Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using someone else's ideas or information and presenting them as one's own. This information sheet describes different types of plagiarism. It also describes how you can avoid plagiarism by properly crediting all the sources that contribute to your research papers.

Types of Plagiarism:

- The natures of some forms of plagiarism are obvious. It is unethical to turn in a paper or deliver a speech that you bought off the Internet, paid someone to write for you, copied from a book in the library, copied off the internet, or got from a friend. When someone steals an entire project from one source, it's what Stephen Lucas (2001) has called *global plagiarism.*

- However, there are other types of plagiarism that you should be aware of and on guard against. *Patchwork plagiarism* is when someone edits together two or more different sources and presents the result as his or her own work. The resulting paper or speech is a "patchwork" of others' ideas (Lucas, 2001). <u>Finding and editing together other information does not constitute authorship</u>. So, if you "construct" your paper or speech by cutting and pasting together paragraphs and sentences from several different sources and do not acknowledge each and every source, it counts as plagiarism.

  Always acknowledge the original author when you use someone else's words or ideas, no matter how long or how short the passage you are borrowing from may be. Furthermore, the structure and organization of the work should be yours. You should decide what the main points are and how they should be linked together. Even if you're writing a research paper or giving a speech that reports on information gathered by others, the overall effect should be a unique reflection of your perspective of the topic.

- Finally, there's *incremental plagiarism*. This is when the bulk of the project is yours and the organization is yours, but passages or bits of information have been taken from others' work without being acknowledged. A reader or listener has no way of knowing where these bits came from or that they were not your original ideas (Lucas, 2001). <u>It is also plagiarism if you incorporate small bits of people's ideas, works, or information into a project without crediting them.</u>

  Again, please make sure you acknowledge each of the sources that contributed to your work.

Acknowledging Sources:

O'Hair, Stewart, and Rubinstein (2001) suggest that you should credit the original author when you use:

- direct quotations – you are using someone else's words
- paraphrased information – you are repeating someone else's ideas in different words
- statistics,
- any unique information that was not collected by you personally.

"Unique information" means information that you can only find one place. You do not have to cite the source of information that can be found in any standard reference book. However, if it's new information (for example, a study that's just been published or information that has just been updated) or if it is information that only one person or group or organization had originally, you should acknowledge the source. Citing your sources for this type of information not only gives the originator of the information credit for their work, it enhances your credibility as a writer or speech maker. Also acknowledge the source if the information represents a point of contention or something people disagree about.

For information about how you acknowledge sources in public speeches, you should consult your textbook or your instructor. You are expected to tell briefly your listeners where the language or ideas that you borrowed for your speech come from.

The principle of acknowledging sources in written work is that you should always provide enough information to tell your readers where your information came from and how they can locate it themselves. This means that you do not only identify the original author or authors of the works you are citing, but also include information such as the date of publication, title of the work, publisher, and, in the case of direct quotations, the original page or paragraph number. This additional information allows the reader to track down the original source.

Although this principle is the same across all fields, the format through which this is done varies from one field to another. Social sciences, like communication, generally use a format developed by the American Psychological Association, called APA style. This is the format that you are encouraged to use for most of the papers you will write in communication courses.

There are two parts to citing sources.

1) The first part is *in-text citations*. In-text citations are labels that are inserted next to each piece of information that comes from another source. In APA style, the in-text citation is made up of the year the original source was published and the name or names of the author(s).

2) The second part is the *works cited* or *reference list*. This is an alphabetized list of all the sources that are cited in the paper. It is attached to the end of the paper. The list contains not only the author's name and the publication date, but also information like the book or article title and the publisher. It should include all the information that a reader needs to find the original source. Webpages should also be included in this list (and you need to provide more than just the URL to cite them properly.)

The idea is that readers who want to follow up on a piece of information they read in your paper can use the in-text citation to find the appropriate entry in the reference list. The reference list, in turn, would allow them to find the original book, article, or webpage. There are specific rules about the type of information that is put into a reference list for different types of sources and about how this information is formatted. A few examples are provided in the works cited list at the end of this information sheet. More information is available in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001) or the APA format information sheet provided on

the class webpage. The rest of this information sheet focuses on in-text citations. Please remember, however, that you need both in-text citations and a reference list to cite your sources properly.

How to acknowledge a source if you are re-stating someone else's ideas in your own words:
If you are summarizing or re-stating someone else's ideas in your own words, it is called *paraphrasing* (Lucas, 2001). Keep in mind that paraphrasing is more than switching out the occasional word for another word that means the same thing. If you paraphrase a passage you are essentially rewriting it from scratch. If you cannot find a way paraphrase something efficiently, you should quote and acknowledge the original author (see below).

If you are paraphrasing or summarizing someone else's ideas, you can cite the source in the text of the paper by mentioning the name of the original author (or authors) and, if it is appropriate to the flow of the sentence, the title of the publication. Include the year of the publication in parentheses after the author's name. For example:

> According to Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1994) the effect of television on audience members'
>
> perceptions of crime is cumulative. The more one watches, the more one's view of the world will match the
>
> violent patterns of representation of television.

