What it takes to avoid plagiarism

Sandra H Petersson
January 2020
The Academic Support Centre (ASC)
www.lunduniversity.lu.se/academic-support
Academic writing

How would you define it?
What characterizes academic writing?
What skills do you need?
What challenges are involved?
You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it’s about….You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you….The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

-Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*
Academic writing

- Engaging with others
- Building on established discussion
- Agreeing and disagreeing
- Leaving discussion open
- Having your own argument
What is plagiarism?
2012 policy says...

“Plagiarism is a lack of independence in the design and/or wording of academic work presented by a student compared to the level of independence required by the educational context.”
2012 policy says...

“Deceitful plagiarism is a lack of independence combined with an intent on the part of the student to present the work of others as his or her own.”
Remember...

The **goal** of academic writing is not to avoid plagiarism.

The **goal** is to ask an original question and answer it, to make a claim about a topic, discuss that claim with and in relation to others and through that discussion to advance research and thinking in your field.
In order to accomplish that **goal**, you have to first be able to do some other things successfully. And it just so happens that if you can do those things, you will avoid plagiarizing altogether.
In order to accomplish that goal, you have to first be able to do some other things successfully. And it just so happens that if you can do those things, you will avoid plagiarizing altogether.
read

to understand the whole source & to reflect on it

• What type of text is this and what do I need from it?
• What is the purpose of this text and how does each part contribute to that purpose?
• What conversation is this author engaged (why and how do they use sources)?
• What is the author’s argument (claim, reasons, evidence), and the underlying assumptions behind it?
• How does this text reflect writing norms in my field?
When taking notes, don’t focus only on the text’s sentence level. Research shows that sentence-mining is too common among current students.
incorporate sources

why?
incorporate sources

why?

They say...

...I say
Readers need to be able to follow the conversation, to see who is speaking when
incorporate sources

why?

The source...
• gives a definition
• explains a context
• provides evidence for something
• provides a counterargument to engage with
• is text that you will analyze
• others?
incorporate sources

How?

- Summarize
- Paraphrase
- Quote

Example: (Marantelli, 1980, p. 175)
Acknowledgment of source use - both in-text and in a reference list. Harvard, MLA, APA, Chicago, Vancouver...

• Summarize
• Paraphrase
• Quote
incorporate sources

- Summarize
- Paraphrase
- Quote

Reference

Reporting verbs
Marantelli observes...
Spelke argues...
Wilson notes...
Gates confirms...
Dweck claims...
Lee suggests...
incorporate sources

- Summarize
- Paraphrase
- Quote

Focuses on main ideas in the text as a whole

Reference
The debate about Whorf’s ideas has, until now, been mostly conducted in the context of the psycholinguistic empirical research tradition which grew out of anthropological inquiry into the relationships between the language and other aspects of culture in the 1940s and 1950s.


**Summary**

Lee (1999, p. 27) claims that the understanding of Whorf’s work derived from research in language and culture in the 1940s and 1950s.
incorporate sources

• Summarize
• Paraphrase
• Quote

Rewording of a sentence-level detail in a source’s text
The problem of obedience is not wholly psychological. The form and shape of society and the way it is developing have much to do with it. There was a time, perhaps, when people were able to give a fully human response to any situation because they were fully absorbed in it as human beings. But as soon as there was a division of labor things changed.


Paraphrase
Milgram (1974) claims that people's willingness to obey authority figures cannot be explained by psychological factors alone, but also includes social factors. In an earlier era, people may have had the ability to invest in social situations to a greater extent. However, as society has become increasingly structured by a division of labor, people have become more alienated from situations over which they do not have control (p.737).
The problem of obedience is not wholly psychological. The form and shape of society and the way it is developing have much to do with it. There was a time, perhaps, when people were able to give a fully human response to any situation because they were fully absorbed in it as human beings. But as soon as there was a division of labor things changed.

**Original**


**Paraphrase**

People's willingness to obey authority figures cannot be explained by psychological factors alone, but also includes social factors. In an earlier era, people may have had the ability to invest in social situations to a greater extent. However, as society has become increasingly structured by a division of labor, people have become more alienated from situations over which they do not have control (Milgram, 1974, p.737).
Tip!

A proper paraphrase uses less than 20% of source’s language. More than 20% and you are at risk for **patchwriting**, a form of plagiarism.
Table 5.2 Sample From Source Text and Student Paper

| Student text (page 6 of paper)                                                                 | Source text (page 2 of source)                                                                 |
|                                                                                                | A keyword search using the terms “cannabis, 1996” (the year California voters became the first of 14 states to allow for the drug’s medical use under state law) reveals just 258 scientific journal articles published on the subject during that year. Perform this same search for the year 2008, and one will find over 2,100 published scientific studies. |
| Evidence of a jump in interest can be seen in a jump from 258 journal articles that were published in 1996 on the subject of cannabis, to over 2,100 studies that were published in scientific journals in 2008 (Recent Research on Medicinal Marijuana). |
| Most importantly, investigators are now studying the anti-cancer properties of cannabinoids. There is an increasing amount of preclinical and clinical data that conclude that cannabinoids stop the spreading of specific cancer cells through programmed cell death and the prevention of the forming of new blood vessels (Recent Research on Medicinal Marijuana). |
| Investigators are also studying the anti-cancer activities of cannabis, as a growing body of preclinical and clinical data concludes that cannabinoids can reduce the spread of specific cancer cells via apoptosis (programmed cell death) and by the inhibition of angiogenesis (the formation of new blood vessels). |

