



TEACHING&LEARNINGUNIT
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS & COMMERCE

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

FOR STUDENTS IN THE
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS &
COMMERCE

Teaching and Learning Unit, Faculty of Economics and Commerce
2nd Floor Babel Building



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Avoiding Plagiarism

In all academic work, you are expected to read the literature on the topic and build on this to develop and support your own ideas. In order to do this correctly, you need to adhere to the academic conventions for referencing and acknowledging sources. The aim is to avoid **plagiarism** – or being seen to claim as your own, the words, ideas or research of other people.

Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty and can have serious consequences such as failure in a subject or even expulsion from a course. While there are cases of deliberate plagiarism or cheating, most cases of student plagiarism are the result of ignorance, carelessness or a lack of advanced writing skills. That's where this booklet can help. It will help you to understand what plagiarism is and to recognize examples. More importantly, the booklet focuses on strategies for avoiding plagiarism and provides valuable information about acknowledging sources and referencing.

1. What is referencing?

Evans (1995, p.52) defines referencing as 'the labelling of material you have drawn from other writers with enough information for the reader to be able to locate the source'. Referencing (or citing) is an essential feature of academic writing and is extremely important as it enables you to:

- Acknowledge someone else's ownership of words and ideas
- Show that you have researched widely to give your writing credibility
- Allow readers/researchers to access the same sources for themselves
- Add evidence and authority to statements or arguments and demonstrate that your work is based on solid evidence
- Help maintain academic values such as exchanging knowledge and recognising intellectual work
- **Avoid plagiarism**

2. What is plagiarism?

The first step in avoiding plagiarism is knowing exactly what it is. Ignorance is no excuse for plagiarism and you may face serious consequences for plagiarising even if it is unintentional or 'accidental'.

In the University of Melbourne's *Policy on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism*, plagiarism is defined as: 'the act of representing as one's own original work the creative works of another, without appropriate acknowledgment of the author or source' (University of Melbourne, 2006, para. 1).

It is important to note that this definition extends beyond words printed in text and refers to all the elements in someone else's work including: ideas and arguments; images such as diagrams, charts and pictures; compositions; and organisational structures (Carroll, 2002). In short, plagiarism is a form of intellectual dishonesty or theft.

Appropriately, the word *plagiarism* is derived from the Latin words for 'kidnapper'. When a person plagiarises he/she is 'kidnapping' or stealing someone else's words or ideas and passing them off as his/her own. Although the definition of plagiarism may seem simple, the subject can be quite confusing for students as plagiarism comes in various forms. Some examples of plagiarism listed in the University's website on *Academic Honesty and Plagiarism* include:

- Copying directly (or allowing to be copied) paragraphs, sentences, a single sentence or significant parts of a sentence. An end reference without quotation marks around the copied text may also constitute plagiarism;
- Copying ideas, concepts, research results, statistical tables, computer programs, designs, images, sounds or text or any combination of these;
- Paraphrasing of another's work closely, with minor changes but with the essential meaning, form and/or progression of ideas maintained;
- Relying on a specific idea or interpretation that is not one's own without identifying whose idea or interpretation it is;
- Cutting or pasting statements from multiple sources or piecing together work of others and representing them as original work;
- Presenting as independent, work done in collaboration with other people (eg, another student, a tutor);
- Submitting, as one's own, all or part of another student's original work;
- Preparing an original and correctly referenced assignment and submitting part or all of the assignment twice for separate subjects or marks (The University of Melbourne, 2005, para 3)

Examples of plagiarism

Copying another person's work, or colluding with other people to produce an assignment that is submitted as independent work, are clear examples of plagiarism that are usually intentional and not difficult to avoid. However, few cases of student plagiarism result from such deliberate misconduct; most are unintentional and result from incorrect or inappropriate use of sources. In order to avoid plagiarism, you must be able to recognise the difference between acceptable and unacceptable use of sources. Look at the passage from Janet Yong's article (source text for the information) and the five versions of writing that follow. Pay special attention to the comments explaining why the first four versions are unacceptable.

