

Avoiding Plagiarism: A Few Thoughts and Resources

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Some Causes of Plagiarism

- Rare: attempt to deceive
- Probably more common: cross-cultural differences in what is acceptable
- Probably most common: ignorance or carelessness—
for example:
 - Uncertainty what constitutes plagiarism
 - Attempts to compensate for language difficulties
 - Carelessness in recording sources
 - Carelessness in wording
 - Carelessness in citation

What's Plagiarism?

- Presenting others' work as your own
- Examples
 - Presenting someone else's paper as one's own
 - Using others' ideas without citing the source
 - Using others' wording without showing that it is being quoted
 - Using others' figures or tables without citing the source (and, if required, obtaining permission)

Detectors of Plagiarism

- People: mentors, peer reviewers, editors, et al
- Plagiarism detection software
 - Identifies text that overlaps considerably with text elsewhere
 - Doesn't prove plagiarism; rather, identifies text to evaluate for *possible* plagiarism
 - Used by some journals
 - Used by some authors before submission (to detect inadvertent plagiarism)

Note

- For very common types of content, wording is not necessarily expected to be original. Examples:
 - We randomly assigned the patients to 3 groups.
 - This difference was not statistically significant.
 - Our findings have several policy implications.
- Distinctive wording must be either paraphrased or quoted. Examples:
 - “Leave your shyness behind when you accompany a poster.” (Day and Gastel, 2011)
 - “The best part of an oral presentation is often the question-and-answer period.” (Day and Gastel, 2011)

Some Tips on Avoiding Plagiarism

- Carefully record all sources.
- In general, avoid pasting items from elsewhere into your manuscript, even if you plan to reword them.
- Remember to cite sources. If in doubt, cite. It's easier for a journal to remove a citation than to know to request one.
- In general, paraphrase. [See next slide.]
- If you quote material, both (1) cite the source and (2) use quotation marks or indentation to show that it's a quotation.

Paraphrasing

- Definition: using your own words to present content from elsewhere
- Note: changing a word here and there isn't paraphrasing.
- A good practice: Know your source material well, and rough-draft each section without looking at it. Then check your draft against the sources for accuracy.
- If you're not sure of the English word to use, leave a blank or write the desired word in another language; then revise later.

Some AuthorAID Blog Posts with Links to Resources on Plagiarism

- [“Avoiding Plagiarism: Principles and Resources”](#)
- [“Avoiding Plagiarism: A Resource”](#) (about a tutorial from Indiana University)
- [“Guest Post: Some University-Based Websites on Plagiarism”](#)
- [“A Resource on Paraphrasing Properly”](#)
- [“A Video on Avoiding Accidental Plagiarism”](#)

