

# HOW TO GUARD AGAINST PLAGIARISM

## Guidelines for University Writing

Writing at the university level frequently requires students to integrate work written by other authors. Your class assignments will ask you to read, understand, refer to, and restate the words of others as a means of learning about and participating in formal scholarly conversation. It is of utmost importance that you learn to use references ethically and in accordance with the conventions of scholarly work. Your attention to the following guidelines will help protect your writing against possible accusations of plagiarism. You are responsible for reading and understanding the following material. Proficiency comes from your practice with these guidelines.

### ☞ THREE RULES FOR INCORPORATING SOURCES IN YOUR WRITING ☞

- 1 Always present an author's actual words within quotation marks and accompanied by a full and accurate citation.
- 2 Always paraphrase thoroughly by reshaping the original in accordance with your own vocabulary, syntax, and sentence rhythm. Paraphrases must be accompanied by a full and accurate citation.
- 3 Always preserve the context or intent of the original source.

These three rules are discussed in detail below. The source text, by David and Foray, and the full citation follow. MLA (Modern Language Association) style is used for all examples.

### SOURCE TEXT

The sudden wild passion for private property in the realm of knowledge creation has given rise to a rather paradoxical situation (Foray 1999). The technological conditions (codification and low-cost transmission) may be right for individuals to be able to enjoy instant and unfettered access to new knowledge, but a proliferation of intellectual property rights prevent access to such knowledge in hitherto protected areas (basic research in general, life science, software). (18-19)

David, Paul A., and Dominique Foray. "An Introduction to the Economy of the Knowledge Society." International Social Science Journal 171 (2002): 9-37.



✓ **RULE 1** Always enclose an author's actual words within quotation marks and include a full and accurate citation: Copying entire or partial texts without adding both quotation marks and full citation is plagiarism.

**Example A:** Although, on the one hand, current technological conditions seem to be right for individuals to gain immediate and free access to new knowledge, claims of intellectual property rights impede that access (David and Foray 18-19).

(Full, accurate citation added at the end of the paper.)

Although the original source is cited, example A is plagiarized for two reasons. First, the writing contains exact language from the original that is not placed within quotation marks. The exact quotes are treated correctly below in Example B; however, the passage is awkward, and it is still plagiarized, as explained below.

**Example B:** Although on the one hand, current “technological conditions” seem to “be right for individuals” to gain immediate and free “access to new knowledge,” claims “of intellectual property rights” impede that “access” (David and Foray 18-19).

**Warning:** Example B is not considered a well-written passage. A professor might justifiably question the use of these particular quotes, as they seem both indiscriminately “plucked” from the original and inelegantly incorporated into the writing. Sentences that appear this “patched” are usually in need of revision. The quotation marks would, however, protect the copied words against a claim of plagiarism. Nevertheless, simply adding quotation marks will not solve the problem. Example B is still plagiarized.



✓ **RULE 2 Always paraphrase by thoroughly reshaping the original in accordance with your own vocabulary, syntax, and sentence rhythm. Paraphrases require full and accurate citations.** To paraphrase means to restate a text in your own words; this requires that you rewrite the original text *in a significantly new way*. Inadequate paraphrases may include sentence patterns close to those of the source and/or synonyms of words found in the original. Below, examples of synonyms of original terms are placed in bold type.

**Example C:** Although on the one hand, current “technological conditions” seem to “be right for individuals” to gain **immediate and free** “access to new knowledge,” claims of “intellectual property rights” **impede** that “access” (David and Foray 18-19).

The writer has inserted the words “immediate and free” for “instant and unfettered” and the word “impede” for “prevent.” These words are too close to those in the original. Furthermore, the sentence pattern is very similar to that of the source text, thus, the writing is plagiarized.

**Example D:** As David and Foray write, “technological conditions” allow “instant and unfettered access” to information, but legal maneuvers to protect “intellectual property rights” work against these freedoms (18-19).

This example is not plagiarized, but it is graceless. The writer has chosen a number of phrases from the original and strung them together with her own words.

**Example E:** David and Foray suggest that legal claims regarding the ownership of ideas conflict with expectations of “instant and unfettered access” to information (18-19).

This example is better. Here the writer has used one interesting and original phrase from the source text and has incorporated it into a sentence that maintains some sense of the original; however, the structure and phrasing are the writer's own.

As you practice paraphrasing and citing sources, you will probably find that the number of words you place in quotations will decrease as your own language begins to take precedence in your writing. This is a sign that both your thinking process and your writing are becoming more sophisticated.



✓**RULE 3 Work to preserve the intent and context of a source.** Notice the following example, taken from the original.

**Example F:** David and Foray note a contradiction between the “sudden wild passion” for the ownership of ideas and the simultaneous explosion of publicly available information (18-19).

In the original, the section quoted here is followed by “(Foray 1999)”; this citation indicates that David and Foray are referring to an earlier article written by Foray (maybe the same Foray, maybe not). The Foray 1999 article is the “primary” or “direct” source. The David and Foray 2002 article is the “secondary” or “indirect” source. Without studying the earlier article, it is difficult to know whether example F preserves the context and intent of the primary source. *Example F may be considered plagiarism by some professors.*

**Example G:** David and Foray, referring to a 1999 article by Foray, note contradiction between the “sudden wild passion” for the ownership of ideas and the simultaneous explosion publicly available information (18-19).

If your professor allows you to use sources, this may be acceptable. If your professor indicates ‘no secondary or indirect sources,’ you must read the original Foray 1999 text, quote (or paraphrase) it, and cite that article in your writing.



**Your professors are the best resources for information about specific writing assignments. Be sure to thoroughly discuss with them their expectations about the assignments you receive. Some questions you might ask:**

- May I write in first person?
- Do I need to use a specific font or margin?
- Do I need to use outside sources in my writing?
- How many sources do I need to include?
- How recent must my sources be?
- May I use internet sources?
- Is there a limit to the number of internet sources I may include?
- How should I evaluate internet sources?
- Are there types of internet sources I should avoid?
- What is a writing style guide?
- What referencing style should I use American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago, etc?
- May I use secondary sources?
- If I use secondary sources, how should I cite them?
- Do you require copies of my sources when I submit my paper?
- May I submit my paper via email?