



University of Chicago Plagiarism Guidelines

I. University policy on academic honesty

From the Student Manual of University Policies and Regulations:

As students and faculty of the University of Chicago, we belong to an academic community with high scholarly standards of which we are justly proud. Our community also holds certain fundamental ethical principles to which we are deeply committed. We believe it is contrary to justice, to academic integrity, and to the spirit of intellectual inquiry to submit the statements or ideas of work of others as one's own. To do so is plagiarism or cheating, offenses punishable under the University's disciplinary system. Because these offenses undercut the distinctive moral and intellectual character of the University, we take them very seriously and punishments for them may range up to permanent expulsion from the University.

Proper acknowledgment of another's ideas is expected, whether that use is by direct quotation or by paraphrase, however loose. In particular, if any written source is consulted and material is used from that source, directly or indirectly, the source should be identified by author, title, and page number. Any doubts about what constitutes "use" should be addressed to the instructor.

II. Some advice on plagiarism and paraphrase

From Joe Williams and Larry McEnerney, "Writing in College," in *Engaging the Humanities at the University of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 206-207.

When you want to use the exact words you find in a source, stop and think. Then, type a quotation mark before and after, or create a block quotation; record the words exactly as they are in the source (if you change anything use square brackets and ellipses to indicate changes); cite the source.

Those are the first three principles of using the words of others: unambiguously indicate where the words of your source begin and end, get the words right (or indicate changes), and cite the source. Omit the first or last step, and intentionally or not, you plagiarize. You also plagiarize when you use someone else's ideas and you do not credit that person.

It is trickier to define plagiarism when you summarize and paraphrase. They are not the same, but they blend so seamlessly that you may not even be aware when you are drifting from summary into paraphrase, then across the line into plagiarism. No matter your intention, close paraphrase may count as plagiarism, even when you cite the source.

For example, this next paragraph plagiarizes the last one, because it paraphrases it so closely:

It is harder to describe plagiarism when summary and paraphrase are involved, because while they differ, their boundaries blur, and a writer may not know that she has crossed the boundary from summary to paraphrase and from paraphrase to plagiarism. Regardless of intention, a close paraphrase is plagiarism, even when the source is cited.



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This is borderline plagiarism:

Because it is difficult to distinguish the border between summary and paraphrase, a writer can drift dangerously close to plagiarism without knowing it, even when the writer cites a source and never meant to plagiarize.

The words in both these versions track the original so closely that any reader would recognize that the writer could have written them only while simultaneously reading the original. Here is a summary of that paragraph, just this side of the border:

According to Williams and McEnerney, writers sometimes plagiarize unconsciously because they think they are summarizing, when in fact they are closely paraphrasing, an act that counts as plagiarism, even when done unintentionally and sources are cited (Williams and McEnerney, "Writing in College," p. 206).

Here is a simple test for inadvertent plagiarism: be conscious of where your eyes are as you put words on paper or on a screen. If your eyes are on your source at the same moment your fingers are flying across the keyboard, you risk doing something that weeks, months, even years later could result in your public humiliation. Whenever you use a source extensively, compare your page with the original. If you think someone could run her finger along your sentences and find synonyms or synonymous phrases for words in the original in roughly the same order, try again. You are least likely to plagiarize inadvertently if as you write, you keep your eyes not on your source, but on the screen or on your own page, and you report what your source has to say after those words have filtered through your own understanding of them.