How to Avoid Plagiarism

(See also: Tutorial)

Introduction

1. According to the Liberty University Online Honor Code (LUHC)* academic misconduct includes, “plagiarism, cheating [sic] and falsification” (LUHC, n.d., p. 1).

2. Plagiarism* is defined as “the intentional failure to give sufficient attribution to the words, ideas, or data of others that the student has incorporated into his/her work for the purpose of misleading the reader” (LUHC, n.d., p. 5).

3. To avoid plagiarism, the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (2010) states: “Cite the work of those individuals whose ideas, theories, or research have directly influenced your work” (p. 169). The proper format for crediting the work of others is covered in the American Psychological Association Publication Manual (APA)** in “Chapter 6: Crediting Sources” (pp. 169-192).

When in doubt ➔ Provide a Citation

4. Many students erroneously believe that the term plagiarism only refers to copying someone else’s words and failing to give proper credit (citation) to the source that was directly copied (word-for-word). However, it is important to note that students are also committing plagiarism if they copy someone else’s ideas and fail to give proper credit to the source of those ideas (Plagiarism. Writing with integrity (PWWI), n.d., Slide 1).***

5. Plagiarism can be either intentional, or unintentional.

6. Intentional plagiarism occurs when a student intentionally (i.e., deliberately) incorporates the “words, ideas, or data” of someone else into his/her paper “for the purpose of misleading the reader” (LUHC, n.d., p. 1). This form of plagiarism may result in serious academic sanctions or consequences.

7. To avoid intentional plagiarism, a student should never try to deliberately “mislead a reasonable reader as to the true source of the words, ideas, or data” (LUHC, n.d., p. 1) that are included in his/her paper. According to the APA Publication Manual, “Authors do not present the work of another as if it were their own work” (p. 16).

Abbreviations:

* LUHC (Liberty University Online Honor Code)
**APA (American Psychological Association Publication Manual)
***PWWI (Plagiarism: Writing with Integrity)
8. **Unintentional** plagiarism occurs when the student carelessly (i.e., unintentionally) fails “to give credit to the words, ideas [sic] or data of others” (LUHC, n.d., p. 1). Please note: *unintentional* plagiarism is still plagiarism (LUHC, n.d., p. 1), and may also result in serious academic consequences to the student. We will now cover several examples of plagiarism (intentional or unintentional) and how to avoid plagiarizing.

9. **Direct Quotations:** *Quoting* refers to copying from another source *word-for-word and using the words copied in your paper.* This type of plagiarism is what most students think of when they think of the act of plagiarizing. When directly quoting a source, word-for-word, you must put the words that are quoted in quotation marks, and provide a citation that includes the author’s name, the date of the publication, and the page number on which the quotation can be found. If no page number is available, then you should cite the paragraph number on which the quoted material occurs (APA, p. 170).

If you copy information word-for-word from another source, you must put the information you copied in quotation marks and provide a properly formatted in-text citation. To give proper credit to your source, and avoid plagiarism, a full reference to in-text citations must be included at the end of your paper in the “Reference” section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example #1: Direct Quotation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to Entwistle (2010), “Christian redemption entails the formation and transformation of character so that we may be more Christ-like” (p. 4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The author argues that “Christian redemption entails the formation and transformation of character so that we may be more Christ-like” (Entwistle, 2010, p. 4).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reference**


10. **In-Text Citations and End-of-Paper References:** As stated above, for each in-text citation, you must provide a corresponding reference in the “Reference” section at the end of your paper. Failure to provide a properly formatted and complete reference for the work you have cited represents a form of plagiarism. Before you turn in a paper, make sure you check to see that you have a complete reference (in the “Reference” section of your paper) for each in-text citation that you have provided in the body of your paper.
11. **Limit the Amount of Direct Quotations Used in Your Paper:** There is a limit to the amount of information you can directly quote from the source without committing copyright violations. According to the APA Manual, “What constitutes the maximum acceptable length of duplicated material is difficult to define but must conform to legal notions of fair use” (American Psychological Association, 2010, p. 16).

In general, you should limit the length of the material you are quoting, and you should limit the overall quantity of directly quoted material you use in your paper. In general, the use of long quotes “is not preferred” (Harvard Graduate School of Education, n.d., Module 2, Slide 3). Using a large number of direct quotations may give the reader the impression that you don’t understand the material you are quoting (Harvard Graduate School of Education, n.d., Module 2, Slide 3). Instead of directly quoting long passages, consider paraphrasing or summarizing the information contained in the source.

12. **Block Quotations:** If the material you are directly quoting is 40 words or greater, then special formatting is required according to APA (2010) rules (p. 171).

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Example #2: Block Quotation

According to Campbell (2010),

   The Bible is best mental health textbook ever written! And God's Word is the best counselor. "Godly Counsel" focuses on 33 topics relevant to psychological problems encountered by Christians. It is designed for people who are hurting and the counselors who help them.

