping internet plagiarism guide at Plagiarism Today](https://www.plagiarismtoday.com/stopping-internet-plagiarism/) can help you either contact the plagiarist directly or reach out to their host to get the offending work removed.

Beyond that, any further action would require consultation with a lawyer to see what additional legal remedies might be available.

In the end, it is very possible to protect your work and both minimize and respond to any plagiarism that you find. The key is to think about the issues before publishing your work and have a plan in place from the outset rather than dealing with it after something has already happened.

With plagiarism, an ounce of prevention truly is worth several pounds of cure

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# **Is it Plagiarism to Pay Someone to Write for Me?**

**54**

Paying someone to write your paper, whether it’s a fellow student or an essay mill, is a form of plagiarism and is usually considered one of the most serious by teachers and administrators alike.

That’s because a teacher doesn’t just assign a paper to have you produce one, the goal of the assignment is to showcase your understanding of the subject, your ability to communicate that information and how well you analyze and draw conclusions from it.

In short, essays are designed to test your skills as a student and, if you simply pay someone else to write that paper, it is impossible for your teacher to evaluate your understanding or your progress.

Despite this, many still claim that since the use was “allowed” by the original author that it is ethically acceptable. After all, it’s a case of “victimless” plagiarism.

But even if we ignore the issues about what the goals of the assignment are and how cheating on such an assignment hurts you as a student, there are other victims to be considered.

First, by turning in a paper you paid for, you are lying to your teacher. When you place your name on top of your paper or on the cover sheet, you are saying that everything in that paper, unless specifically cited, is your work.

If you pay someone to write the paper, that is clearly untrue.

Second, other students in the class did the work and are earning a grade based on their efforts. They chose not to pay someone to write their paper, either out of ethical concerns or fear of punishment, and are at a disadvantage to someone who simply paid for their paper.

But while buying an essay is definitely a form of cheating, it’s very likely that you won’t end up owning the essay that you “bought”.

The reason for that is because, under copyright law, buying a work doesn’t necessarily transfer copyright into it, much like how buying a DVD doesn’t make you the owner of the film.

Copyright in a work, whether it is a paper, song or film, [resides with the author of the work](https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ01.pdf). Unless that work is by an employee of a company or the author has signed a contract ([which must be in writing](https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/204)), the copyright in the work stays with the author.

Since just buying an essay doesn’t make the author an employee, you don’t own the work unless you have a contract transferring copyright in it. While the person has agreed to let you use, it’s still, legally, their work.

As such, they can turn the paper in themselves, sell it to other students, post it online or do nearly anything they want with it.

Buying a paper does not make it your work, neither for the assignment it’s submitted for nor in the eyes of the law.

When it comes to buying essays, your best bet is to save your money and do the work yourself

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# **Is Plagiarism Illegal?**

**79**

Most already know that plagiarism is an ethical infraction and a violation of your school or workplace’s honor code. If you’re caught plagiarizing, you can be punished by your school, fired from your job, or even have your career ruined.

But what about legal consequences? Is it possible for a plagiarist to get sued or, even worse, face criminal action? The answer is that it depends on the nature of the plagiarism.

The most obvious way that a plagiarism can become a legal issue is copyright infringement.

[Copyright is a set of exclusive rights](https://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-general.html) granted to the creator of an original work. Plagiarism, often times, violates those rights both by copying the work without permission and distributing it.

However, [not all plagiarisms are copyright infringements](https://www.plagiarismtoday.com/2013/10/07/difference-copyright-infringement-plagiarism/). For example, one can plagiarize from sources that are out of copyright (meaning in the public domain) and not commit copyright infringement. Likewise, ideas and facts are not protected by copyright but can definitely be plagiarized. Finally, copying and reuse of short passages without attribution is a form of plagiarism but is unlikely to be a copyright infringement.

In short, plagiarism is about whether or not a work is properly cited while copyright infringement focuses on the use of the original work. While there is overlap between the two, they are far from one and the same. Furthermore, most plagiarisms that are copyright infringements would likely still be copyright infringements even if they were properly cited.

However, copyright is not the only way for plagiarism to end up in court. Outside the classroom, when submitting research grants or providing projects to clients, there are often contracts that require the work submitted to be original. Plagiarism is a breach of that contract and can result in a lawsuit.

