

Methods of Writing Research Papers

A Lecture by: Prof. Ziyad Ahmed Dahaam

University of Tikrit

College of Arts

Department of Translation

3rd Stage

Lecture Nine

Plagiarism and How to Avoid It

Intellectual property has value; hence, there are ethical standards for writing in an academic environment. By studying examples of careful documentation as well as plagiarism, we can discover the worst and best of research projects and citing borrowed material. Moreover, we must face the constant problem of the Internet, which makes it easy to copy and download material and paste it into a paper. Plagiarism is defined as the act of claiming the words or ideas of another person as your own. Plagiarism is a serious violation of the ethical standards of academic writing, and most colleges and universities have strict penalties, including academic probation or expulsion, for students who are guilty of plagiarism. Most schools publish an official code of student conduct (sometimes called an academic integrity policy), and you should be familiar with these guidelines and how they apply to your research and writing. Students who knowingly copy whole passages from outside sources into their work without documentation are committing the most blatant form of plagiarism. Unintentional plagiarism, however, is still a violation of academic integrity. Unacknowledged use of another person's sentences, phrases, or terminology is plagiarism, so provide a citation and use quotation marks to show exactly where you are drawing on others' work. Similarly, unacknowledged use of another person's ideas, research, or approach is also plagiarism, so write careful paraphrases.

Using Sources to Enhance Your Credibility

Research is something you need to share, not hide. What some students fail to realize is that citing a source in their papers, even the short ones, signals something special and positive to your readers—that you have researched the topic, explored the literature about it, and have the talent to share it. Research writing exercises your critical thinking and your ability to collect ideas. You will discuss not only the subject matter, such as the degradation of prairie soil resources, but also the literature of the topic, such as articles from the Internet and current periodicals found at your library's databases. By announcing clearly the name of a source, you reveal the scope of your reading and thus your credibility.

Placing Your Work in Its Proper Context

Your sources will reflect all kinds of special interests, even biases, so you need to position them within your paper as reliable sources. If you must use a biased or questionable source, tell your readers up front. For example, if you are writing about the dangers of cigarette smoke, you will find different opinions in a farmer's magazine, a health and fitness magazine, and a trade journal sponsored by a tobacco company. You owe it to your readers to scrutinize Internet sites closely and examine printed articles for:

- a) Special interests that might colour the report
- b) Lack of credentials
- c) An unsponsored website
- d) Opinionated speculation, especially that found on blogs and in chat rooms
- e) Trade magazines that promote special interests
- f) Extremely liberal or extremely conservative positions