

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

PLAGIARISM

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PLAGIARISM: WHAT IS IT?

If you've ever wondered what your teachers are talking about when they say, "Don't plagiarize!" we've got answers for you!

According to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, to plagiarize means, "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own." Did you see what I just did there? I quoted and cited the source of the definition. That way, you know exactly where I found the definition. You could even look it up to

check it if you didn't believe me (there's a bibliography at the end of this newsletter with all of the resources I used).

Plagiarism is sometimes tough to spell. There's that tricky "i" smack dab in the middle which is hard to remember. The word plagiarize is derived, or originated from the Latin word *plagiarius* meaning to kidnap. Instead of kidnapping a person, a writer who plagiarizes is stealing ideas and words

(www.kidshealth.org).

Wait, you say, but I didn't mean to copy the same words! I just switched some things around. Isn't that okay? It's easy to fall into this trap, especially with the cut and paste technology computers offer us. By reading through this newsletter and keeping it handy, hopefully you will be able to avoid plagiarism all together. A well written report with properly cited references is just what your teachers are looking for!



Farmwell's library has thousands of books for you to use as resources!

PLAGIARISM: WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Would you be able to tell if something is plagiarized just by looking at it? Maybe. Maybe not. Take a look at this list compiled by educator Laura Crisci. Do you think these situations are plagiarism?

1. "Copying someone else's work and saying it is yours." YES NO
2. "Getting someone to do your work for you." YES NO
3. "Buying a paper." YES NO
4. "Using a paper you've written before for a current teacher." YES NO
5. "Forgetting to add quotation marks to a direct quote." YES NO
6. "Changing only a few words from the original text." YES NO
7. "Making up a source or citing a source you didn't use." YES NO
8. "Using a picture, video clip, chart etc. without citing." YES NO

Answers: If you answered "yes" to all of these situations, you are correct! Read on to find out how to avoid these mistakes yourself!

IN FUTURE ISSUES:

RESEARCH SKILLS	Oct
DATABASES	Nov
GOOGLE SEARCHES	Dec
REFERNCE BOOKS	Jan
TOPIC SENTENCES	Feb
WIKIS	Mar
VLOGS	Apr



Researching for reports helps you to practice the art of finding the best sources!

PLAGIARISM: ACCIDENTAL VS. INTENTIONAL

Sometimes plagiarism occurs by accident. You read about a topic but forget to take note of where you learned the information. Or maybe you don't understand the expectations of citing your sources. If you write a bibliography, but don't reference the source within your report, that's a mistake that is considered plagiarism, too (Bauer and Moriyama, 2004).

Sometimes plagiarism is intentional. You cut and paste

from the internet because you don't have time to write the report yourself. Maybe you don't believe your own writing is good enough. You feel that the information was better written by the original author. Remember that the reason you are being given the research assignment is for you to practice the skill of searching, finding, writing and referencing about a topic. A teacher does not necessarily expect you to invent or dis-

cover brand new information about a subject. They do expect you to give credit where credit is due and explain where you found the information in your report (Bauer and Moriyama, 2004)

Accidental or intentional, stealing someone else's ideas and passing them off as your own is a serious offense. Teachers are very astute at recognizing plagiarism. When you are caught, there will be consequences.

“TEACHERS ARE VERY ASTUTE AT RECOGNIZING PLAGIARISM. WHEN YOU ARE CAUGHT, THERE WILL BE CONSEQUENCES.”

PLAGIARISM: COMMON KNOWLEDGE VS. INTERPRETATION

There are facts that you will find while conducting your research that are considered *common knowledge* to the general public. This means that these facts “can be found in numerous places and are likely to be known by a lot of people” (Indiana University, 2004).

Example: Barrack Obama was the first African Ameri-

can president of the United States. You could find this fact in many different sources and don't need to cite it.

On the other hand, you should cite all “facts that are not generally known and ideas that interpret facts” (Indiana University, 2004). This way, your reader could follow up on the information you found.