   Whatever your problem in life may be, God’s word can offer important help and guidance. (Campbell, 2010, p. 1)

[Note: Start the block quotation on a new line. Double space the entire quotation. If the quotation involves more than one paragraph, indent the second paragraph. The citation is placed at the end of the quoted material. It is placed in parentheses and includes the author, year of publication, and page number.]
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13. **Changing a Few Words to Avoid Plagiarism:** Changing a few words as they appear in the source material (e.g., using synonyms, leaving out some words, or adding some words), without significantly altering the sentence structure, still constitutes plagiarism. Changing, substituting, or omitting a few words from the source material are not synonymous with **paraphrasing** (see below). Also, even if you are properly paraphrasing the author’s writing, you must provide a citation that includes the author, year of publication, and page number where the paraphrased information can be found.
14. **Paraphrasing Defined**: Paraphrasing refers to “taking a specific passage from another source and putting it in your own words” (PWWI, n.d., Slide 9). When you paraphrase the words or thoughts of someone else, you must provide a properly formatted citation (PWWI, n.d., Slide 14).

15. **Avoid Problems Associated with Paraphrasing**: Paraphrasing involves: reading and understanding the meaning of what the author is trying to say; putting the author’s thoughts into your own words; and, using your own sentence structures. To avoid problems with paraphrasing, follow these “Four Rs” of paraphrasing (Principles of Paraphrasing, n.d., Module 3, Slide 10):

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The Four Rs of Paraphrasing

Reword
Rephrase
Restructure
Recheck (to make sure you have not directly quoted)
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(Harvard Graduate School of Education, n.d., Module 3, Slide 10)

Stated differently, correct paraphrasing involves:

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Paraphrasing Involves:

- Understanding a passage
- Internalizing the meaning of the text
- Restating the important points in your own voice
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(Harvard Graduate School of Education, n.d., Module 2, Slide 5)

16. **Paraphrasing Doesn’t Just Refer to “Words”**: Remember, paraphrasing pertains to more than just revising the words that someone else wrote; paraphrasing also pertains to revising the ideas contained in the words of others.

If you attempt to paraphrase ideas from another author/source, you must still provide a citation that specifies the source of the ideas you are paraphrasing. Remember, you must provide an in-text citation for any idea that is based on something you read from another source—this includes ideas you are paraphrasing.

17. **Use In-Text Citations for Paraphrased Material**: To avoid plagiarism, provide an in-text citation for each and every sentence you write that contains paraphrased ideas (in whole or in part) that are not your own (PWWI, n.d., Slide 14).
18. **Test Each Sentence:** After you write each sentence in your paper, ask yourself the following questions:

   a. Are those *my own* thoughts/ideas, or can they be traced back to something someone else said or wrote? If your ideas can be traced to another source, then provide an in-text citation (PWWI, n.d., Slide 11).

   b. Did those ideas come out of my own head, or are they based on something someone else said or wrote? If the ideas did not originate entirely from your own head, then provide an in-text citation (PWWI, n.d., 14).

19. **Direct Quotations within Paraphrases:** If you paraphrase the work of another author/source, you must use quotation marks to identify any unique terms or unique phrases you have copied directly (word-for-word) from your source (Purdue Owl, n.d., p. 3). Provide a page number for the reader so he/she can locate the source of the directly copied words. If no page number is available, provide a paragraph number.

   **Example #3: Direct Quotation within a Paraphrase**

   Campbell (2010) illustrates how the truths of the Bible can help set you free from the “tyranny of false beliefs and lies” (p. 1) that are prevalent in contemporary society.

   Generally speaking, if you are looking directly at the source material while attempting to paraphrase, and if you are copying any of the original source “word-for-word,” the words you have copied would be considered a direct quotation, and must be placed in quotation marks and appropriately cited.

   **Example #4: Paraphrased Sentence Following a Paraphrased Sentence**

   Missing Citation:

   Campbell (2010) illustrates how the truths of the Bible can help set you free from the “tyranny of false beliefs and lies” (p. 1) that are prevalent in contemporary society. **Many people start to learn these lies about themselves from their parents.**

   [According to whom? The second sentence above is ambiguous with respect to the source of the assertion being made. The reader must be informed at all times with respect to the source of any statement/assertion that is being made.]

   Correct Citation:

   Campbell (2010) illustrates how the truths of the Bible can help set you free from the “tyranny of false beliefs and lies” (p. 1) that are prevalent in contemporary society. The author (Campbell, 2010) believes that many people start to learn these lies about themselves from their parents.
Remember, paraphrasing refers to “taking a specific passage from another source and putting it in your own words [Emphasis Added]” (PWWI, n.d., Slide 9). Simply stated, if you are using the exact words of the original author, you are not paraphrasing, you are directly quoting the author. As such, you need to put the quoted information in quotation marks, and provide a proper citation.