Original text:

The Internet has changed the appearance of libraries and how librarians work today. The library is no longer confined to the four walls of a building. It has, instead, extended into cyberspace. Many librarians have gone into cyberspace to locate on-line resources (p.294).

From: Yong, Janet Y. 2001 'Malay/Indonesian speakers' In M. Swan and B. Smith (eds) 2001 *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp. 279-295.

Version 1:

Today, the Internet has changed the appearance of libraries and how librarians work and the library is no longer confined to the four walls of a building. Instead, the library has extended into cyberspace and so many librarians go into cyberspace to locate on-line resources.

Comments: This version is a clear example of plagiarized work. Much of it has been copied directly from the original without acknowledgement.

Version 2:

Today, the Internet has changed the appearance of libraries and how librarians work and the library is no longer confined to the four walls of a building. Instead, the library has extended into cyberspace and so many librarians go into cyberspace to locate on-line resources (Yong, 2001, p. 294).

Comments: This is still plagiarized work. Although this version has acknowledged the source of the information by providing an in-text reference, the writer has not put quotation marks around the words copied directly from the original text (direct quotations).

Version 3:

The library is no longer confined to the four walls of a building. It has, instead, extended into cyberspace and many librarians have gone into cyberspace to locate on-line resources. The Internet has thus changed the appearance of libraries and how librarians work today (Yong, 2001, p. 294).

Comments: This paragraph also constitutes a plagiarised piece of work as the sentences have merely been rearranged and most of the original wording has been copied without acknowledgement. Rearranging is not paraphrasing – paraphrasing requires the writer to reformulate the ideas in the original text in his/her own words.

Version 4:

Recent developments in Internet technologies have brought about a major transformation of libraries and the way that librarians conduct their work. Extending beyond the physical space of the library itself, many resources are now found on-line and are therefore easily accessed by library users and librarians alike.



Comments: In this version, the writer shows an understanding of the topic and has paraphrased effectively by using the information (rather than the words) of the original text to create a more original piece of work. However, the writer has failed to acknowledge the original source of information and therefore has plagiarized.

Version 5:

Recent developments in Internet technologies have brought about a major transformation of libraries and the way that librarians conduct their work. Extending beyond the physical space of the library itself, many resources are now found on-line and are therefore easily accessed by library users and librarians alike (Yong, 2001, p. 294).



Comments: This writer uses the original text appropriately. The paragraph shows the writer's understanding of the topic and lets the reader know that the information has been obtained from another source.

Consequences of plagiarism

Plagiarism can have very serious consequences for you in your future studies. If found guilty of plagiarism, you may be:

- Required to undertake additional assessment in the subject
- Given a mark of zero for the piece of assessment
- Given a fail grade for the subject
- Referred to the Discipline Committee under Statute 13.1 for Academic Misconduct which may result in termination of enrolment and expulsion from the University.

**Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional -
ignorance or carelessness is no excuse.**

For more information on the University's policy on plagiarism and the possible penalties see <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/plagiarism/policy.html>

3. Acknowledging sources

To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use another person's work. This means that whenever you use information obtained from another source including ideas, examples, theories or opinions, you must give a full reference to that source.

What do you have to acknowledge?

a. Direct quotations

A direct quotation means using another person's exact words. When you use direct quotations, it is important to make clear to the reader that you have taken someone else's exact words. Acknowledging the source with a reference alone is not sufficient; you must also place the words in quotation marks (for shorter quotes) or indent paragraphs (for longer quotes).

For example:

According to Cullis & Jones (1992, p. 217) 'the distinction between tax avoidance and tax evasion is not an easy one to make.'

In discussing majority voting and its effect on the public budget, Cullis & Jones (1992, p. 111) comment:

An opportunity to reduce tax price for the majority, fiscal illusions as to the tax price, and the unbridled tyranny of the majority may all lead to public budgets (both exhaustive and transfer spending) that are larger than would be predicted from a traditional approach to public finance.

b. Paraphrases of another person's words or ideas

A paraphrase is an indirect quotation and means rewriting someone else's ideas in your own words. Plagiarism often results from students' misguided belief that they only have to acknowledge someone else's work when copying or quoting words directly from a text. This is incorrect. When you paraphrase, you must cite the source of the ideas (see examples in previous section).

