

CHRISTENDOM GRADUATE SCHOOL

PLAGIARISM: WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO AVOID IT

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas, expressions, organizational structure, or other information, without due acknowledgment, in work presented as your own. It can be the actual copying of another's words without quotation marks, or the failure to acknowledge the source of your ideas or information. Plagiarism thus gives the impression that the words or ideas are original to you when they are not. Plagiarism is a form of cheating or stealing, against the law, and a serious academic offence. Consequences for plagiarism range from a grade of zero on the assignment or an F in the course, to dismissal from the school. Here are some things to keep in mind to avoid plagiarism:

1. Any use of another's words (whether a sentence, phrase, or even a few words) must be placed within quotation marks and acknowledged by a footnote citing the source.
2. Footnotes are NOT just for quotes, however: they must be used to acknowledge any ideas or facts that are not generally known. Even if the idea or argument is expressed completely in your own words, you still need to give credit to the original source of the idea or information. Thus, every paragraph of a paper will normally have at least one footnote showing where the information was found, unless it is a purely introductory, conclusional, summarizing, or transitional paragraph, or one that consists entirely of your own original ideas.
3. To take another's sentence and change it slightly is still plagiarism, even with a footnote, if you do not use quote marks around the author's exact words. If you take another's paragraph and change each sentence a bit but otherwise keep the paragraph the same, this is also plagiarism. You must write the paper in your own words and with your own original organizational structure.
4. Even extensive "borrowing" from your own previous papers might be considered self-plagiarism – if you want to build on previous research you have done, check with your professor to see how much of this he will permit.

The most effective way to avoid plagiarism is to keep your research phase separate from your writing phase. It is impossible not to plagiarize when you are writing your paper directly from your sources, whether these are books & articles spread around the table or internet sources. Set aside time to do proper research: reading the materials, taking notes in your own words, noting down the sources of the ideas so that later you can properly cite, and putting in quotes any words of the author you include in your notes. Then make an outline of your paper, deciding the order in which you will present your argument & ideas. Then put away the books & other sources, and write the paper in your words, according to your outline and using your notes. Make sure you have at least one footnote per paragraph, as appropriate, and make sure you check your footnotes and bibliographic entries for proper format.

Here are some sources to help you research & write papers, properly cite your sources, and avoid plagiarism:

The Research Paper (video), available on the Graduate School Resource Center:
<http://www.christendom.edu/graduate/resources.php> under "important links."

Footnote and Bibliographic Form for Christendom Papers (video), available on the Graduate School Resource Center:
<http://www.christendom.edu/graduate/resources.php> under "important links."

"Footnote Information" document available on the Graduate School Resource Center:
<http://www.christendom.edu/graduate/resources.php> under "information."

PLAGIARISM dot ORG website: www.plagiarism.org

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Latest edition.