Example: According to the National Geographic Kidsblog website, 46% of kids who were polled feel that Barrack Obama deserves an A or B grade on health care.

Who knows, maybe one day you will write an article that will be cited by a student writing a report. Wouldn't you want to be given credit for your work?

PLAGIARISM: WHO WILL REALLY KNOW?

You may think no one will find out if you cut and paste information from the web. You might assume that a teacher will not be able to tell if you just switch a few words around in a sentence and pass it off as your own.

In fact, it is usually pretty clear when a student has plagiarized material from a

source. Long sentences with big words are usually a clue that the writing is not your own. Changing writing styles throughout the report shows that you're taking information from various sources. Also, when you just state ideas but don't really explain them, this can show that you don't understand the material. Teachers can turn to Google

and type in a fishy sentences to find the internet source that may have been used. Instructors can also use a computer program such as *Turn It In* to find an “originality percentage” of the report (Bauer and Moriyama, 2004). You should know that if you choose to plagiarize, you will likely be caught!



Use books for information, not copying.

PLAGIARISM: HOW TO AVOID IT

Now that you know more about what plagiarism is and how to recognize it, let's talk about how to avoid doing it. Let's think through the process of your report.

First you are going to seek out resources. Keep a list of all of the resources you use. Even if you read through the book or website and don't use it, you will want to make sure you note all of your sources in your bibliography. Make sure you write down all of the

pertinent information about your source—title, authors, publisher, publication dates and page numbers.

As you take notes from your source, make sure you are paraphrasing the information instead of copying it down word for word. Reread the information a couple of times to ensure you really understand what the author is saying and you paraphrase it correctly. Here's a great tip from Indiana University:

without looking at your source for help, write out your understanding of the information for your notes. Then you can look back to the source to make sure your summary isn't too close to the original.

Finally, when you are writing, remember to put quotation marks around any direct quote and cite the resource. Make sure your bibliography also includes this resource at the end of your report!



Keep a list of all of your resources as you take notes.

PLAGIARISM: CITING A SOURCE

When writing your report, you need to put citation information in two different places. The first place is within your report when you have quoted or paraphrased the information. The second place is in your bibliography page. Both of these types of citations should be in either MLA (Modern Language Association) or APA (American Psychological Association)

format. Your teacher will tell you which he or she prefers.

When citing the author within a report, you can do this in two ways:

- 1) as a lead in to the information—According to Laura Crisci...
- 2) After the information in parentheses (Crisci,2004).

Your bibliography page

should be a separate page with your resources listed in alphabetical order.

If you're having trouble figuring out the correct format for citing, you can find examples on the library page of the Farmwell Station Middle School website or stop by the library help desk for a take away reminder sheet.

“LIKE MANY THINGS IN YOUR EDUCATION, IT'S NOT THE END PRODUCT THAT MATTERS SO MUCH AS THE SKILLS YOU LEARN ON THE JOURNEY TO GET THERE.”

PLAGIARISM: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Dear Mrs. M,

What's the big deal if I copy out of the book? At least I know I got all of the information right if I write it down word for word! ~J.M.

Dear J.M.,

I see your point about wanting to make sure the topic

information is correct, but this isn't the reason your teacher gave you the assignment. We want you to research and write a report about a topic so that you can not only learn facts about a topic, but also practice researching, writing, and referencing. By researching multiple sources, you may find differing opinions that you

will have to interpret and make sense of yourself. When you summarize and paraphrase, you are putting the information into your own words which will help you retain the facts better. Like many things in your education, it's not the end product that matters so much as the skills you learn on the journey to get there.



Paraphrase what you are reading as you take notes.

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*At the FSMS library, we're here
to help you!*

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*All photos were taken at the Farmwell Station Library by the author.

PLAGIARISM: ONE LAST THING

One last, good reminder from kidshealth.org:

“...even if you put the information into your own words, you still should list the source. Ask yourself, "Would I know this if I hadn't read it on that website or in that book?" If the answer is *no*, list the source.”