



GRADUATE SCHOOL

## Plagiarism and How to Avoid It

Richard A. Redner  
Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies  
Professor of Mathematics

John M. Bury  
Assistant Dean of the Graduate School  
Director of Graduate Student Enrollment Management

## Definitions of Plagiarism

**PLAGIARISM** - To use someone else's words or ideas and claim them as your own.

*(International Student Services Dictionary of Academic Terms)*

**PLAGIARISM** - To take and use another person's ideas, concepts, language, statistics, graphs, or drawings without giving proper credit.

*(Thompson and Williams, 1995)*

The failure to acknowledge unique, unusual, or new ideas and facts not the product of one's own investigation or creativity is plagiarism. When it doubt... seek guidance...

*(University of Tulsa Student Handbook)*

- The Graduate School may dismiss a student “for failure to maintain the standards of academic, ethical, or professional integrity expected in a particular discipline or program.”

*(Graduate Bulletin 2010-2012, p. 22)*

- TU uses software (TurnItIn.com) to help catch plagiarists.
- The internet can be a great resource, but anything that you copy from it to include in your own work **MUST** be attributed to its source and include quotation marks.

## Avoiding Plagiarism

**Exact copying** is to be enclosed in **quotation marks** with appropriate citations indicating the origin of the quotation.

**Paraphrasing** should capture the spirit and intent of another author’s language in your own words with appropriate citations.

## The Consequences of Plagiarism

- Plagiarism discovered while the student is still in school may result in a failing grade for an assignment or a course and may lead to dismissal from the University.
- Even when plagiarism is discovered after a student graduates, it can have far-reaching consequences, **possibly leading to public embarrassment, the loss of degrees, or the loss of professional licenses, credentials, and privileges.**
- The negative consequences resulting from an act of plagiarism can be **invoked at any time after the actual act (no statute of limitations).**

## Obvious Acts of Plagiarism

*(Wilhoit, 1994: Love and Simmons, 1998)*

- Deliberate deception: intentional misrepresentation.
- Submitting a paper purchased from some source.
- Submitting another student's work either **with or without** the student's knowledge.
- Submitting a paper with parts copied from a source text without proper acknowledgment of the copied parts.
- Submission of a paper to more than one class or academic journal (self-plagiarism or misconduct).
- Collaboration when explicitly not allowed.

## Non – Obvious Acts of Plagiarism

*(Wilhoit, 1994: Love and Simmons, 1998)*

- Submitting a paper with parts copied from a source, acknowledging the source by reference, but lacking the use of quotation marks.
- Submitting a paper that has material paraphrased from a source, but lacking reference to the source.
- Careless documentation, often resulting from hasty or careless proofreading.

## You are Susceptible to Plagiarize IF

*(Wilhoit, 1994: Love and Simmons, 1998)*

- Do not have time to properly finish a task (poor time management and planning)
- Not prepared for a course
- Don't know the style or citation rules for your discipline
- Past training did not discourage plagiarism
- Susceptible to peer pressure

## Aids to preventing plagiarism

(*Wilhoit, 1994: Love and Simmons, 1998*)

- Be respectful of your intellectual community
- Adequate time to research and write a paper
- Good pre-writing and writing skills (from notes to final draft)
- Sound understanding of your sources
- Practice in application of the rules of quotation, paraphrasing, and referencing
- Ask faculty when you have questions

## Quotation and Citation

(*Standler 2000*)

When using someone else's words, you must:

1. Enclose their words in quotation marks (or possibly indent the text)

**AND**

2. Provide a citation (usually a reference in the text AND a bibliographic entry).

If you use someone else's ideas, graphs, data, programs etc. then proper reference must be given.

*Avoiding plagiarism is really about giving credit for ideas. Sometime ideas are expressed in words (then we use quotes when we use them). But often ideas are expressed formulas, data, charts etc. All of these instances must be clearly referenced.*

## Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is an attempt to capture the spirit and intent of another author's language **in your own words**.

- It is not sufficient to just replace a few words.
- It is not appropriate to state ideas in the same order.
- It is not sufficient to reorder the words.

## Paraphrasing

1. To paraphrase, one must internalize what you have read ( you must understand it ).
2. Then you must restate it in your own words.
3. Even then, you will need a citation.

### **The first two steps are difficult.**

The first step is difficult unless you are well trained and give yourself enough time.

The second step is difficult unless you are good with language.

## Helpful Hints

- Avoid using “copy and paste” to write papers and documents. This can quickly lead to poor paraphrasing, unintended quotation without proper reference, and confusion.
- Keep good notes on where ideas, text, etc. come from, including relevant conversations with students and faculty.
- Manage your time.
- Let the faculty help you!

## Hints cont.

- Know or ask about the “common knowledge” in your discipline.
- When you use a citation, make sure that it is clear which words or ideas are being cited. (Keep your citations as near to the referenced material as possible.)

**\*\*Good writing includes both quotation and paraphrase and an understanding of when it is best to use each.\*\***

## Scenarios and Example

The first two examples are from

Social Sciences Research and Instructional Council  
Teaching Resources Depository  
Other Teaching Tools  
Plagiarism by Earl Babbie

<http://www.csubak.edu/ssric/Modules/Other/plagiarism.html>

# Absolute Objectivity

## **Original text**

It has become fashionable to reject the notion of absolute objectivity on the grounds that objectivity is simply unattainable or, even if attainable, is undesirable.

## **Modified text**

I feel it has become fashionable to reject the notion of absolute objectivity on the grounds that objectivity is simply unattainable.

## **Original text**

It has become fashionable to reject the notion of absolute objectivity on the grounds that objectivity is simply unattainable or, even if attainable, is undesirable.

