



Academic Center

Tutoring and Testing at UHV.

Plagiarism Supplement to the APA Quick Guide

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the use of information (words, sentences, and/or ideas *and* even the structure of sentences and/or ideas) from another source that is not properly credited. Plagiarism may be unintentional and may occur even if a source is credited but is done so improperly.

Why should I be concerned about plagiarism?

All plagiarism, even if unintentional, can result in serious consequences. The *UHV Student Handbook* (2001-2002) * indicates, “students who are trying conscientiously to learn and to demonstrate what they know need not worry about academic dishonesty and should feel free to use any assistance available in advancing their knowledge. Education and scholarly research depend, after all, upon shared assistance. On the other hand, no one should claim credit for the work of others, misrepresent or misappropriate the work of others, or try to gain unfair advantage over others” (p. 17). Essentially, plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty with disciplinary actions ranging from a reduced grade for the assignment or course to expulsion.

The *UHV Student Handbook* further indicates, “students also have a responsibility to fulfill, and indeed an investment to protect, in helping to ensure that academic achievement is characterized by honesty and fair play” (p. 17). Remember, it is your responsibility to be conscientious about avoiding plagiarism.

*More information about academic dishonesty is available in the *UHV Student Handbook*.

What needs to be cited?

Robert Harris (2002), in *Using Sources Effectively*, provides a list of what you would need to cite. He indicates,

you must cite someone else’s words you quote, words you summarize, words you paraphrase, idea (interpretation, opinion, conclusion), data, graph, photograph, drawing, table of information, experiment, example, unique concept, apt phrase, expression of common knowledge, solution to a problem, speech, video source (film, TV program), [and] the structure or sequencing of facts, ideas. or arguments. (p. 18)

Harris’ list, though not extensive, shows that plagiarism may involve not only the ‘borrowing’ of words or sentences but also tables and graphics.

Harris, R. (2002). *Using sources effectively: Strengthening your writing and avoiding plagiarism*. Los Angeles: Pycszak Publishing.



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What is common knowledge?

Above, Harris mentions that you have to cite an “expression of common knowledge.” You may or may not have to cite common knowledge (which Harris explains later in his chapter).

Common knowledge may consist of commonly known dates and factual information (i.e. the Alamo fell on March 6, 1836, to Santa Anna; or the chemical composition of water is H₂O) or common sayings like proverbs or clichés (i.e. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; or strike while the iron is hot.).

Common knowledge also may exist when you and your reader(s) share the same perspective. For example, if you’re writing a research report on the Victoria, Texas, Public School System and your audience is the citizens of Victoria, you probably wouldn’t need to cite that Victoria is in the coastal bend region or that Victoria has a consolidated school district. On the other hand, if you live in North Dakota and are writing a research paper on consolidated school districts, you may need to cite information that lists the school districts in Texas that are consolidated.

You *will* need to cite *opinions* related to the facts. It may be a well-known fact that the Alamo fell on March 6, 1836, and that in Victoria the school district is consolidated, but you will need to cite someone’s opinion or interpretation of those facts. Also, your sources may present both opinion and factual information. Because that factual information is part of an opinion, you will need to cite the source.

If in doubt, cite the source.

What are some strategies to avoid plagiarism?

Attention to detail will help you avoid plagiarism.

1. Take careful notes when you research and clearly document whether you’ve directly quoted, paraphrased, or summarized the material in your notes.
2. Keep photocopies of each source for easy reference.
3. Borrow from the source correctly. (The handout titled “How to Decide when to Quote” may be helpful in borrowing from the source correctly.)
4. Credit the source of any ideas, whether directly quoted, paraphrased, or summarized in your paper. For information on how to cite your sources, please consult the proper manual. The Academic Center offers an APA Quick Guide and an MLA Quick Guide, and, while these guides are not comprehensive in nature, they do answer basic questions about documentation. (The Academic Center handout titled “How to Signal the Use of a Source” may be helpful also.)
5. Make sure all cited information has an entry in your bibliography or works cited page.
6. Give an adequate signal to your reader to show you are using someone else’s words. (For more information on signaling, please pick up a copy of the “Signal the Use of a Source” handout.)
7. Review your paper and consider your use of documentation carefully.

Remember that it’s your responsibility to avoid plagiarism. If in doubt, cite it.



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