Avoiding Plagiarism:
A Guide for University of Texas Student Mentors

Created By
Library Instruction Services, the University of Texas Libraries
George Schorn, Writing Coordinator, Undergraduate Studies
at the request of
The Senate of College Councils' Students for Academic Integrity committee
## Contents

Created By............................................................................................................................................................................................ 1

How to Use the Materials..................................................................................................................................................................... 3

Outline for the Plagiarism Training Session......................................................................................................................................... 4

Defining Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism................................................................................................................................. 5

Plagiarism Discussion-starters............................................................................................................................................................. 6

Cite it? Game....................................................................................................................................................................................... 9

Scenarios Game ................................................................................................................................................................................ 11

Resource Sheet: Avoiding Plagiarism............................................................................................................................................... 14
**How to Use the Materials**

These materials are designed to enable student mentors to conduct a plagiarism training session for their mentees. The goals of the session are to raise mentees’ awareness about the importance of plagiarism, provide some basics about how to avoid plagiarism, and get tips and learn about helpful resources on campus.

**Step 1: Sharing the materials with your mentees**

Peer mentors should post the following materials to an online space (eg. Canvas) for their group. You can ask that your students review the material beforehand, but it may be more helpful to refer them to it after you’ve held the training session.

- All About Plagiarism Tutorial from the UT Libraries video
  Link: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/plagiarism](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/plagiarism)

- Resource Sheet: Avoiding Plagiarism
  Attached to this manual.

**Step 2: The Plagiarism Training Session**

Peer mentors should use the materials available in the rest of this manual to lead a discussion and play games to teach their mentees about plagiarism during one of the weekly meetings. The materials are designed for a 45 minute time slot.

You can find an accompanying Powerpoint or PDF to show during the session at [http://lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/avoidplagiarism.html](http://lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/avoidplagiarism.html)

**Need help?**

Peer Mentors with questions or suggestions or who need any help with this content should contact the librarians in Library Instruction Services at lib-instruction@utlists.utexas.edu.
Outline for the Plagiarism Training Session

I. Introduction (2 minutes):
Introduce your students to the session topic by outlining what they should understand by the end of the meeting. For instance, you could say “We are going to discuss plagiarism and play a few games. By the end of this meeting, everyone should have a basic understanding of what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, as well as tips and resources for further help.”

II. Defining Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism (5 minutes)
Ask students to provide their definitions of academic dishonesty and plagiarism, then read the definitions as defined by the Dean of Students office. Use statistics from the latest Dean of Students Annual report to illustrate that students from all majors and levels are susceptible to plagiarism.

III. What do you already know about plagiarism? (7 minutes)
Use a news story to begin a discussion about what students already know about plagiarism. The sheet on the “Plagiarism Discussion Starters” page lists examples of plagiarism in the news. Break students into small groups and ask them to pick one to read. Then lead a discussion where you ask students what they think plagiarism is, if they have any experiences to share, if they know of any stories in the news, etc.

IV. What constitutes plagiarism? Play the Cite it? Game (10 minutes)
See the attached Cite it? Game, for the questions and answers. How to play: Break up into small teams. The peer mentor is the emcee. The mentor should ask one question at a time, giving the teams 1 minute to discuss and decide on an answer. At the end of one minute, each team tells their answer and why. The mentor then tells the correct answer and the reason and opens up the floor for discussion.

V. Plagiarism Scenarios: Play the Scenarios Game (15 minutes)
See the attached Scenarios Games, for the scenarios and discussion points. How to play: The mentor breaks the students into smaller discussion groups and each group discusses a scenario for a few minutes. Is this plagiarism or not? Why or why not? Then each group reports out about their scenario and discusses it with the larger class. Depending on the amount of time you have and the size of your group, you can use as many groups and scenarios as would work.

VI. Wrap-up: Ok, now I’m freaked out. How can I avoid plagiarizing? (3 minutes)
The peer mentor lets students know there are campus resources to help with writing and research, and handouts about writing/paraphrasing, note taking tips and citation help. Let students know that the Resource Sheet: Avoiding Plagiarism outlining these tips and resources is available on their group’s online site if the mentor posted it there before the training).
What is academic dishonesty?
UT Students agree to the sign the honor code upon matriculation to the university; the honor code specifically states that students should abide by the ideals of academic integrity. When students disregard these rules, they commit an act of academic dishonesty. The expectations set forth by the Office of the Dean of Students at UT regarding academic integrity specifies that UT students will:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

What is plagiarism?
Plagiarism is generally recognized as copying and pasting information without providing attribution, but it also takes on other forms such as submitting work done as a group without expressed instruction (unauthorized collaboration) or submitting the same work for different classes or assignments without notifying your instructor (multiple submissions) are also serious offences.

