

Avoiding Plagiarism



Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism occurs when writers include ideas that are not their own without giving credit to the original authors. Plagiarism may be either intentional or unintentional. To avoid plagiarizing, always cite any material that is not your own.

Plagiarism includes

- Copying and pasting text from a website or document without introducing its source
- Mentioning an idea without connecting it to the source
- Paraphrasing, summarizing, or quoting text without crediting the original author
- Using statistics, research, or graphics that are not common knowledge without citing the source
- Slightly altering text and using it in your writing without giving credit to the author

Common knowledge is information that can easily be found in a wide variety of resources (i.e., historical dates). Ideas, interpretations of facts, and research, however, always need to be cited.

Making reference to other authors builds your credibility as an author. You will show your readers that you are familiar with what others have said about your topic and allow them to locate your sources.

How do I avoid plagiarism?

- Take time to make note of sources when taking notes and cutting and pasting from the Internet. Include the author, title of work, and page numbers along with pertinent publication information.
- Put direct quotes in quotation marks, use the same wording as the original quote, and convey the meaning intended by the author.
- Place paraphrases and summaries in your own words, cite them, and be true to the author's ideas.
- Always include an accurate Works Cited/References/Bibliography page.

Summarizing and Paraphrasing

Summaries condense large amounts of text into a much shorter space. For example, you might summarize an entire article in a couple of sentences. Summaries generally provide context for the reader.

Paraphrases are generally about the same length (or even longer) than the original text. When paraphrasing, you put a paragraph or sentence into your own words, perhaps to clarify technical language for the reader or to emphasize the author's implication.

Many students are not aware that like direct quotations, summaries and paraphrases also require citations. (Information for citing direct quotes is available on our MLA, APA, and Turabian style guides.)

When summarizing or paraphrasing, include

- The author or organization's name
- The page number (if the information comes from a specific page or pages)
- The title of the document or website (if necessary for clarity)

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The following examples demonstrate correct and plagiarized summaries and paraphrases from the same text.

Original text

Teaching Sociology reminds us in each issue that sociology instructors need not follow the traditional teaching model of lecturing to a captive audience. Fiction, film, and music are popular cultural media that have been suggested as means for establishing links between sociology and the “real world” outside our classrooms (Laz 1996; Loewen 1991; Martinez 1995; Pescosolido 1990). Given the visibility of comic book characters in American culture, it is surprising that more sociologists have not looked to comic books as another resource for teaching.

Hall, Kelley J., and Betsy Lucal. “Tapping into Parallel Universes: Using Superhero Comic Books in Sociology Courses.” *Teaching Sociology* 27 (1999): 60-66. Print.

Good Summary

Hall and Lucal suggest that since sociology teachers often use movies and music in the classroom, they might also begin to use comic books to connect ideas from sociology to the outside world (60).

- Contains core information, but in the student’s own words
- Authors and page number are clearly given

Plagiarized Summary

Instructors are reminded that they **need not follow the traditional teaching model of lecturing to a captive audience** and instead can learn how to use popular media such as comic books as teaching tools **to link sociology to the real world outside the classroom**.

- Too much language taken directly from the original source
- No mention of authors or page number

Good Paraphrase of a Sentence

Hall and Lucal suggest that sociologists capitalize on the prominence of comic book characters by increasing their use of comic books in the classroom (60).

- Maintains the idea and relative length of the original, but in the student’s own words
- Includes author names and page number

Plagiarized Paraphrase of a Sentence

Even with **the visibility of comic book characters** in US society, many sociologists **surprisingly have not looked to comic books as another resource for teaching**.

- Wording that is too similar to the original text
- No reference to the authors or article