Paraphrasing strategies

• Put away the original
• Use a combination of strategies:
  1. Use synonyms
  2. Use different parts of speech
  3. Change the order of ideas
  4. Break long sentences into shorter ones or combine shorter sentences into longer ones
  5. Make abstract ideas concrete

The more strategies you use simultaneously, the better!
Paraphrasing strategies

1. Use synonyms
   • think about → mull over
   • huge impacts → great effects
   • standard process → usual steps

**Challenge with this strategy:** not all synonyms are equal!

If you’re in doubt, look up the synonym in a dictionary and find examples of it used in other sentences.
Paraphrasing strategies

1. Use synonyms

2. Use different parts of speech
   - Marx’s ideas → Marxist ideas (noun → adjective)
   - had an impact → impacted (noun → verb)
   - Lee conducted a study → _____?_____ (noun → verb)
1. Use synonyms
2. Use different parts of speech
3. Change the order of ideas
   • Effects of climate change include ______ and ______
   → Climate change has caused ______ and ______
   → _____ and ____ are results of climate change.

Reminder: just this change will not yield a successful paraphrase, but it’s one of several to use at the same time!
1. Use synonyms
2. Use different parts of speech
3. Change the order of ideas
4. Break long sentences into shorter ones or combine shorter sentences into longer ones
4. Break long sentences into shorter ones or combine shorter sentences into longer ones

• “This article proposes a feminist reinterpretation of just war theory as the revitalization that just war theory needs. It explains this feminist just war theory based on relational autonomy, political marginality, empathy, and care. It introduces some feminist ‘standards’ for considering the morality of war.” (Sjoberg abstract) 

• Sjoberg (2008) revises just war theory through a feminist lens, using “relational autonomy, political marginality, empathy, and care” to propose moral guidelines of war. (quote + paraphrase)
Paraphrasing strategies

1. Use synonyms
2. Use different parts of speech
3. Change the order of ideas
4. Break long sentences into shorter ones or combine shorter sentences into longer ones
5. Make abstract ideas concrete
   • The data are inconclusive on the superiority of either mode of measurement.
   → Neither method A nor method B measured ______ better than the other.
incorporate sources

• Summarize
• Paraphrase
• Quote

Source’s exact words and punctuation in quotation marks.
Summarize and paraphrase more than quote directly.
Tip!

Ask a librarian at SOL or LUX about looking for sources and referencing systems!
The two most important legal systems in the Western World today are the English Common Law and the Roman Civil Law. Countries such as Australia and the United States have inherited the Common Law.

The two most important legal systems in the Western World today are the English Common Law and the Roman Civil Law. Countries such as Australia and the United States have inherited the Common Law.

The two most important legal systems in the Western World today are the English Common Law and the Roman Civil Law. Countries such as Australia and the United States have inherited the Common Law.

The two most important legal systems in the Western World today are the English Common Law and the Roman Civil Law. Countries such as Australia and the United States have inherited the Common Law.


Student’s:

The two most important legal systems in the Western World today are the English Common Law and the Roman Civil Law. The impact of these systems on a number of first-world countries around the world has been considerable. According to Brennan and Marantelli, “countries such as Australia and the United States have inherited the Common Law” (Brennan and Marantelli, 1980, p. 175).
The two most important legal systems in the Western World today are the English Common Law and the Roman Civil Law. Countries such as Australia and the United States have inherited the Common Law. According to Brennan and Marantelli, “countries such as Australia and the United States have inherited the Common Law” (Brennan and Marantelli, 1980, p. 175).
The two most important legal systems in the Western World today are the English Common Law and the Roman Civil Law. Countries such as Australia and the United States have inherited the Common Law.

The two most important legal systems in the Western World today are the English Common Law and the Roman Civil Law. Countries such as Australia and the United States have inherited the Common Law.

Tip!

Plagiarism is often easily detectable by shifts in language quality. **It’s better to use your own words with grammatical mistakes** than take text without mistakes as your own. Plagiarism is a much worse offense than poor grammar.
Resources

The Harvard Guide to Source Use
http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do

Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism Quiz
Cornell University, College of Arts and Sciences
https://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/exercises/questions.cfm

They Say/I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing
By Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein

AWELU
http://awelu.srv.lu.se/
Take away message

• Source use must be **transparent** to the reader

• The source must **serve a function**

• **Summarize** and **paraphrase** more than you **quote**

• **Always give a reference** when using a source

• **Use available resources**: SOL and Lux librarians, The ASC, useful links