Quoted from:

Plagiarism Discussion-starters

Directions:

Use a news story to begin a discussion about what students already know about plagiarism. Explain that bad citation habits can follow you into your post-college life and can have major consequences on your career. Break students into small groups and ask them to select a discussion starter (below). In their groups and using their discussion starter as an example, they should discuss:

- How did people find out about the plagiarism?
- What happened to the plagiarist?
- What harm was done to the person whose work was used without attribution?
- Do you think the penalty was appropriate? Why or why not?

Ask one or two groups to report out about their scenario and their discussion. Then, use the story to begin a discussion with your students about their experiences with plagiarism and their definition of it. Integrate some of the focus points (below) into your discussion. You may also find recent reports about plagiarism from the New York Times at http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/p/plagiarism/index.html.

Time:

10 minutes

Discussion-starters:

- Marks Chabedi, a professor at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, plagiarized his doctoral thesis. He used a work written by Kimberly Lanegran at the University of Florida and copied it nearly verbatim before submitting it to The New School. When Lanegran discovered this in 2003, she launched an investigation into Chabedi. He was fired from his professorship, and The New School revoked his Ph.D.


- In 2008, freelance surfing columnist David Burroughs was fired after the Ventura County Star found instances of plagiarism in his work. Though he admitted to using quotes from sources without attribution, Burroughs stated that he didn’t think it was plagiarism because the quotes had been cited elsewhere.

- A young Helen Keller was accused in 1892 of plagiarizing Margaret T. Canby’s story “The Frost Fairies” in her short story “The Frost King.” She was brought before a tribunal of the Perkins Institute for the Blind, where she was acquitted by a single vote. She said she was worried she may have read “The Frost Fairies” and forgotten it, then “remained paranoid about plagiarism ever after” and said that this led her to write an autobiography: the one thing she knew must be original.
In 2006, Kaavya Viswanathan’s first novel How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild and Got a Life was reported to contain plagiarized passages from at least five other novels. All editions of the book were subsequently withdrawn, her publishing deal with Little, Brown and Co. was rescinded, and a film deal with Dreamworks SKG was cancelled.

A 2010 episode of “South Park” lifted similar and verbatim dialogue from a video by Dan Gurewitch on CollegeHumor.com which satirized the movie “Inception”. Show creator Matt Stone told the New York Times “It’s just because we do the show in six days and we’re stupid and we just threw it together”. The “South Park” creators’ apology was accepted by Gurewitch.

Columbia University’s School of General Studies 2010 valedictorian, Brian Corman used a story that was lifted from a routine by comedian Patton Oswalt. Oswalt called out Corman in a Tweet. Corman later apologized and Columbia issued a statement saying it was “deeply distressed”.

In 2009, Chris Anderson, a respected writer of Wired magazine, was accused of lifting passages without citation from Wikipedia for his book Free. Though he owned up to his mistake and his publisher absolved him of wrong doing, he attributed his mistake to an “inability to find a good citation format for web sources” that frequently change over time, such as Wikipedia entries; however, such specific guidelines exist on Wikipedia’s copyright page as well as other credible places on the web.

Bengü Sezen, a chemist at Columbia University was found guilty in 2010 of 21 counts of research misconduct. Sezen plagiarized and fabricated research data in three papers and in her doctoral thesis. As early as 2002, when Sezen was still a graduate student, colleagues were becoming skeptical at the reproducibility of Sezen’s research. Despite this, Sezen continued at Columbia and eventually destroyed the graduate careers of three students working under her, who left Columbia after being unable to reproduce Sezen’s experiment results. Columbia has moved to rescind Sezen’s Ph.D.

Questions for discussion:
- What other cases have you heard of where people presented the work of others as their own?
- How did people find out about the plagiarism?
- What happened to the plagiarist?
- What harm was done to the person whose work was used without attribution?
- Do you think the penalty was appropriate? Why or why not?

Focus points for the discussion:
There are different penalties for plagiarism, depending on the context.
- A scholar who uses someone else’s work to earn a degree could lose that degree. You could also lose any job you had gotten because you had the degree.
- Students who plagiarize can be expelled, suspended, or lose credit for coursework.
- Journalists who plagiarize can lose their jobs, and will find it hard to get new jobs, since they have damaged the reputation of the company they were working for.
- A publisher or filmmaker who plagiarizes may have to pay money to the person whose work they used. The plagiarized work may have to be destroyed and kept out of circulation, and the plagiarist or his publisher can be made to pay for this process.
Students may think of other examples.