Another common mistake made by students is partial paraphrasing – that is, changing only some of the words from the original. To paraphrase correctly, you must change and rewrite the original language completely, including the original sentence structure. If you retain even short phrases or distinctive words from the original text without enclosing these words in quotation marks, it is plagiarism.

Acceptable paraphrasing:

- Accurately relays the information in the original source using your own words
- Acknowledges the source of information
- Is incorporated in your discussion to add to or support your own ideas and argument.

c. Summaries of another person's ideas.

A summary is also an indirect quotation, but is much shorter than the original text as it only includes the main points of the original author's ideas or argument. To avoid plagiarism, you must cite the source whenever you summarise another person's work.

4. Tables, figures, graphs, diagrams or images obtained from any source

When you copy or use information from any source, including information contained in tables, graphs, figures or diagrams, you must acknowledge the original source. This is also the case for images that you obtain.

5. Information obtained from lectures and personal communication

If you want to use information or an idea that you have obtained from a verbal discussion with someone or from your lectures, you have to acknowledge the source of the information in your work. Just because the other person's work has not been published in print form, it does not mean that the ideas do not belong to that person. If you use another person's ideas without acknowledgement, then you are plagiarising.

To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use other peoples' work including their ideas, arguments, theories and opinions.

What does not have to be acknowledged?

1. Your own ideas, arguments, theories, images, diagrams, graphs or results from research
2. Common knowledge – unless it is a direct quote from a specific source
3. Facts available from various general reference books such as textbooks, dictionaries or encyclopaedias. Statistics taken from these sources should still be cited, as this will increase the credibility of your information.

What is Common Knowledge?

Sometimes you do not need to acknowledge the source of your information. For example, when a topic is part of what we assume to be general or 'common knowledge', or information that is in the public domain, you usually do not have to provide a reference. For example, statements such as: *Bob Hawke was Prime Minister of Australia from 1983 to 1991*, or *World War I began in 1914 and ended in 1918*, are generally known information so you do not need to provide a reference even though you may not have known these facts before you started your research. However, if you use the exact words of the reference source, you must place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge the source.

If you are not sure whether a particular point is considered to be common knowledge in your field, consult various general reference books. If you find the fact in more than one general reference book, you can consider it 'common knowledge'.

Note that 'common knowledge' is limited to facts and does not include opinions or arguments that you could disagree with or argue against (Carroll, 2002, p. 53).

For example, compare the following two statements:

- i) John Maynard Keynes was an influential British economist.
- ii) John Maynard Keynes is considered to be the most influential economist of the 20th century (reference).

The first sentence is a fact that is commonly known by many people. The second sentence is an opinion, which people can disagree with and therefore needs to be referenced.

Look at another example:

Gans, King and Mankiw (1991, p.88) define price elasticity of demand as 'a measure of how much the quantity demanded of a good responds to a change in the price of that good'. In other words, price elasticity of demand measures how sensitive quantity demanded is to changes in price. Demand is said to be elastic if the quantity demanded is very sensitive to changes in price. For example, if a given percentage decrease in the price of a good leads to a larger percentage increase in the quantity demanded of this good, then demand is said to be elastic. On the other hand, if the percentage change in the quantity demanded is less than the percentage change in price then demand is said to be inelastic.

Comments: In this example, the first sentence includes a direct quote taken from a textbook, so a reference must be given. The other sentences have been written in the student's own words and contain ideas or concepts that are 'common knowledge' in the Economics field so a reference is not required. In your assignments, it can be quite useful to quote experts' definitions of technical terms or concepts but it's always a good idea to paraphrase or elaborate on these in your own words as this shows the reader (usually your lecturer) your understanding of the ideas and concepts.

By recognising that some facts are common knowledge, you can avoid filling up your page with unnecessary references. However, if in doubt, be cautious and cite the source.

