

## How to avoid plagiarism

**Always cite your sources.** If you get anything from an external source—a quote, a picture, a table, a diagram, an idea, or a fact—describe where you got it. Make sure the source is described accurately, specifically, and thoroughly enough so that someone else can easily find it based on your citation alone. The full citation can be put at the end of your paper or in a footnote, but somehow include a reference to the citation in the text itself, so that it's clear exactly what things came from each source.

**Use several sources.** The idea of (secondary) academic research is to take facts, opinions, concepts, and conclusions from several different sources and combine them into a new creation. Find a few sources, read what they say, and then mix them together: interpret, compare, analyze, contrast, refine, explain, critique, and summarize them, and synthesize everything into a coherent whole. To simply restate what is said in a single source is to miss the point of research.

**Don't write from your sources directly.** Read your sources and make notes about what is being said (don't copy sentences—restate things in your own words). Keep track of which things came from which source. Set everything aside and come back to it the next day. Write your paper based only on your notes, to avoid the temptation to copy phrases and sentences from the source. If you can restate ideas in different words a second time when writing your paper, all the better. Reread the original sources only if it's really necessary to clarify a particular point.

**Consider alternative ways to structure your paper.** Think about the order in which ideas are presented in your sources and examine whether a different structure might suit your paper. Can you present these ideas in a different order? Can you collect ideas from different parts of your sources and present them together in your paper? As far as is practical, resist the temptation to copy the structure of your sources.

**Write your own introduction and conclusion.** Once you've figured out which ideas you're going to present in your paper and the way in which you're going to present them, you can start to think about an appropriate introduction and conclusion for your paper. The introduction and conclusion should be your own work, tying together the ideas in your paper and emphasizing your key points.

**Use direct quotations sparingly.** Word-for-word quotations (which should always be enclosed in double quotation marks) are fine for short, memorable statements or to present a particular excerpt from a source for analysis or criticism. However, if a sentence is simply stating a fact, write it in your own words.

**Invent your own examples.** If an example would make your paper clearer (and they often do), come up with the example yourself. Similarly, if a picture or diagram would help to explain things, try to draw it yourself if possible rather than copying it from somewhere else. This has the added benefit of showing that you thoroughly understand the ideas you're presenting.