

Summarising, Paraphrasing and Avoiding Plagiarism

After completing this workshop you will:

- Explain the importance of using your own words in your essay writing, except when quoting directly from a source you have punctuated and referenced correctly.
- Apply your understanding of paraphrasing and summarising to short texts.
- Distinguish, through an analysis of short texts, the difference between plagiarised and non-plagiarised texts.
- Know what plagiarism is, know how to avoid it, and how to improve your academic writing using *Safe Assignment*.
- Know how to access workshops and online resources to help develop your academic writing skills.

www.jcu.edu.au/studyskills

1. Why do you need to use other people's work?

One of the most important learning and assessment tools at university is the writing of essays. These essays differ from the essays you wrote at school. Firstly, they are written in an academic style, and secondly, the content is often a synthesis of ideas you have collected from a wide variety of readings. Using the work of experts and researchers in various disciplines is a large part of our university study. Your lecturers want to see that you have been reading widely and well on your topic. So you will use other people's work to:

- **Get information**

Published work contains useful facts and ideas. Use this knowledge to formulate ideas and opinions that in turn will help you to produce your own written work.

- **Show that you have done the reading you were supposed to do**

Very often, your subject outlines will have a list of readings that you need to do in order to write a particular assignment.

- **Demonstrate that you have read widely on the topic**

You need to show that you have used a range of *authoritative* sources.

- **Set up an argument**

You might use someone else's idea in order to disagree with it, or as a springboard for your own argument. You are expected to provide evidence to support your points.

2. How can you incorporate the work of others?

- **Use quotations**

Quotations must be identical to the original document. You must use quotation marks. Don't use too many very long quotes. You must cite the source and the page(s).

- **Paraphrase**

When you paraphrase, you rewrite information from an outside source in your own words without changing the meaning. Because you include nearly all of the original content in your version, a paraphrase can be almost as long as the original. Whenever you paraphrase, put the other person's thoughts entirely into your own words. To avoid plagiarism when paraphrasing, read the passage, think about it, and write it in your own words and use your own sentence structure. Then compare your version to the original. Your version should contain the same information as you found in the source, and it should not change the author's meaning. You must cite the source.

- **Summarise**

Another way to use borrowed information from an outside source is to summarise it. A summary uses only the most important points and leaves out the details. It is also written in your own words but is shorter than the original. Often the topic sentence of a paragraph is a good summary. A summary is about a third to a quarter length of the original text.

Example of the difference between a Paraphrase and a Summary

Original Passage (85 words)

Language is the main means of communication between peoples. But so many different languages have developed that language has often been a barrier rather than an aid to

understanding among peoples. For many years, people have dreamed of setting up an international universal language which all people could speak and understand. The arguments in favor of a universal language are simple and obvious. If all peoples spoke the same tongue, cultural and economic ties might be much closer, and good will might increase between countries (Kispert, 2000).

Paraphrase (63 words, about the same length as the original)

Humans communicate through language. Because there are so many different languages, however, people around the world have a difficult time understanding one another. Some people have wished for a universal international language that speakers all over the world could understand. Their reasons are straightforward and clear. A universal language would build cultural and economic bonds. It would also create better feelings among countries (Kispert, 2000).

Summary (28 words, much shorter)

People communicate through language; however, having different languages creates communication barriers. A universal language could bring countries together culturally and economically as well as increase good feelings among them (Kispert, 2000).

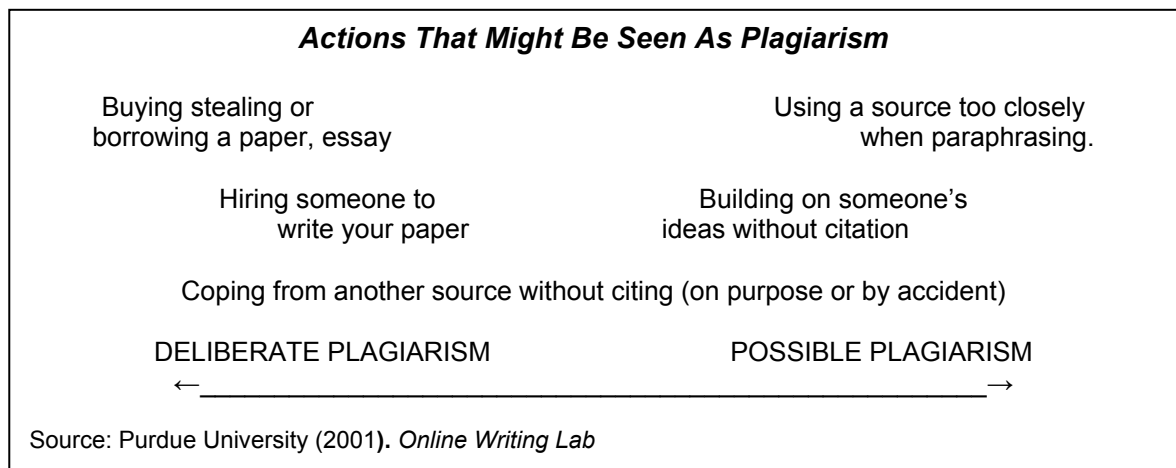
3. What is plagiarism?