[One famous example of this was author Kaavya Viswanathan](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/27/books/novelist-says-she-read-copied-books-several-times.html), who only avoided a breach of contract lawsuit with her publisher by returning the advance she was given on her book.

But while civil cases involving plagiarism are rare, criminal cases are even more so. However, they are not unheard of.

In the United States, [researcher Craig Grimes faced a criminal fraud investigation over his acceptance of duplicative grants](http://www.nature.com/news/duplicate-grant-case-puts-funders-under-pressure-1.9984) he received for the same proposal. While the charges were dropped, he was given a two-year ban on receiving funding for research.

Instead, criminal cases are more common in other countries and are usually tied to the nation’s copyright regime.

For example, in 2012 in India, former Delhi University vice-chancellor Deepak Pental [was put in jail over allegations that he plagiarized a colleague’s research](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Ex-VC-of-DU-sent-to-jail-for-plagiarism-released/articleshow/45278628.cms). That same year, [a Polish professor faced up to three years in prison](http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/120508%2CPolish-professor-could-face-threeyear-sentence-for-plagiarism) for plagiarizing in a book under the nation’s copyright law.

However, this is an area of rapid development as the UK, as well as other countries, [are looking to criminalize contract cheating](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/02/21/university-students-could-fined-handedcriminal-records-plagiarised/). This could see students who engage in contract cheating facing criminal punishments, including a permanent record of their misdeeds.

For right now though, plagiarism rarely becomes a criminal or civil matter, especially when it’s in the classroom. However, it can and does happen. As if one needed another reason to avoid plagiarism, the potential legal consequences should provide an additional motivation.

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# **What does citation have to do with plagiarism?**

**77**

Plagiarism is the act of taking words, ideas or information from others and presenting them as your own. While many plagiarists do this very deliberately, it’s also possible to do it simply through the lack of proper citation.

The reason for this lies in what your audience, in this case your instructors, expect from the work that you hand in.

When you turn in a work bearing your name, the expectation is that you are submitting work that you have done on your own. That’s part of what putting your name on an assignment means: that the work contained inside it is yours, unless expressly stated otherwise.

Therefore, when you use the work of others, it’s important to clearly and correctly cite that content to indicate that it isn’t your original work. Citations also show that you have done the proper research work and that you’ve consulted appropriate texts for your assignment.

Failure to cite basically means that you are claiming that the entire paper and all of its information as yours and, if that’s untrue, it’s plagiarism.

Where things become murkier is when one attempts to cite the work but does so incorrectly. This can include everything from simply using the wrong citation style (EG: Using MLA instead of APA or vice versa) to footnoting a passage lifted directly, but not quoting it.

Those cases depend heavily on the exact circumstances. If one simply uses the wrong citation style, an instructor may lower the grade, but wouldn’t consider it as plagiarism since the source is fully cited (just in the wrong way for that assignment).

However, in situations where the citation is neither correct nor complete, it can definitely still be considered plagiarism. For example, if you use a passage and don’t quote it, it doesn’t matter if you cite the source, because you only gave credit for the information, not the words.

Still, instructors often look at these cases differently and may be more lenient if there’s a clear attempt to not plagiarize. Such cases are often not treated as disciplinary matters but rather as problems with the assignment.

Those decisions are left up to your teachers. Since plagiarism is sometimes considered an offense where the intent of the accused doesn’t matter, your instructor and your school can choose to take strict action, even if you didn’t intend to plagiarize.

If you are unsure whether you are citing your sources adequately, the best thing you can do is talk with your instructor and and show them what you’re doing. Working with your instructor will ensure that you meet their standards of citation and let them know the issues you are struggling with.

That can go to great lengths to head off a plagiarism allegation before it starts and greatly help improve the grades you get when the assignment is returned

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Turnitin was made specifically for classroom use and is intended for reviewing student work. Similar to Blackboard’s SafeAssign service, Turnitin can be integrated into Canvas courses and allows instructors to review originality reports of student work. Turnitin compares student work against 60 billion web pages; 600 million student papers that have been submitted to the Turnitin database; over 100 million articles from professional journals, periodicals, and publications. Submitted documents are added to a database of material from colleges and universities around the country.

iThenticate is meant to assist academic authors in avoiding plagiarism and copyright infringement when preparing items for publication and is NOT intended for classroom use. This program is often used by publishers to check originality of submitted articles prior to publication. Papers reviewed using this service are NOT added to or indexed in any other database and remain the proprietary property of the individual author.

