



Addressing Plagiarism in Different Academic Contexts

Plagiarism is a common and serious concern in academic settings. It is defined as “when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its sources” (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2003). Plagiarism can be directly copying someone else's words and ideas, or it can be incorporating information without giving credit to the sources. This resource will provide some additional context into what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

Plagiarism in the United States

Compared to other cultures, American settings deem plagiarism to be unethical; by taking the words of others, you are stealing someone else's intellectual thoughts where no original credit can be given. American academic settings have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism, as it is considered a form of cheating and academic dishonesty. Students who engage in plagiarism may receive a zero on the assignment, may fail the class, or may face expulsion.

American plagiarism norms are different from other cultures. In other countries, for example, using someone's work without a citation is a way of honoring them. Because of this, many international students, especially those whose native language is not English, struggle with academic integrity rules that are common in American colleges and universities (Campbell, 2017). When international students come to America, the variety of styles and rules for citations can be a world of differences from their own.

How to Identify When You Are Using Someone Else's Work

Knowing whether or not you are steering clear of plagiarism can be a difficult task. You will know if you need to acknowledge a source:

- When the original idea or information is not your own, or is influenced by an outside source (an article, book, website, speech, etc.).
- When using a direct or paraphrased quote from another person or resource.
- When researching specific information, like data or facts, related to your topics or ideas.
- When replicating pictures, graphs, tables, or images that are not your own.
- When using information gathered from news outlets or other video sources.



The ability to identify plagiarism is crucial within American colleges and universities. It is important for international students to become familiar with a variety of sources, such as articles, websites, and textbooks. On top of knowing how to cite different sources, students should also learn to evaluate their sources for credibility and accuracy. These tasks can be difficult to learn, but they are important when using different sources in writing. Students should ask their instructor or visit the Writing Center for assistance as needed.

How to Properly Cite a Source

As you begin to cite sources and integrate quotations, you should first familiarize yourself with the citation style you will need. You may be expected to work in MLA, APA, or Chicago Style for an assignment. There are other citation styles, but these three are the most commonly used in academic settings. It is important that you are able to distinguish between the three. If you are unsure which style is required for your paper, don't be afraid to ask your professor!

Academic papers must contain evidence to help further illustrate a point you are trying to make. Sometimes, you may use a direct quote from your source. Other times, you may paraphrase what the source is saying in your own words. In both of these cases, the source must be cited. Sources are meant to support your writing, not replace it; be sure to balance your writing and your source usage. Along with citing sources as they are referenced in the paper, all sources must also be listed out separately at the end of the paper. This list is called either a Works Cited or a Reference page. Different formatting styles have different requirements for what information is needed to properly credit a source. For more information on using sources, check out our guides on [Citing Sources](#) and [Using Evidence in Writing](#).

Using Citation Styles

- [MLA](#) is mostly used in literature and language based papers. It is currently in its 9th edition.
- [APA](#) is a format used in science/social science based papers. Papers written in APA format should include a title page and a references page. Sometimes, a professor may also want an abstract, which is a 250-word summary of the paper with 5-6 keywords. The current edition is APA 7.
- [Chicago Style](#) is mainly used in history, English, and art papers. Chicago is similar to MLA, except that papers written in Chicago style must include footnotes. These can be found at the bottom of the page and typically consist of citations used in the main paper or direct quotes from alternate sources. Chicago Style is currently in its 17th edition.

Further Assistance: For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.

Sources Consulted: Lewis OWL, “Cultural Differences in Plagiarism” by Audrey Campbell, “Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: the WPA Statement on Best Practice” by the Council of Writing Program Administrators