When you consult multiple sources, learning a little from each one, it is possible to forget to record the sources as you go along. It is likely that you may not always acknowledge where the ideas come from or you may forget to cite or reference sources properly. This results in what is called **PLAGIARISM**.

Because it is sometimes difficult to improve on what a professional writer says, the writer's words can end up in the essay, presentation, or project, either quoted extensively, or with a few words changed to avoid direct quotes. This is also plagiarism.

When students ask friends to let them use their previous essays, this can lead to copying someone else's work. Some end up with bad information from poor sources, or, worse yet, copy and paste from Internet sites. This is also plagiarism.

To sum up then, plagiarism is taking ideas, or even graphs and pictures, and reproducing them in your own essay in a way that might make others think that it is your own work. In other words, plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as your own without acknowledgement.



4. How can you avoid plagiarism ?

It is possible to use other people's work and ideas without plagiarising. You cannot avoid plagiarism simply by putting in a reference here and there.

To avoid plagiarism

- Acknowledge another person's ideas, opinions, or theories.
- Acknowledge any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings or any pieces of information that are not common knowledge.
- Acknowledge quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words.
- Acknowledge paraphrases of another person's spoken or written words.
- Learn to summarise effectively.

These actions can lead to plagiarism

- Copy and paste complete papers from electronic sources.
- Copy and paste passages from electronic sources without placing the passages in quotes and properly citing the source.
- Others writing complete papers or portions of papers for you.
- Summarize ideas without citing their source.
- Pull out quotes from sources without putting quotation marks around the passages
- Poor paraphrasing - not putting the information in your own words (even if it's cited).
- Quote statistics without naming the source unless you gathered the data yourself.
- Use words and passages you don't understand and can't explain.
- Self-plagiarise - use one assignment for more than one class without the permission of your lecturers, or not cite another one of your assignments as a source.
- Make up sources, bibliographic or citation information (page numbers, etc.).
- Use photographs, video, or audio without permission or acknowledgment.
- Translate from one language to another without properly citing the original source.
- copying computer programs or other technical information without acknowledgment
- Fail to acknowledge sources of oral presentation, slides, or Web projects.
- Fail to acknowledge sources of elements of nonverbal work: painting, dance, musical composition, mathematical proof.

Activity 1.

Paraphrase the following passage

In fact, after 1870 the food and the eating habits of the British people began to be transformed. They began, for instance, to eat fruit, previously a luxury. To begin with working class fruit consumption took the form of jam; later also of the novel and imported banana, which supplemented or replaced apples as the only fresh fruit eaten by the urban poor. Even so characteristic a landmark of the British proletarian scene as the fish-and-chip shop first appears in this period. It spread outwards from its original home, in probably Oldham, after 1870. (Hobsbawn, 1990 p.162-3)

Compare your answer to the five that follow. Which student answer matches yours most closely? Do any answers constitute plagiarism?

Student Answers

STUDENT 1

Even so characteristic a landmark of the British proletarian scene as the fish-and-chip shop first appears in the period after 1870. Its original home was probably Oldham.

STUDENT 2

There were many changes in the British diet in the period after 1870. Fruit became more common, especially in the form of fruit jam. Even the fish-and-chip shop dates from the same period (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 162).

STUDENT 3

There were many changes in the British diet after 1870. Hobsbawm points out that the British people 'began, for instance, to eat fruit, previously a luxury', and goes on to describe other new developments as well. (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 162).

STUDENT 4

In fact, after 1870 the food and the eating habits of the British people began to be transformed. They began, for instance, to eat fruit, previously a luxury. To begin with, working-class fruit consumption took the form of jam; later also of the novel and imported banana, which supplemented or replaced apples. (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 162).

STUDENT 5

The period around and after 1870 saw many changes in British life and culture. Hobsbawm (1990, p. 162) describes changes and improvements in diet, including an increase in the consumption of fruit and the arrival on the scene of the fish-and-chip shop. Far from being a timeless traditional part of British life, the fish-and-chip shop was a product of these years of change at the end of the nineteenth century. Many aspects of Britain which are sometimes thought to be very old were similar innovations of this period (Coils & Dodd, 1987, p. 56).

