

# Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional imitation that someone else's thoughts, words, or research findings are your own. You must always give credit to the people whose ideas or words you are using.

## Why Should I Avoid Plagiarism?

How would you feel if someone tried to pass your hard work off as their own? We can show respect for a writer's contributions by giving credit to original work.

Proper citation creates a roadmap that your reader can use to find more information on a topic. Imagine that you are reading a fascinating paper on a subject of great importance to you — wouldn't it be handy to have a list of resources that provide more detailed information?

## What Are The Consequences of Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is defined as academic dishonesty in the "Code of Student Conduct." Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action, and instructors are well within their rights to push for student expulsion. The disciplinary procedures for academic dishonesty are described in Section 5.36 of the Code, which can be found on the SHSU website.

## Inadvertent Plagiarism

Inadvertent plagiarism occurs when a student commits one of the following careless mistakes:

They quote, paraphrase, or summarize a source without proper citation.

They adopt someone else's methods or ideas without proper citation.

They use the exact words from a source — and provide citation — but fail to put those words in quotation marks.

They paraphrase a source — and provide citation — but the paraphrase is too similar to the original document.

## Tips to Help You Avoid Plagiarism

Cite the source of every quotation, paraphrase, or summary. If you are unsure how to cite, consult the style guide requested by your instructor or consult the Academic Success Center handouts for the specified citation style.

Do not paraphrase too closely.

Cite any ideas or methods that are not your own.

When in doubt, cite.

Signal every quotation with quotation marks, even when you cite its source. Your reader needs to know exactly which words are not yours.

Think about it this way: if the person you borrowed from read your report, would she recognize your work — including paraphrases, summaries, and general ideas or methods — as her own?

Citations are rarely needed for common knowledge if: you are confident your readers already know the information and/or the information could easily be found by *anyone* with general reference sources. Remember: what is common knowledge to you might not be common knowledge to your reader.