4. Referencing styles

There are many different methods of referencing used in academic writing. This faculty generally requires a version of the in-text referencing style, either Harvard or APA. In-text referencing styles use brackets for citations within the text (Smith, 2006, p.2) and these citations are accompanied by a full list of references on a separate page at the end of the assignment. For more information on the APA referencing style, see the TLU's booklet on "Basic Referencing using the APA system" at <http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/pdfs/apastyle.pdf>

In order to reference correctly and avoid plagiarism, it is important for you to look at the relevant style guides carefully so that you can follow the particular referencing style 'rules' even down to the positioning of commas and full-stops. As different lecturers may prefer different referencing styles, it is essential for you to ask your lecturers which referencing style he/she expects you to use and to be consistent in using that style for the whole assignment.

One example of a style guide used by some lecturers in Economics is the *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (5th ed) published by the Australian Government Publishing Service. This and other style guides are available in the library.

You can also access numerous referencing style guides online:

Harvard referencing style

<http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/vl/cite/citecon.htm>

<http://www.dtls.cqu.edu.au/clc/pdfs/referencing.pdf>

www.library.qut.edu.au/subjectpath/citing_Harvard.pdf

APA style

<http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/pdfs/apastyle.pdf>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/>

<http://juno.concordia.ca/services/citations.html#chic>

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/info1010/ref_apa.html

Citing Electronic sources

<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html>

<http://www.ifla.org/I/training/citation/citing.htm>

When submitting work for assessment, you must follow the referencing style preferred by your lecturer.

5. Strategies for avoiding plagiarism

Strategy 1. Understand why students plagiarise and plan ahead

Why do students plagiarise?

Common student excuses include:

*I ran out of time and I got desperate at the last moment'
I couldn't keep up with the workload in my course'
I couldn't do it on my own! I didn't know enough'
I can't express my ideas as well as the authors can'
My English is not good enough so I used the author's words'
I didn't know how to reference properly'*

The first important step in avoiding plagiarism is to plan ahead and avoid putting yourself in a panic situation that could result in plagiarised work. Make sure that you:

- Understand the requirements of the assessment task and your lecturer's expectations
- Check the referencing style you are required to use and ask questions early on
- Manage your time well. Take note of all your deadlines and make a realistic timeline
- Do not expect extensions
- Plan to complete your work independently but seek assistance early on if you need help with your writing skills. Speak to your lecturer or contact the TLU (8344 4464). The TLU facilitates various free writing workshops and provides individual tutorials.

Strategy 2. Maintain detailed records of all the sources you use

One of the most important steps in avoiding plagiarism is developing good notetaking and research habits. When taking notes from readings and research, it is important to ensure that details on the source of the information (i.e. author's name, publication, page numbers) are not lost. Before taking notes from any source, record all the bibliographic information.

Details you need for a paper citation:

- Author's or editor's or organisation's full names
- Title of article, book or chapter (if each chapter has a different author)
- Name of the book, journal or periodical
- Version or edition
- Name of publisher
- Year of publication
- Place of publication (for books only)
- Volume and issue numbers (for journals only)
- Page numbers

Details you need for an electronic citation (web pages):

It is important to remember that unlike standard published material, electronic publications are easily updated and revised. Therefore, it is important that you note details such as:

- Name of the author or editor (or organisation)
- Title of the page
- Title of the site (ie. Homepage)
- Date the site was created
- Date the page was last modified or updated (or copyright date)
- Date you accessed the material
- The full URL address

Details you need for audio and multimedia works:

For audio and multimedia works, which include audio and video recordings, film and CD Roms, record details such as:

- Author/organisation/director (if available)
- Title
- Format (eg. Video recording, film etc.)
- City of recording
- Date of recording

Strategy 3. Develop an organised notetaking system

There are numerous ways of organising notes and you should develop a notetaking system that works for you. The most important thing to remember is that you must distinguish carefully between direct quotes (taken word for word) and your own words. To do this, some students organise their notes by highlighting direct quotes or by using a colour coding system (e.g. blue for direct quotes, red for paraphrased passages and yellow for their own ideas and thoughts). Other students use symbols to distinguish direct quotations (**Q**) from paraphrases (**P**) and summaries(**S**).