Which of the above constitute plagiarism? Did yours?

STUDENT 1

Even so characteristic a landmark of the British proletarian scene as the fish-and-chip shop first appears in the period after 1870. Its original home was probably Oldham.

Is it plagiarism? Yes. This student has mainly just copied Hobsbawm 's words. Most importantly, there is no reference to the source

STUDENT 2

There were many changes in the British diet in the period after 1870. Fruit became

more common, especially in the form of fruit jam. Even the fish-and-chip shop dates from the same period (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 162).

Is it plagiarism? No. This student has paraphrased part of Hobsbawm's original accurately, and has included a reference to the source.

STUDENT 3

There were many changes in the British diet after 1870. Hobsbawm points out that the British people 'began, for instance, to eat fruit, previously a luxury', and goes on to describe other new developments as well. (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 162).

Is it plagiarism? No. It's quoting directly, rather than paraphrasing as Example 2 did, but it includes a reference. As long as there's a reference, quoting and paraphrasing are both OK.

STUDENT 4

In fact, after 1870 the food and the eating habits of the British people began to be transformed. They began, for instance, to eat fruit, previously a luxury, To begin with, working-class fruit consumption took the form of jam; later also of the novel and imported banana, which supplemented or replaced apples. (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 162).

Is it plagiarism? Yes, it is, though it isn't as bad as Example 1. There is a reference, but there is no attempt to do anything with the material apart from copy it, and it isn't clear whether the words are quoted, paraphrased, or, as here, simply stolen,

STUDENT 5

The period around and after 1870 saw many changes in British life and culture. Hobsbawm (1990, pp162-3) describes changes and improvements in diet, including an increase in the consumption of fruit and the arrival on the scene of the fish-and-chip shop. Far from being a timeless traditional part of British life, the fish-and-chip shop was a product of these years of change at the end of the nineteenth century. Many aspects of Britain which are sometimes thought to be very old were similar innovations of this period (Coils & Dodd, 1987, p. 56).

Is it plagiarism? No. It has a reference, and provides an accurate paraphrase. More than that, it uses the Hobsbawm material to start an argument of its own, about supposedly ancient things actually being quite recent, Better still, it has another reference, to show that this essay is the product of wide reading. Example 5 is part of a good essay. .

Source: Benckendorff, P. (2004). *The Endeavour: A quality learning manual for students*. Townsville: School of Business, James Cook University.

5. How can you check your assignments for plagiarism?

- Read through your assignment carefully ensuring that all the required in-text referencing has been done.
- Check your reference list and make sure that you have included all sources that you used in your text.
- Use *Safe Assignment*.

6. How can you improve your academic writing skills?

It is important that you recognize that the skills required to paraphrase, summarise and avoid plagiarism form part of a wide range of academic writing skills that are introduced and developed by your lecturers in their lectures, tutorials and course materials. Subject outlines and assessment guidelines often contain valuable subject specific information, most of which should be available on LearnJCU.

Learning Advisers also provide workshops throughout study periods as well as extensive online resources. The resources on referencing are particularly important. The best place to find out about Learning Adviser workshops and online resources is at the Language and Learning Skills (Study Skills) Web site:

www.jcu.edu.au/studyskills

7. Improving your writing skills by using Safe Assignment

Universities have developed software that can assist you to improve your academic writing skills and prevent plagiarism. JCU uses *Safe Assignment*. By learning to use this software correctly you (and your lecturers) will be able to identify potential problems with the way information has been referenced.

The online resources at the Web site above contain information about *Safe Assignment*. Alternatively, when you log on to LearnJCU you will find links to 'fast guides' about using LearnJCU and *Safe Assignment*.

8. Conclusion

Finally, it is very important that your writing is not composed solely of material from texts and articles. Tutors want to see how you have reviewed the literature on the topic and formed your own structure for your piece of writing, based on the body of knowledge or literature in the field. When information from texts or articles is used to support your response to the topic, it is most important that the sources of references used are acknowledged. There can be serious consequences if this does not occur. A guiding principle is that if words or ideas are taken from a source and used in writing, the source must be acknowledged.

Materials in this resource adapted from:

- Anders, D. (2005) *Teaching and Learning Development Workshop Notes: Summarising and Paraphrasing*. Cairns: James Cook University.
- American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*. (5th ed.). Washington: APA.
- Arnaudet, M.L. & Barrett, M.E. (1984). *Approaches to academic reading and writing*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
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- Marshall, L & Rowland, F (1998). *Guide to learning independently*. (3rd ed) Melbourne: Longman
- Purdue University (2001). *Online Writing Lab*. Retrieved February 6th, 2006 from owl.english.purdue.edu/