20. **When Paraphrasing, Treat Each Sentence Separately:** When paraphrasing ideas you obtained from another source, you must provide a separate in-text citation for each and every sentence you write that contains paraphrased material. It is not acceptable to simply provide a citation for an initial sentence containing a paraphrase, and then assume that the reader understands that subsequent sentences are also paraphrases based on the same source.

The reader must be clearly informed as to whether or not you are still paraphrasing the same source material, or whether you are making this or that statement “on your own.” You must treat each sentence separately, and provide a separate citation for each and every subsequent sentence that is being paraphrased.

21. **Citations at the end of a Paragraph:** Similar to #20 above, it is not acceptable to paraphrase for several sentences and then provide a single in-text citation following the last sentence in a series of sentences or at the end of a paragraph. A citation at the end of a heavily paraphrased paragraph does not “cover” the sentences that came before the last sentence that was properly cited. Failure to properly cite each and every paraphrased sentence is a form of plagiarism (LUHC, n.d., p. 2). In such instances, your actions would result in not giving proper credit to someone else’s ideas.

**Example #5: End of Paragraph Citations (Incorrect)**

**Incorrect Citation:**

There are many different sources of irrational beliefs, or lies. Importantly, these “false beliefs” can have a profound effect on a person’s mental health. Therefore, it is important for Christian counselors to discover the irrational beliefs that are underlying mental health issues, challenge these false beliefs, and replace them with God’s Truth (as contained in the Holy Bible) (Campbell, 2010).

[In the above example, all of the information is paraphrased from Campbell’s (2010) book. However, the person doing the paraphrasing has not properly acknowledged that the statements being made in the first two sentences of the paragraph are based on the ideas expressed by Campbell (2010).]

**Correction:**

According to Campbell (2010), there are many different sources of irrational beliefs, or lies. Importantly, the author (Campbell, 2010) emphasizes that these “false beliefs” can have a profound effect on a person’s mental health. Therefore, Campbell (2010) argues that it is important for Christian counselors to discover the irrational beliefs that are underlying mental health issues, challenge these false beliefs, and replace them with God’s Truth (as contained in the Holy Bible).
22. **When a Citation is Not Needed for a Paraphrase:** The only exception to #21 above, would be if you cite the source in the first sentence of your paragraph and then make it crystal clear to the reader that you are still referring to the same source when you make subsequent assertions or statements. However, be careful, as this is often a bit tricky for beginning writers.

**Example #6: When You Don’t Need a Full Citation for Every Sentence**

In his popular book entitled “Godly Counsel,” Campbell (2011) gives several suggestions for how a Christian should live his/her life. First, it is suggested that you try to be “Christlike” in all you say and do (p. 21). Second, you should pray “constantly,” and talk with God on a regular basis (p. 50). Third, you should ask for forgiveness for your sins (p. 33).

[Notice that it is clear that the information provided in the second part of the paragraph above is all taken from Campbell (2011).]

**Example #7: Properly Acknowledging the Source of Paraphrased Material**

In his presentation entitled, “Take Captive Every Thought,” Campbell (n.d.) argues that our role as Christian counselors is to bring people to a “knowledge of the truth” (Slide 5). He asserts that most people have learned to believe the “lies” (Slide 1) that the world teaches them. He believes that the role of the counselor is to “identify irrational beliefs” (or lies) (Slide 2), challenge these “toxic beliefs,” (Slide 2), and help the individual in counseling “replace false beliefs with biblical truths” (Slide 2). In the final analysis, Campbell (n.d.) believes that the truth will “set the client free” (Slide 5).

[It is clear in the paragraph above that all of the information that is included in the paragraph was based on information provided by Campbell (n.d.). Actually, this information was taken from a PowerPoint presentation that appears on the internet.]

23. **Summarizing:** In addition to directly quoting the source, or paraphrasing the source, you can also summarize the original material. Summarizing can be thought of as “a short, concise, form of paraphrasing (Harvard Graduate School of Education n.d., Module 2, Slide 10). When summarizing the author’s work, you must accurately reflect the meaning of what the author is trying to say, while at the same time “using your own words and your own sentence structure” (Harvard Graduate School of Education n.d., Module 2, Slide 10). Material that is summarized requires a properly formatted citation.
24. **Secondary Sources:** When the author you are reading includes information from some other source, this is referred to as a “secondary source.” In some instances, you may decide that you want to include information from the secondary source in your own paper. If you do so, APA (2010) recommends that you “use secondary sources sparingly” (p. 178).

Rather than quote secondary sources, authorities (Mcadoo, 2010) recommend that you locate the original source whenever possible. In instances where the secondary source is out-of-date or unavailable, then you use the following method to properly cite the secondary source.