The important thing to remember when taking notes whether you are quoting directly or paraphrasing, is to keep the author's name near the text in your notes.

When taking notes, remember to:

- Put quotation marks around everything that comes directly from the text or use a symbol
- Rewrite the text fully when paraphrasing. Don't just rearrange sentences or replace a few words
- Check your rewritten version against the original text to ensure that you have not inadvertently used the same phrases or words

Strategy 4. Analyse and evaluate what you read

As a university student, you are expected to form your own ideas and opinions about different issues and you are expected to be able to support your arguments with literature and the research of scholars in your field. That is why it is important to add your own comments and responses to your notes from reading as you go along (see example of notetaking above). This will help you to recognise the difference between your own ideas or 'voice', and the ideas of other writers or researchers. Also, in analysing and evaluating the literature, it is sometimes useful to read several articles at the same time so that you can compare and contrast different authors' ideas and arguments.

Using electronic sources

Electronic sources are usually gathered from a World Wide Web site and as these are relatively easy to access, students are increasingly searching internet sites to obtain information. When using electronic sources, it is important to consider the validity of the information. This is because it is much easier for anyone to produce an electronic publication than it is to publish a book or get an article accepted for publication in a journal (most academic journals have referees who judge the research merit of an article before it is accepted for publication).

When you are using an electronic source you have to be more critical and ask questions to determine the validity of the information. Ask questions such as:

- Who are the authors? (If the work is authorless it should be regarded suspiciously)
- What do you know about the authors?
- What is the perspective of the author?
- How old is the material?
- Are the arguments logical and well-supported by reliable evidence?
- Is the material referenced fully and/or linked to other information?

Strategy 5. Learn how to use sources correctly and appropriately

As mentioned earlier in this booklet, there are three main ways to use sources in your writing:

- **Quoting** directly from a source and providing a reference
- **Paraphrasing** words or information and providing a reference
- **Summarising** or synthesising information and providing a reference

Try not to copy extensively from the original source – using lots of direct quotes does not show you understanding of the concepts or issues. Whenever possible, you should aim to understand what you have read and write it in your own words. Remember to always acknowledge the source of your information by providing a reference and ensure that you use the particular referencing style preferred by your lecturer/department. Get a copy of a style guide and follow the 'rules' even down to the positioning of commas and full-stops.

6. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Can't I just list all the sources I have used in the bibliography and not refer to them in the text?

No, you need to give the reference immediately after you mention the idea or information you have obtained from another source. It is best to integrate your acknowledgements into your discussion rather than to just give a reference at the end of the paragraph. One way to do this is by naming the authors or making the quote 'author-strong' - for example:

Smith (2006) states that ...

Lee (2003) argues ...

Is it still plagiarism if I make an honest mistake and accidentally forget to put in quotation marks or the reference?

Yes it is. It can be very difficult for a lecturer to distinguish between intentional and unintentional plagiarism and students have been known to fail assignments for 'forgetting' to add quotation marks and references. The surest way to avoid unintentional or accidental plagiarism is to take extra care by maintaining good practices in research and note-taking, and by proofreading and editing carefully. As the saying goes: 'It's better to be safe than sorry', so be over-diligent in referencing and acknowledging sources of information.

Do I still have to write the reference details in the text if I change all the ideas into my own words?

Yes you do. You must acknowledge that someone else is the 'owner' of these ideas and you have to signal to the reader that you have obtained these ideas or the information from a particular source. If you have established a strong argument then this should not be a problem as the information from the sources will merely be providing examples for, or supporting, your argument.

But what if I can't remember where I got the information?

This really isn't an excuse for plagiarism. The fact is, if you use information obtained from another source without providing a reference, then you are not acknowledging that source. This is plagiarism. The best way to avoid this kind of situation is by maintaining good research and note-taking habits, jotting down all reference details as you go. If you have not done this, then you really only have two choices: 1. Try to find the source of the information or a source that says similar things (not always possible if the idea or argument is very unique or 'new') or 2. Don't use the information – using someone else's work without acknowledgment is plagiarism.