**Many different parties can suffer harm or loss from plagiarism.**

- A college or university that awards a degree based on plagiarized material will suffer harm to its reputation.
- Students at the institution will suffer harm because their degrees will not be worth as much if people think their institution permits plagiarism to flourish.
- Scholars whose work is taken by a plagiarist may find that they are not given credit for their own work.
- Authors whose work is stolen may lose money because the plagiarized work attracts some of their potential readers, or it confuses readers about the real nature and quality of the original work.
- Readers can suffer harm from plagiarism because they will have a mistaken impression of the plagiarist. They may think the plagiarist is smarter, more experienced, or more honest than he or she really is.
- Plagiarists who turn in plagiarized school work also suffer because they have not acquired the knowledge they were supposed to be gaining in the class.

**Plagiarists often claim they didn’t intend to plagiarize.**

- This tells us that, however “common” people may think plagiarism is, most still understand, at heart, that it is not socially acceptable.
- The widespread availability of digital, community-shared information (such as Wikipedia) has caused confusion about what plagiarism exactly is, especially regarding citing information that is written by unnamed authors or crowdsourcing (multiple authors contributing information to something, sometimes without being named).

**Even unintentional plagiarism results in consequences for the plagiarist.**

- Someone whose work is stolen by a plagiarist suffers the same damages whether the plagiarism was intentional or not.
- Since there is no way to really tell if someone has plagiarized intentionally (apart from them saying so), even unintentional plagiarism has to be punished.
Cite it? Game

Directions/How to play:

Break up into small teams. The peer mentor is the emcee.

If you have a way to project the questions to the class, you can use the Cite it? Game slides found within the PPT or PDF presentation at http://lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/avoidplagiarism.html.

The mentor should ask one question at a time, giving the teams 1 minute to discuss and decide on an answer. At the end of one minute, each team tells their answer and why. The mentor then tells the correct answer and why and opens up the floor for discussion.

The mentor keeps track of which teams get questions correct and the team with the most correct answer at the end wins. The mentor can provide a prize for the winning team if s/he wishes.

Time:

10 minutes

Questions:

- During the course of your research, you come across an idea that you use in your paper. You don’t use the author’s exact words or even paraphrase — just the idea. Cite it?

  Answer: yes

  Notes: Other people’s words aren’t the only thing you need to cite. You also need to cite ideas. If you paraphrase, you also need to cite it. Keep in mind that there are no “tricks” to paraphrasing such as replacing every 3rd word with your own. The Undergraduate Writing Center has handouts about paraphrasing online and the Center is available to help any undergraduate with any writing project.

- You are writing a paper for your History class about World War II and mention that the US entered the war after Pearl Harbor was bombed. Cite it?

  Answer: no

  Notes: You don’t have to cite this because it is common knowledge. Defining common knowledge can be tricky, though. For example, if you are taking a class outside of your major, what may be common knowledge to people in the major isn’t common knowledge to you. Or, in this example, it may be common knowledge for an American student but not necessarily for an international student. A good rule of thumb is — when in doubt, cite it!

- You are doing a presentation for your Chemistry class and use an image of the Periodic Table you found on a government web site. Cite it?

  Answer: yes

  Notes: You have to cite images just as you would cite words. Even though this is a government web site and thus in the public domain (owned by the public), and even though it is the periodic table which you see in many science classrooms, it needs to be cited. One reason for citing is so that the person watching your presentation or reading your work knows where your information came from. If this periodic table had an error in it and you didn’t cite it, they might think you created it and made a
mistake, for example.

- **During a lecture in your RTF class, your professor mentions the results of a study she is about to publish about the impact of television on toddlers. You use the information in your paper for that class. Cite it?**

  **Answer:** yes

  **Notes:** Even though it is unpublished and recently came up in a class lecture, you still need to cite it because it is someone else’s work. Even though the professor knows what you are talking about because it is her study, you still need to cite it because it isn’t your work or your idea.

- **You are writing a paper for your Psychology class about students’ use of hotlines. You do a survey on campus as part of your research and use the results in your paper. Cite it?**

  **Answer:** no (usually)

  **Notes:** If it is your original research, you don’t have to cite it. But, if you published this research elsewhere first (and that includes using it for another class), you do have to cite it even though it may seem odd to cite yourself.

- **During a class presentation, you show a video on YouTube that you created with a group in a class the previous semester. Cite it?**

  **Answer:** yes

  **Notes:** Since the video has multiple authors, you must cite it in order to credit the contributions of the other people in your group.