When providing an in-text citation for the secondary source, you start by naming the secondary source. Then give a citation for the secondary source, using “as cited in”—which makes reference to the paper, article, book, etc. where the secondary source was included.

**Example #8: How to Cite a Secondary Source**

In his emails, Johnson (as cited in Campbell (2015), describes many problems that could block eternal salvation.

In your list of references at the end of your paper, you would simply list the Campbell (2015) reference.

25. **You are not Required to Cite “Common Knowledge”:** You don’t need to provide an in-text citation for information that most people would consider to be “common knowledge.” However, deciding whether or not the assertion/statement you are making is “commonly known by most people” is not always easy. When in doubt, provide a citation.

**Example #9: Common Knowledge**

Christians believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God. (No citation required)

**Additional Forms of Plagiarism**

26. **Purchasing a Paper:** If you purchase a paper on the internet or some other source, and submit it “as an original”), this constitutes intentional plagiarism (LUHC, n.d., p. 2).

27. **Downloading a Paper from the Internet:** If you download a paper from the internet and then submit it as your own, you are committing intentional plagiarism (PWWI, n.d., Slide 13).

28. **Turning in Someone Else’s Paper:** If you replicate “another person’s work or parts thereof,” and then submit it as an original, you are committing plagiarism (LUHC, n.d., p. 2).
29. **Using Other People’s Thoughts or Ideas**: If you read something that one of your fellow students wrote (e.g., in a discussion board post), or something that your professor said or wrote, and try to pass it off as your own (without properly citing the source), then you are committing plagiarism (PWWI, n.d., Slide #15).

30. **Hidden Plagiarism**: Getting another student, professional, or family member, to re-write your paper, and then submitting it as your own work, would constitute plagiarism (PWWI, n.d., Slide #15). In general, “DO NOT let a classmate, spouse, or friend rewrite your papers under any circumstances” (PWWI, n.d., Slide #15).

31. **Using Background Sources**: If you use the internet for background information (encyclopedias, Wikipedia, reviews, etc.), you must cite the source to avoid plagiarism (PWWI, n.d., Slide #14).

32. **Self-Plagiarism (Multiple Submissions)**: You are committing “academic fraud” (LUHC, n.d., p. 2) if you use a paper you wrote for another class (or, for another academic institution) and submit it for a current course assignment. Slightly altering the original paper and then resubmitting it is also considered to be fraudulent (LUHC, n.d., p. 2). Sometimes a professor may allow a student--who has sought prior permission--to “complete one assignment for two classes” (LUHC, n.d., p. 2). In these instances, prior permission must be sought “from both instructors” (LUHC, n.d., p. 2).
How to Avoid Plagiarism  
(Brian Campbell, Ph.D., 2015)

1. To avoid plagiarism, you must give proper credit to any words or ideas that you directly quote, paraphrase, or summarize from another source.
2. After you write a sentence, ask yourself, “Was that idea/thought entirely my own, or is it based on something I read somewhere else?” If it is not entirely your own, you must provide a citation.
3. If you copy information “word-for-word” from another source, put the words you copied in quotation marks and provide a properly formatted in-text citation that includes the author, date of publication, and the page (or paragraph) where the quoted material can be found.
4. Use direct quotations sparingly. Using too many direct quotations weakens your paper.
5. There are special rules that must be followed if your direct quotation is longer than 40 words.
6. Paraphrasing refers to taking something someone else wrote and putting it in your own words. You can paraphrase both words and ideas.
7. If you paraphrase any ideas from another source, provide an in-text citation.
8. If you summarize information from another source, provide an in-text citation.
9. If you utilize background information from another source, provide an in-text citation.
10. The rules for properly formatting citations are complex, and depend on the source that you are citing. There are different rules for every source, such as: books, journal articles, PowerPoint presentations, lectures, articles on the web, videos on the web, etc.
11. All citations must be formatted according to APA guidelines (Chapter 6, “Crediting Sources”).
12. Every in-text citation must have a corresponding reference in the “Reference” section that appears at the end of your paper.
13. The formatting of references is complex; all formatting must comply with APA guidelines (Chapter 7, “Reference Examples”).
14. The purpose of in-text citations and end-of-paper “References” is to give credit to the work of others and to help the reader locate the information on which you based your statement and/or assertion.
15. Never purchase a paper from the internet or some other source and submit it as your own.
16. Never copy a paper from another source, change a few words or sentences, and then submit it as your own.
17. Never allow another class member, family member, or friend to write your paper for you and submit it as your own.
18. Never submit a paper you have written previously for another class without first discussing the situation with your professor.
References


Additional Resources:

Mages, Wendy. (n.d.). APA exposed. Everything you always wanted to know about APA formatting but were afraid to ask. Retrieved from: [http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=apa_exposed](http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=apa_exposed)