

What is Plagiarism and How Can I Avoid it?

To explain it simply, plagiarism is taking the work or words of another and claiming it as yours. The word plagiarism comes from the Latin word “plagarius”, meaning kidnapper. Plagiarism can happen even unintentionally; even using someone else’s work as a source of inspiration can be considered plagiarism.

With the birth of the internet, students found it hard to distinguish what was “fair game” and what they had to cite. We think of it as just copying or borrowing, neither of which we take that seriously. Plagiarism, though, is a serious offense. In colleges and universities, students can be expelled for such an offense, and in the business world law suits ensue over plagiarism and copyright infringement. That is why it is so important to learn now what plagiarism is and how to avoid it at all costs.

Examples of plagiarism:

• turning in someone else’s work as your own

* working on an assignment as a group when the teacher did not give permission to do so

• copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit

• failing to put a quotation in quotation marks

• giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation

• changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit

• copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the bulk of your work, whether you give credit to that source or not.

Changing the words from a book, article, website, etc is not enough to avoid plagiarism. If you have kept the essential idea from the work, it does not matter how many words you have changed, it is still plagiarism if you do not cite it.

To avoid plagiarism, you should give credit to a source if you have used:

* another person’s idea, opinion, theory or words
* facts, statistics, graphs, drawings or other forms of information that are not common knowledge(Common knowledge is information that you know, or would expect others to know without having to look it up! Consider it this way: would EVERY book or website you looked at say the same thing? If so, it is common knowledge. Example, the fact that George Washington was America’s first president.)
* quotations of another person’s spoken or written words or ideas
* paraphrases of another person’s work or words (even song lyrics and pictures, and especially anything from the internet, newspapers, or television).

How do you give credit properly? Look at the MLA guidelines given to you at the beginning of each year, on the LA website, or just ask me. It is better to be safe than sorry. Also, keep in mind that even if you pay for an essay, the words still do not belong to you. Trust what you know, use your own words, and always give credit where credit is due.