- **You are writing a paper for a psychology class about what influences eating disorders in the United States. As a nursing student, you know off the top of your head that those suffering from bulimia often stay at a normal weight. But you’re not sure if this is well known in psychology. Cite it?**

  **Answer:** yes

  **Notes:** This is an example of when “common knowledge” in one field may not be widely known in another. If you’re unsure if something needs citing, you can always ask your professor or TA if a fact is common knowledge. Common knowledge can be tricky, so use your best judgment to decide if something needs a citation or not.
**Scenarios Game**

**Directions:**
The mentor breaks the group into smaller discussion groups and each group discusses a scenario for a few minutes. They should answer the questions - Is this plagiarism or not? Why or why not? If yes, is it a specific form of plagiarism, like unauthorized collaboration or multiple submissions? Each group should then report out on their scenario and discusses it with the larger class. Depending on the amount of time you have and the size of your class, you can use as many groups and scenarios as would work.

During the report-out phrase and if you have a way to project the questions to the class, you can use the Scenarios Game slides found within the PPT or PDF presentation at [http://lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/avoidplagiarism.html](http://lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/avoidplagiarism.html).

**Time:**
15 minutes

**Scenarios:**
- **Scenario A**
  You hear two people talking about a class that you also happen to be in. The first took the class the previous year, and says the professor never changes the assignment. It’s a class of 200, and everyone has to write a paper on the same topic. The first person offers her friend the paper she used the year before to turn in as his own.

  **Notes:** Yes, this is plagiarism. It is still considered plagiarism if the original work is unpublished; citation doesn’t just pertain to published materials such as on a web site or in a journal, magazine, newspaper, or book. Any time you use someone else’s work, whether it was formally published or not, you need to cite it. If you put your name on work that isn’t your own, which is what the student in this scenario would be doing if he used his friend’s paper, you are claiming that you did the work and that clearly isn’t the case. Using a friend’s paper is just like buying a paper online and putting your name on it even though you didn’t write it. The only difference is that it doesn’t cost you any money.

- **Scenario B**
  You receive your assignment for a class, and realize that you can write your paper on the same topic that you wrote on for another class last semester. Because of the requirements of the assignment, the focus of the paper will be different, but you can use many of the same sources you already read just two months ago.

  **Notes:** No, this is not plagiarism. Using the same sources to support or inform your arguments in the new paper does not constitute plagiarism. If you were to incorporate sections of your old paper into your new paper without citing the previous paper, you would be committing self-plagiarism by not acknowledging your own earlier work, regardless of whether or not that work was published. Self-plagiarism can be avoided by not submitting the same paper for different courses and by providing citations to your previous work if it’s necessary to use parts of it in a newer work. Submitting the same paper for different courses without the prior permission of both course instructors constitutes an offence called multiple submissions. This is deemed to be scholastic dishonesty at the University of Texas [Section 11-802(b) of the Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities].
• **Scenario C**
In your psychology class, you were given an assignment to research 10 different phobias and write a paragraph explaining each fear. When you’re standing in line to turn in your paper, you hear the person behind you tell her friend, “My sister’s a psychologist, so I just emailed her and she wrote back with the answers.”

**Notes:** Yes, this is plagiarism. The person turning in the answers written by her sister is representing her sister’s work as her own without attributing the material to her sister. Anytime you use someone else’s words, you are required to cite the source of that information, even if it was provided through an email by a family member. This is also a case of unauthorized collaboration. The work was assigned to the student to be done individually, but the student collaborated on the assignment with her sister without the authority to do so from the professor. Unauthorized collaboration is a form of scholastic dishonesty that carries the same consequences as plagiarism. If you’re ever unsure of the resources that are appropriate to use when completing an assignment, just ask your professor.

• **Scenario D**
You’re doing a lab project with a partner. You’re having a hard time producing the expected results of the experiment you are working on. Without telling your lab partner, you change the results to get the right answer and turn in your lab report.

**Notes:** Yes, this is plagiarism. You are presenting work done in the lab that you did not actually do, hoping to get credit for it. And, if you get caught, you could be penalized for plagiarism and your partner could be held responsible as well.

• **Scenario E**
In your research for a paper, you find the short phrase “cultural tapeworm” and like how it sounds, so you decide to use it in your paper. You think that since it is such a short phrase, it’s not worth writing a whole citation for it, so you don’t bother.

**Notes:** Yes, this is plagiarism. Since this phrase is unique language that did not originate from you, you must give the author credit, no matter how short it is.

