

# Plagiarism

## Introduction

Plagiarism occurs when ideas, findings, or work of other people are presented as though they were those of the author. All work must make clear exactly what are the ideas and findings of the author and what are ideas and work of other people. Most work will therefore need to make reference to the work of other people to show clearly how much of the material belongs to others and also to give them credit for their work.

The work of other people must always be referenced whether the work comes from books, journals, magazines, newspaper articles, unpublished papers, theses, the internet, a CD, a documentary, a film, an interview, a lecture, or a discussion.

**Beware!** Plagiarism is considered to be a very serious offence!

## Types of plagiarism

### Copying verbatim without acknowledgement

One form of plagiarism is copying, word for word, the writing of some other person without using quotation marks and without citing the actual writer. To the reader, it would seem as though you were the original author of the material. You are therefore misrepresenting the real situation. To use the words of others in this way is plagiarism whether the words constitute a whole work, a section of a work, a paragraph, a sentence or a phrase. The following is an example where phrases have been used without quotations and without any reference to the original author.

#### **The original:**

“A feature of the theory is that for each point in a sentence it can be determined what structure is being developed and what processes the parser is engaged in — whether it is hypothesizing a constituent, attaching one, ordering possibilities, or perhaps backtracking if a mistake has been made”.

### **Plagiarism from the original:**

(The phrases in bold are copied word for word from the original).

It can be seen that **a feature of the theory is that for each point** that you have **it can be determined what structure is being developed and what processes the parser is engaged in** — it could be **hypothesizing a constituent, attaching one, ordering possibilities, or perhaps backtracking**.

### Copying verbatim with acknowledgement

Copying the work of another, word for word, without quotation marks and then noting the source is still plagiarism. Consider the following:

#### **The original:**

“A feature of the theory is that for each point in a sentence it can be determined what structure is being developed and what processes the parser is engaged in — whether it is hypothesizing a constituent, attaching one, ordering possibilities, or perhaps backtracking if a mistake has been made”.

### **Plagiarism from the original:**

#### *Version 1.*

A feature of the theory is that for each point in a sentence it can be determined what structure is being developed and what processes the parser is engaged in — whether it is hypothesizing a constituent, attaching one, ordering possibilities, or perhaps backtracking if a mistake has been made (Ford, 1989).

It would appear to the reader that the writer is discussing Ford's theory. In fact, though, the writer is merely copying Ford's writing and is contributing nothing original.

#### *Version 2.*

A feature of Ford's (1989) theory is that for each point in a sentence it can be determined what structure is being developed and what processes the parser is engaged in — whether it is hypothesizing a constituent, attaching one, ordering possibilities, or perhaps backtracking if a mistake has been made.

Again, it would appear to the reader that the writer is discussing Ford's theory. In fact, though, the writer is merely copying Ford's writing and is contributing nothing original.

### Taking ideas without acknowledgement

Even if you do not copy another author's words verbatim, you are still plagiarising if you write about ideas as though they were your ideas. Consider the following:

#### **The original:**

"A feature of the theory is that for each point in a sentence it can be determined what structure is being developed and what processes the parser is engaged in — whether it is hypothesizing a constituent, attaching one, ordering possibilities, or perhaps backtracking if a mistake has been made".

#### **Plagiarism from the original:**

One idea would be to have a system where it can be worked out for each point in the sentence what the parser is doing — what it has developed so far and what processes it is working on, such as ordering different possibilities, hypothesizing, attaching, or maybe backtracking.

The writer has paraphrased the original but, by not acknowledging the original author has suggested that these are the ideas of the current writer.

## Referencing

Different disciplines reference the work of others by slightly different means. You can find out how you are expected to reference work by asking what your school requires. If no particular method is expected then you should look at journals in your area to see how to reference work. Make sure you are consistent in how you cite references within the body of your work and within the reference list. The following shows you how a writer talking about Ford's work could avoid plagiarism.

#### **The original:**

"A feature of the theory is that for each point in a sentence it can be determined what structure is being developed and what processes the parser is engaged in — whether it is hypothesizing a constituent, attaching

one, ordering possibilities, or perhaps backtracking if a mistake has been made”.

### **Description of the original (avoiding plagiarism):**

Ford (1989) put forward a system in which it can be worked out what the parser is doing throughout a sentence. At each stage of processing, the structures it has developed and the processes it is working on can be determined — such as hypothesizing or attaching constituents, scheduling possibilities, or backtracking.

While the above paragraph is not plagiarism, your essay should not consist of a string of acknowledged paraphrases. Try to develop original thoughts about what you have read and present your own viewpoint.

## **Caution**

Do not fall into the trap of using a string of acknowledged quotations to avoid plagiarism. When someone is reading your work, they expect it to be *your* work. Your work should show the reader that you have understood the work of others in the area and that you have ideas about it. You cannot do this if you simply string quotes together or if you use long quotations from someone else. There are some occasions when you do need to use quotations. For example:

1. If you are claiming that a certain writer is inconsistent or vague you could possibly use quotations to support your claim.
2. If you think that the reader might have trouble believing that a certain writer really did say something, you could use a quotation as proof.
3. If you feel that a quotation supports your argument.

# Plagiarism Quiz

*For each of the following, respond True or False.*

All work must make clear exactly what are the ideas and findings of the author and what are the ideas and work of other people.

- True
- False

Ideas from newspapers do not need to be referenced.

- True
- False

If you copy verbatim from a reference, you do not have to use quotation marks as long as you acknowledge the source.

- True
- False

Using a lot of acknowledged quotes is a good way to avoid plagiarism.

- True
- False

There are some occasions when using an acknowledged quotation is appropriate.

- True
- False

You can avoid plagiarism by changing one or two words in a sentence and then acknowledging the original author.

- True
- False

## Answers

All work must make clear exactly what are the ideas and findings of the author and what are the ideas and work of other people.

- True ✓
- False ✗

- ✓ Correct.
- ✗ Incorrect.

Ideas from newspapers do not need to be referenced.

- True ✗
- False ✓

- ✓ Correct.
- ✗ Incorrect. You always need to reference other people's ideas and work.

If you copy verbatim from a reference, you do not have to use quotation marks as long as you acknowledge the source.

- True ✗
- False ✓

- ✓ Correct.
- ✗ No. If you copy verbatim you must use quotation marks, otherwise it would seem to the reader that you were the author of the words.

Using a lot of acknowledged quotes is a good way to avoid plagiarism.

- True **X**
- False **✓**

**✓** Correct.

**X** No. Your work should show the reader that you have understood the work of others and that you have ideas about it.

There are some occasions when using an acknowledged quotation is appropriate.

- True **✓**
- False **X**

**✓** Correct.

**X** Incorrect. Look at the lesson on plagiarism again.

You can avoid plagiarism by changing one or two words in a sentence and then acknowledging the original author.

- True **X**
- False **✓**

**✓** Correct.

**X** Incorrect. Study the lesson again.