If you do not mention the authors' name in the sentence, you can put it in parentheses after the paraphrase or summary. After the paraphrase or piece of information that you are using, include the name of the author, a comma, and then the year of the publication within a set of parentheses.

> Some critics of cultivation theory argue that it fails to take into account the fact that audiences select what they
>
> watch (Potter, 1993).

If the author is an organization, you would treat the source in essentially the same way.

How to acknowledge a source if you are using someone else's exact words: If use the same words as the original author it is called a *direct quotation* and you must communicate this to your readers. If you are using another person's words, but fail to indicate that you are doing so, it counts as plagiarism even if you include a parenthetical reference at the end of the passage. It is considered to be "stealing" someone else's prose.

Of course, there are some combinations of words such as "such as" and "it is" that turn up over and over again almost any passage of English. We all use them, without necessarily stealing them from each other. However, distinctive combinations of words - and phrases and sentences should be considered distinctive combinations of words – should be considered unique creations of their writers and those writers should always be given credit for them. As a rule of thumb, whenever you are using more than five of another writer's words in the same order as that writer, you should consider it a direct quote and acknowledge the original writer. To acknowledge the writer, you need to use either quotation marks or a block quote. The length of the quotation determines which one is appropriate. Both forms require that you provide the reader with the

original author's name, the year of publication, and place in the original manuscript where the quotation originally appeared.

If your quotation is 40 words or less, the other person's words should be enclosed in quotation marks and integrated into the rest of your paragraph. If you mention the author's name when you introduce the quote, you should follow it with the year of publication in parentheses. If the date on which the information was posted is unavailable, you should indicate this by using the abbreviation "n.d." (for "no date") where the year would otherwise go. Then, at the end of your quotation, you should insert the number of the page on which the words originally appeared in parentheses and preceded by "p." If the quotation runs across more than one page in the original source, insert the page range preceded by "pp.".

> Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1994) argue that the kinds of television programs an individual
>
> chooses to watch are ultimately irrelevant because the images of television programming are uniform: "…the
>
> pattern of settings, casting, social typing, actions, and related outcomes…cuts across program types and viewing
>
> modes and defines the world of television. Viewers are born into that symbolic world and cannot avoid
>
> exposure to its recurrent patterns…" (p. 20).

Use the paragraph number if you are quoting from an electronic text like a webpage that does not have page numbers. Sometimes paragraph numbers are noted in the margins of electronic texts. If your source does not include paragraph numbers, count down from the top of the page to figure out what paragraph the passage you are quoting from is in. The first paragraph from the top is paragraph 1. The second paragraph from the top is paragraph 2 and so on. In in-text citations, paragraph numbers are preceded by the paragraph symbol (¶). You can get most word processors to produce this symbol by clicking on "insert" and then "symbol" in the drop-down box.

> Arbitron and Nielsen, who are working together to launch Project Apollo, describe the project on its website as
>
> a "national marketing research service that collects multimedia and purchase information from a common
>
> sample of consumers in order to measure the return on investment for marketing efforts" (¶ 2).

If you do not mention the author's name in the introductory sentence, it should be added along with the year to the parentheses at the end of your quotation.

> This type of reality program represents one of the most popular and influential of the programming category.
>
> *Survivor* has been said to represent "the 'classic' format of the current generation of reality TV" (Andrejevic,
>
> 2004, p. 195).

If your quotation is more than 40 words, it should be presented in the form of a *block quotation*. That is, the quotation is formatted as its own paragraph. Each line of this paragraph is indented five spaces. The page number, along with the author's name and the publication year if they

haven't been mentioned in the introductory sentence, should be included at the very end of the block quote.

> Although audience members can differ in their evaluations of film characters, there are conventions that communicate to the audience what their response to particular characters should be. Noel Carroll (1995) argues that that one of these conventions is the way characters are shown to treat others.
>
>> Quite frequently in mass fictions, characters are designated as morally good in virtue of their treatment of supporting characters, especially ones who are poor, old, weak, lame, oppressed, unprotected women, children, helpless animals, and so on. Good characters typically treat such people with courtesy and respect, whereas your standard snarling villain, if he notices them at all, usually does so in order to abuse them – to harass the woman sexually, to taunt the child, to kick the dog, or worse. (p. 79)
>
> According to the principle Carroll describes, a brief scene in which a character is shown behaving kindly toward a panhandler would function communicate to most of the audience that the character is good.

Note that no quotation marks are needed if you are using a block quotation. However, whenever you use someone else's words, you need use one of these formats - either the quotation marks or a block quotation - to indicate that the words are not your own.

Again, please remember that no matter what kind of in-text citation you use, you must also include the entire bibliographic citation (author, title, publication date, page numbers, publisher, and so forth) of all the sources you've used in a reference list attached to the end of your paper. For information about formatting your reference list, see the fifth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001).

References

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