Do I have to come up with my own ideas – I'm not an expert. Why can't I just paraphrase different experts' ideas and provide references?

While you may not be an 'expert' on a particular topic, you do have a unique and individual opinion. Sometimes this opinion is only formed after reading widely on the topic. An important part of the process of academic writing is to come up with your own perspective or argument and then draw on the research and ideas of other 'experts' to support your argument.

Do I have to reference sources even if they haven't been published?

Yes you do. You have to acknowledge someone else's ideas and any further information that you have obtained from another source (except common knowledge). In other words, you

have to give a person credit for his/her ideas –some people call this ‘intellectual integrity’ while other people call it ‘good manners’.

What if my friend helped me to write the paper?

Unless you have been instructed to work in groups or to collaborate with classmates, you should never assume that it is OK to get others to help you write a paper. This is known as collusion and is a form of plagiarism. It is probably safer for you to think that it’s not OK to work collaboratively until you have asked your lecturer or supervisor.

If you have a friend who has a lot of knowledge (or experience) on your assignment topic, and you discuss the subject with him/her at length, then you have to give proper credit for this information and acknowledge your friend as the source of that information.

But I come from a country where using someone else’s work is a sign of respect. How can I be penalized for plagiarizing when I don’t really know why plagiarism is a problem here?

Even if you really don’t understand why plagiarism is wrong, you are responsible for your actions and your work so you will be penalized if you submit plagiarized assignments. This means that you have to become familiar with the academic expectations and conventions, and you have to learn how to avoid plagiarism. Reading this booklet is a good first step but you also need to know what is expected by your department and lecturers.

Are lecturers more ‘forgiving’ or lenient towards international students when they plagiarise?

Absolutely not. Basically, it is the responsibility of every student regardless of their background, to learn how and when to cite sources. If you have any questions or are finding it difficult, you should see your lecturer or seek assistance from the Teaching and Learning Skills Unit (ph 8344 4464 or 8344 3645).

What do I do when I really want to use information from the internet but there’s no mention of the author?

If the information was written by an organization or company then they are the author. If there is no mention of an organization or company then you need to reference as much of the website as you can. If the page has a title or heading at the top, note that and put it in quotation marks (e.g. ‘History of Conflict’). Scroll down to the bottom of the page and look for information on when the website was first posted or the date it was last modified. Also, remember to be critical in using websites – it’s easy for anyone to write something for the web. You should be especially suspicious of authorless articles.

Where can I go to get help with my writing skills?

The Faculty’s Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) runs various free writing workshops and provides individual tutorials for all students. Visit their website at: <http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au>, call them on (03) 8344 4464 , or visit them in person. They are located on the 2nd floor, Babel Building.

6. References and resources

Works Cited

- Carroll, J. (2002). *A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education*, Oxford: The Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.
- Cullis, J. & Jones, P. (1992). *Public Finance and Public Choice: Analytical Perspectives*, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Crozet, C. & Liddicoat, A.J. (1997). Teaching Language and Teaching Culture, *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, No.14.
- Evans, D. (1995). *How to Write a Better Thesis or Report*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
- Gans, J., King, S. & Mankiw, N.G. (2002). *Principles of Microeconomics*, South Melbourne : Thomson Learning.
- University of Melbourne (2005). What is plagiarism? [online] *University of Melbourne [Academic Honesty and Plagiarism](http://www.unimelb.edu.au/academic/honesty-and-plagiarism/) Web Site*. URL: [academichonesty.unimelb.edu.au/plagiarism.html](http://www.unimelb.edu.au/academic/honesty-and-plagiarism/) (07/02/2005) [Date Accessed: 12/06/2007]

Resources on Plagiarism

<http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/AcademicHonestyTest/index.cfm/>

<https://airport.unimelb.edu.au/gate1/writing/>

<http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/pdfs/plagiarism.pdf>

<http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html>

<http://www.zoology.ubc.ca/bpg/plagiarism.htm>

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html

<http://www.georgetown.edu/honor/plagiarism.html>