



# Recognizing and Avoiding Plagiarism

## What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is what happens when someone uses the words or thoughts of another person without permission. Sometimes this happens when a source hasn't been cited properly or at all, and sometimes it happens when someone is deliberately trying to misrepresent themselves. Plagiarism means that the proper credit hasn't been given to the person who originally came up with the ideas or language being used, and it is a serious problem in universities all over the world.

Whether intentional or accidental, the result of plagiarism is that some, or all, of a different person's ideas are represented as your own. Because this is a kind of intellectual theft, plagiarism is an academic offence and has very serious consequences at the University of Regina. If what you're doing feels wrong, or if you think what you're doing might be plagiarism, visit a student success writing tutor to help talk you through it.

Fortunately, avoiding plagiarism is easy if you're aware of what it is, how it happens, and what to do to make sure you're not plagiarizing. The key part of avoiding plagiarism is making sure that you're **giving credit to all your sources** when you use them.

This info sheet should help you avoid accidentally plagiarizing.

## Ways Plagiarism is Committed

Plagiarism is committed when:

- A person copies and pastes information from an online source (or copies information from a print source) into their own paper without citing it properly, or at all.
- A person summarizes or paraphrases the work of someone else without properly citing the research they've summarized.
- A student reuses an assignment from a past class for a current one.
- A student submits work that has been completed by someone else.
- Students work together on assignments that aren't assigned as group work.



## Citing to Avoid Plagiarism

If you are not dealing dishonestly with your assignments (as you would be if you did any of the last three things on the list) you can avoid plagiarizing by making sure you **document and cite your sources** when you use them.

### When do I need to cite?

You need to cite your sources when:

- You use or refer to someone else's ideas you find on a website, in a book, in a song, on tv or in an interview.
- You copy the exact words or a phrase from a source. Even if you change a few words in the phrase, you still need to cite the source the information comes from.
- You reprint any diagrams, charts, illustrations, pictures or photographs.
- You use ideas that others have given you in conversation or over email.

In an academic context you are allowed (and, in upper years, will be encouraged) to use information that other people have published. But to do this properly, you need to cite your sources of that information.

### What don't I need to cite?

Citing is not always necessary. You do not need to cite when:

- You are writing your own experiences, observations, insights, thoughts and conclusions about a subject.
- You are using "common knowledge" – common sense observations, folklore, or shared information in your field of study or your cultural group.
- You are compiling generally accepted facts – dates in history, major events, political leaders, and so on.
- You are writing the results of your own experiments.

During your program, you will learn (or be asked to learn on your own) various citation styles. The three that are most common are [APA](#), [MLA](#), and [Chicago](#). Learning how to properly construct an in-text citation and make a reference list are key steps to avoiding plagiarism.

Other tips and tricks:

Some other tips that will help you avoid plagiarizing:

- Manage your time well and make sure you prepare. Students often resort to plagiarism when they run out of time, don't realize how complicated an assignment is, or when they haven't done the preparation work necessary to complete the assignment. The Student Success Centre offers [time management workshops](#) if you need some help managing your time.
- Take careful notes about what you've read and where you've found your ideas: record your sources carefully, including page numbers, source titles, and authors. Identify quotations in your notes with quotation marks, and put summaries and paraphrases in different colours in your notes so you know what they are.
- Learn to [cite properly](#). Not only is this something that is going to be expected of you in your university career, but it's something that keep you from being accused of plagiarism.