• **Scenario F**
You class works on a lab experiment for which each student is required to turn in a separate report. You and your lab partner each write different halves of a report, share it with one another, and then turn in separate reports.

**Notes:** Yes, this is plagiarism, and more specifically, it is unauthorized collaboration. You are getting credit for work you did not do, and the instructor also noted that despite working as a group, each student was to submit separate reports. Many students incorrectly assume that unless an instructor states otherwise, students can work collaboratively on assignments, even if they turn in their own work. In fact, you should work individually unless you are instructed otherwise. Even in group projects, you need to be honest about who put the work into the assignment. If you are having problems with your group, see your professor or TA as soon as possible.
Scenario G
You’re writing a paper for your business class and have selected a few quotes that you want to use to support your argument. You really like how the author has summarized her points and you’ve already got a few direct quotes listed in the paper. You decide to paraphrase the author by changing a few of the words with synonyms, but don’t cite these passages because you’ve already cited previous direct quotes from the same author.

Notes: Yes, this is plagiarism that is the result of poor paraphrasing. Whether you are citing a quote in full or paraphrasing a passage from a text, you still need to cite the idea. As the Undergraduate Writing Center notes, “While the words may be your own, the ideas are borrowed, and you must acknowledge your source.”

Resource Sheet: Avoiding Plagiarism

Some common habits can put you at a higher risk for committing plagiarism. How many of these habits do you have?

- Procrastinating
- Skipping or just skimming required reading
- Taking notes by copying directly from text
- Taking notes from several sources all on one page or mixed up over several pages
- Researching by cutting and pasting information from the Internet
- Often forgetting to write down title, author, and other citation information
- Feeling nervous about asking the instructor for help
- Not wanting to admit you don’t understand something
- Feeling you shouldn’t have to take the class in the first place

What can you do to be pro-active about reducing your risk of plagiarism?

- Set up a schedule for each assignment
- Start your research and writing early
- Go to the instructor’s office hours the first week of class and introduce yourself
- Find out why the class is required for your major
- Set up a template page for notes that includes spaces for author, title, date, etc.

How can you take good notes?

- “Plug and Chug”- the first thing you should include when copying text verbatim is a citation and bibliographic information.
- Draw lines in between notes pertaining to different authors.
- Use different colored pens or different fonts to highlight your words and the author’s separately.
- Use quotation marks to demarcate the original text.
- Summarize the argument of each book/article as succinctly as possible.
- Avoid too much cutting-and-pasting.

Where can you get help with writing and paraphrasing?

- Your instructor or TA (always the best, first choice)
- The Undergraduate Writing Center in the Flawn Academic Center (FAC), room 211. Call 512-471-6222 to set up a consultation. Check out their handouts about paraphrasing and using and framing direct quotations at http://uwc.utexas.edu/handouts.
- Complete the paraphrasing exercises at the end of the UT Libraries All About Plagiarism tutorial: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/ (under the Avoiding Plagiarism tab)
- The Department of Rhetoric and Writing Web site (provides UT’s definitions of plagiarism and collusion): http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/rhetoric/firstyearwriting/plagiarismcollusion.php
- The Online Writing Lab at Purdue: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/9
- Handbooks such as the Penguin Handbook or the Scott, Foresman Handbook. These are often required for writing-intensive courses, but are available in almost any bookstore. Most contain sections on plagiarism and correct citation of sources.
Where can you get help with research?
- Ask a Librarian! The University of Texas Libraries can help you with your research, whether you are just getting started and choosing a topic or already well on your way. IM us, call us, visit us or email us. Contact information is available at www.lib.utexas.edu/ask.
- Guides and tutorials are available from the Libraries website at www.lib.utexas.edu/students.

Where can you get help citing sources?
- Understanding Citations Tutorial (http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/citations/) This interactive tutorial will help you learn about the elements of citations and how to use citations to locate books and articles in the Libraries.
- Try NoodleTools (http://www.lib.utexas.edu/noodlebib/) UT has already paid for this resource so you can set up an account at no cost, enter your citations and then when you are done it will automatically format an MLA, APA or Chicago Style works cited list which you can download as a Word document and turn in with your paper. NoodleTools also has a notecard feature that can help you keep track of quotes, paraphrases and your own ideas and outline your paper.
- Ask a Librarian (www.lib.utexas.edu/ask) or visit the Undergraduate Writing Center.

What happens if you are accused of plagiarism?
- Academic Integrity at the University of Texas at Austin video Link: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/sjs/sjs-output.htm