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**Plagiarism is the representation of a source's words or ideas as one's own. Plagiarism**

**occurs when a writer fails to supply quotation marks for exact quotations;**

**fails to cite the sources of his or her ideas; or adopts the phrasing of his or her**

**sources, with changes in grammar or word choice.**

**Plagiarism takes three different forms-cheating, non-attribution of sources,**

**and patchwriting:**

**1. Cheating Borrowing, purchasing, or otherwise obtaining work composed**

**by someone else and submitting it under one's own name. The minimum penalty is**

**an "F" in the course; the maximum penalty, suspension from the university.**

**2. Non-attribution Writing one's own paper but including passages copied exactly**

**from the work of another (regardless of whether that work is published or unpublished**

**or whether it comes from a printed or electronic source) without**

**providing (a) footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical notes that cite the source and**

**(b) quotation marks or block indentation to indicate precisely what has been copied**

**from the source. Because non-attribution is sometimes the result of a student's inexperience**

**with conventions of academic writing, instruction in source attribution and**

**subsequent revision of the paper may be the instructor's most appropriate response.**

**Non-attribution can alternatively be the result of a student's intent to deceive, in**

**which case the minimum penalty is an "F" in the course and the maximum penalty,**

**suspension from the university.**

**3. Patchwriting Writing passages that are not copied exactly but that have**

**nevertheless been borrowed from another source, with some changes-a practice**

**which The BedfordH andbookfo r Writersc alls "paraphrasingt he source's language too**

**closely" (477). This "patchwriting"i s plagiarism regardlesso f whethero ne suppliefso otnotes,**

**e ndnoteso, r parentheticanl otest hat acknowledgteh e source.H owever, patchwriting**

**is not always a form of academic dishonesty; it is not always committed by immoral**

**writers. Often it is a form of writing that learners employ when they are unfamiliar**

**with the words and ideas about which they are writing. In this situation, patchwriting**

**can actually help the learner begin to understand the unfamiliar material. Yet it**

**is a transitional writing form; it is never acceptable for final-draft academic writing,**

**for it demonstrates that the writer does not fully understand the source from which**

**he or she is patchwriting. Because patchwriting can result from a student's inexperience**

**with conventions of academic writing, instruction in quotation and source attribution**

**and a request for subsequent revision of the paper may be an appropriate**

**response for the instructor. But because patchwriting often results from a student's**

**unfamiliarity with the words and ideas of a source text, instruction in the material**

**discussed in the source and a request for subsequent revision of the paper is even**

**more frequently the appropriate response. Patchwriting can also be the result of a**

**student's intent to deceive, in which case the minimum penalty is an "F" in the course**

**and the maximum penalty, suspension from the university**

**Additional advice for students:**

**Both citation (footnotes, parenthetical notes, or endnotes) and quotation marks are**

**required whenever you copy exact words and phrases from a source. When you paraphrase**

**or summarize but do not copy exactly, citation is still required. When in**

**doubt, cite; over-citation is an error, but under-citation is plagiarism. Your citations**

**should follow a recognized style sheet; you should not make up your own system. If**

**your instructor does not specify a style sheet, you may want to adopt the MLA style,**

**which is described in The BedfordH andbookfo r Writers,? 50, or the APA system, ?51.**

**For advice about when to quote sources, see ?49d; and for detailed explanation of**

**how to quote, ?37 and 49e.**

**The sources you should cite include not only printed materials but also electronic**

**sources. Most style sheets are currently publishing new editions that provide**

**advice for citing sources obtained by computer-materials from the Internet or CD**

**Rom disks, for example.**

**The sources you should cite also include contributions that others may make to**

**your drafts in progress-friends, family, classmates, and tutors who gave you ideas**

**for your essay or who made suggestions for its improvement. Writers customarily**

**provide a single discursive footnote to acknowledge such contributions. Often the**

**footnote appears at the end of the title or the first paragraph of the essay. Usually**

**one to three sentences, naming the contributors to the paper and sketching the nature**

**and extent of their contributions, suffice**