**Plagiarism 101**

This tutorial has three sections. It can be viewed as a whole or section-by-section. The following transcript applies to Section 1: What is Plagiarism. Transcripts for Section 2: Consequences of Plagiarism and Section 3: Avoiding Plagiarism are also available.

**Section 1: What is Plagiarism?**

In 2010, the New York Times published an article that briefly detailed the research habits of three university students.

One student copied and pasted information from a website's frequently asked questions about homelessness for a research project but did not cite the webpage because there was no author information on it.

A second student came to the writing center at his university wanting to know how to change the formatting of a passage from a cite he had found on the internet without necessarily changing the content.

The third student used information from Wikipedia without acknowledging where the information came from. The student assumed that information on Wikipedia is common knowledge and does not need to be cited.

Why was the New York Times writing an article about these students? Because in all three examples, the students had committed plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting as your own the work of someone else. This can happen when you fail to properly acknowledge a source from which you have taken information. You may be quoting the source word-for-word or summarizing its ideas. If you do not acknowledge the source, you are plagiarizing.

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. The University at Albany, like all college campuses, is made up of a community of scholars engaged in the exploration of new ideas and the creation of new knowledge. Like all scholarly work, this means building on all that has come before. Acknowledging the work of others is an important part of scholarly inquiry.
As a student, you are part of that scholarly community. You may not feel like it yet, but it's important to know that you are being held to this standard of academic integrity and that you are responsible for knowing what the expectations are and behaving accordingly.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Students may commit plagiarism for a number of reasons. One might be that time constraints between family, work, and school commitments make it difficult to invest the time needed to create original work.

Another reason might be that they don't feel confident enough in their skills or their understanding of the topic to use their own thoughts. They may lack knowledge about how to properly give credit for the ideas they are using.

Some students plagiarize because they don't feel the assignment itself really encourages original thought. They may not feel interested in the subject or motivated to put in the work needed. Still others might plagiarize because they simply aren't aware that what they are doing is plagiarism.

Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional. Some of the students in the example earlier may have known they were plagiarizing and chose to do it anyway. Others may not have known enough about plagiarism to know that this was what they were doing. Whether plagiarism is intentional or unintentional, it still comes with potentially serious consequences. These potential consequences will be reviewed in Section 2.

Check Your Knowledge

Plagiarism is best defined as:

a) An act of academic dishonesty that is considered intentional cheating.
b) Using the thoughts and ideas of others without giving proper credit.
c) Copying and pasting a substantial passage from a source without quoting.
d) A minor academic offense.
You Answered: A

Correct!

Exit the Tutorial  Continue to Section 2
You Answered: B, C, or D

Incorrect

Plagiarism is best defined as presenting as your own the work, thoughts, or ideas of someone else without giving proper credit to the source from which the information came.

Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offense whether it is intentional or unintentional and whether the information taken without credit is substantial and word-for-word or not.

Continue to Section 2 or Review more
Optional review

Myth 1: Plagiarism is intentional cheating only.

The key word here is "intentional." While it's true that plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty no matter what, remember that it can be intentional or unintentional. Instructors and others who might be in a position to identify plagiarism in a student's work understand that students do not always plagiarize on purpose. However, the consequences for plagiarism may be the same whether the plagiarism was intentional or not. Those potential consequences are outlined in section 2 of this tutorial.

Myth 2: Plagiarism is copying and pasting a substantial passage from a source without quoting.

It is a common error to believe that plagiarism only happens when you copy something word-for-word or when the amount that you copy is substantial. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Summarizing or paraphrasing someone else's ideas can be plagiarism as well if you don't cite where those ideas came from. It also doesn't matter how much information you take from the source. If you take any information at all, you will generally need to acknowledge where that information came from.

Myth 3: Plagiarism is a minor academic offense.

In the grand scheme of things, it may seem like plagiarizing someone else's work isn't that big of a deal especially if you feel like the risk of getting caught is relatively low. But in scholarly communities like UAlbany, plagiarism can be considered a serious offense and can lead to steep consequences, including failing a course, being put on academic probation, or being expelled from school. These consequences are discussed in more detail in Section 2 of this tutorial.
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