## **Modified text**

Many people today have rejected the idea that there is such a thing as absolute objectivity since they do not believe that it can be achieved.

### **Original text**

It has become fashionable to reject the notion of absolute objectivity on the grounds that objectivity is simply unattainable or, even if attainable, is undesirable.

### **Modified text**

Lisa Staffen (1996:154) begins her review of Porter's book by suggesting "It has become fashionable to reject the notion of absolute objectivity on the grounds that objectivity is simply unattainable or, even if attainable, is undesirable."

Bibliography: Lisa R. Staffen, "Featured Essays," *Contemporary Sociology*, March, 1996, Vol. 25, No., 2, pp. 154-156.

### **Original text**

It has become fashionable to reject the notion of absolute objectivity on the grounds that objectivity is simply unattainable or, even if attainable, is undesirable.

### **Modified text**

In her review of Porter's book, Lisa Staffen (1996:154) says the ideas of absolute objectivity is now commonly rejected as "simply unattainable or, even if attainable, [as] undesirable."

Bibliography: Lisa R. Staffen, "Featured Essays," *Contemporary Sociology*, March, 1996, Vol. 25, No., 2, pp. 154-156.

Virginia Tech English Department Webpage  
<http://www.english.vt.edu/~IDLE/plagiarism/plagiarism3.html>

### **Original text**

The association between humans and dogs began as a hunting relationship before organized agriculture had been developed. This Paleolithic cave painting dates back to about ten thousand years ago and shows a Stone Age hunter who has successfully killed an eland with the assistance of his dogs.

### **Modified text**

Dogs have been "man's best friend" since long before recorded history. The association between humans and dogs began as a hunting relationship before organized agriculture had been developed. One Paleolithic cave painting dates back to about ten thousand years ago and shows a Stone Age hunter who has successfully killed an eland with the assistance of his dogs.

### **Original text**

The association between humans and dogs began as a hunting relationship before organized agriculture had been developed. This Paleolithic cave painting dates back to about ten thousand years ago and shows a Stone Age hunter who has successfully killed an eland with the assistance of his dogs.

### **Modified text**

Dogs have been "man's best friend" since long before recorded history. The relationship between dogs and humans started as a hunting relationship before people developed organized agriculture. One cave painting that dates back about ten thousand years shows a Paleolithic hunter who has killed an eland with the help of his dogs.

### **Original text**

The association between humans and dogs began as a hunting relationship before organized agriculture had been developed. This Paleolithic cave painting dates back to about ten thousand years ago and shows a Stone Age hunter who has successfully killed an eland with the assistance of his dogs.

### **Modified text**

Dogs have been "man's best friend" since long before recorded history. Dogs and humans first got together as hunters. Cave paintings provide some evidence for this early teamwork. One 10,000-year-old painting shows a Paleolithic hunter and his two dogs after they have killed an eland.

### **Modified text**

- Some experts think that dogs have been companions for humans at least since our earliest records. According to University of British Columbia Professor of Psychology Stanley Coren, dogs and humans first teamed up as hunters. In his book *The Intelligence of Dogs: Canine Consciousness and Capabilities*, Coren includes one cave painting that dates back about ten thousand years and shows "a Stone Age hunter who has successfully killed an eland with the assistance of his dogs" (Plate 2).

## A Math Example

### Original text

Fermat's last theorem states that the equation  $x^n + y^n = z^n$  has no positive integer solutions when  $n$  is greater than 2.

### Modified text

It was recently proven that the equation  $x^n + y^n = z^n$  has no positive integer solutions when  $n$  is greater than 2.

### Or

It was recently proven that for  $n$  greater than 2 that the equation  $x^n + y^n = z^n$  has no positive integer solutions.

## Another Math Example

### Original Text

The number  $\pi$  is approximately equal to 3.14159 and this value was used in our computation.

### Modified text

We estimated  $\pi$  to be 3.14159 and used this value in our computation.

## Table, graphs and charts

### Comments

- If you Xerox a table, graph or chart you must give a reference to the object that you copied. You may also have copyright issues to deal with.
- If you use the data from a table, graph or chart, you should reference the use of that data.

## Computer Programs & Spreadsheets

- Copying a program or spreadsheet and presenting it as your own.
- Copying a program or spreadsheet, modifying it and then presenting the work as your own.
- Suppose that you take a copy of a program and then extract the main idea. From this you write a new program.
- Suppose that you have a copy of a spreadsheet and you see how it was put together and then use this to make your own spreadsheet.

## Homework scenarios

1. Alice completes her homework and Bob has not done his. He borrows Alice's homework right before class and copies the solutions and hands it in with his name on it.
2. Alice completes her homework earlier and loans it to Bob the night before the assignment is due. After studying her solutions, Bob writes up his homework.
3. Catherine and John work together on their homework. John solves one of the problems and Catherine copies it onto her homework sheet to hand in.

## Homework scenarios cont.

4. Catherine and John work together on their homework. After solving one of the problems they both make a copy of it to hand in.
5. Catherine and John work together on their homework. After figuring out how to solve a problem, they independently write up their solutions in their own words. Catherine notes on her homework that she worked with John on that problem.

## Scenario

Students are assigned as part of a team to write an ethical code of conduct. A student immediately begins researching corporate codes of conduct online. The student finds that most codes are similar, and copies and pastes one from the website of a local, well-known company.

**Is this acceptable? Why?**

## Scenario

A student is writing a thesis after completing all coursework and research. The student realizes that the notes taken from background references have an accurate listing of the sources, but the student cannot distinguish which notes are quoted from the sources, which are paraphrased, and which are ideas or insights obtained about the student's research from having read that source.

**What should the student do?**