

Talking to Students about Plagiarism

When explaining to students why avoiding plagiarism is important: Emphasize academic institutions care about proper citation because it reflects a student's integrity, ability to give others credit for their work, and ability to demonstrate that a student can understand, interpret, analyze, and integrate the work of others into their own developing ideas. The University of Michigan-Flint has a comprehensive [Policy Statement on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism](#) that explains the definition of plagiarism and citation expectations.

Consequences of plagiarism: Whether plagiarism is accidental or purposeful, students need to be aware that there are levels of consequences. Those levels could include, depending upon severity and decision from instructor and/or department:

- Individual conferences with an instructor to discuss the issue
- Re-doing a paper
- Required visits for tutoring or support
- Lowering a student's grade on a paper
- Failing a paper
- Failure from the class
- Plagiarism reported to the Dean and Academic Standards Committee
- Suspension from school
- Expulsion from school
- Jeopardize future educational or job opportunities as a result of poor performance; adversely affecting faculty recommendations on student's behalf
- May be noted on transcripts

However, there are many forms and causes of plagiarism. Students becoming aware of the pitfalls and not waiting to get help are keys to students avoiding plagiarism.

Resources to suggest to help students avoid plagiarism:

- Talk to (you) the instructor early to clarify expectations and get help
- Use citation manuals and guides effectively
- Use online citation support services like Purdue OWL
- Make an appointment with a tutor in the Writing Center
- Seek help and support through CAPS: The Counseling and Disability support services on campus if there is a need

However, according to the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA), punishing plagiarism is complicated. It's not always intentional and in fact could be a sign of a student's progress towards learning to participate within academic and professional discourse communities, albeit "clumsily" (WPA, 2014). The WPA provides some clear guidance about how to think about student's developmental processes with writing, and the signs to look for when determining whether it's plagiarism or not, and whether it's "intentional" or not. Here is a

link to their statement: [Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices](#).

So, how does an instructor know when a student needs additional support or discipline? According to the Council of Writing Program Administrators, (2014):

Most current discussions of plagiarism fail to distinguish between:

1. submitting someone else's text as one's own or attempting to blur the line between one's own ideas or words and those borrowed from another source, and
2. carelessly or inadequately citing ideas and words borrowed from another source. (WPA, 2014)

The council would identify the first as both "intentional" and plagiarism, whereas the second would be a case of:

A student who attempts (even if clumsily) to identify and credit his or her source, but who misuses a specific citation format or incorrectly uses quotation marks or other forms of identifying material taken from other sources, has not plagiarized. Instead, such a student should be considered to have failed to cite and document sources appropriately. (WPA, 2014)

The following chart is organized using a developmental perspective, helping instructors consider what may be contributing to plagiarism, what level of seriousness it might be, and resources to support students.

Likely Unintentional Forms of Plagiarism:

- Accidental Plagiarism

Likely Plagiarism Resulting from Developmental Learning Processes: Could be considered more serious if it's not corrected or continues at the upper levels

- Patchwork Plagiarism
- Summarizing Without Credit Plagiarism
- Over Using a Source Plagiarism

Likely Intentional Forms of Plagiarism:

- Self-Plagiarism (Although, may not have known it was wrong)
- Blatant Plagiarism

Accidental Plagiarism	
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not understanding how to use proper citation methods and/or misusing them• Forgetting to cite something meant to be cited
Reasons it might occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unfamiliar with citation styles and methods• Feeling frustrated with the complexity of those methods

	Waiting until the end to put in citations; only using placeholders and forgetting which source it came from
Resources for prevention and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a citation manual or Purdue OWL for correct ways to cite • Go to the Writing Center for help understanding how to use a particular citation style if it feels overwhelming, Marian E. Wright Writing Center: 810-766-6602 • In-text citations are short—re-inforce to students to add them every time direct quote or paraphrase to save time, frustration, and risk later • Suggest they research to learn more about what Plagiarism is and how to avoid it

Patchwork Plagiarism	
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Splicing different sources together, but only giving partial credit to one or more of them, while others are left out • Using pieces of an author’s exact words or phrases intermingled with your own ideas or paraphrases of the text, but not using quotes for author’s exact words or a citation indicating what came from the author
Reasons it might occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure how to weave sources together effectively, or trying to sound knowledgeable • Taking information as common knowledge, when it’s not • Not sure how to cite and weave information from a source with own ideas
Resources for prevention and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite and actively encourage students to ask for help or clarification • Recommend/require going to the Writing Center for help understanding how to paraphrase Marian E. Wright Writing Center: 810-766-6602 • Explain the dangers of assuming “common knowledge.” Here is a link to OWL that explains common knowledge: “Is It Plagiarism Yet?” from Purdue OWL • Purdue OWL: Paraphrasing has great resources on how to cite, paraphrase, and integrate ideas with a source

Summarizing Without Credit Plagiarism	
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizing the work of an author, but passing it off as one’s own idea • (Could be serious)
Reasons it might occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmentally trying to practice one’s academic voice and knowledge about a topic, and assuming the information is part of a field’s common knowledge (a developmental mistake) • Knowingly using too much of someone else’s ideas, as a way to boost one’s own control or authority in the paper without crediting the source (more intentional and more serious, but can be difficult to determine whether it’s a developmental mistake or an intention to be dishonest)
Resources for prevention and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go over and/or refer to citation examples in the citation manual or Purdue OWL • Invite and actively encourage students to ask for help or clarification

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend/require going to the Writing Center and practice with a tutor on paraphrasing Marian E. Wright Writing Center: 810-766-6602 • Recommend student(s) attend one of the Library Plagiarism Workshops • Talk to a librarian: Ask Us • • Recommend they attend one of the Library Plagiarism Workshops • Use Purdue OWL's sample papers to demonstrate what a summary, direct quote, and paraphrase look like • MLA Sample Paper • APA Sample Paper
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Over Using a Source is Plagiarism	
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using too much of a source either through direct quotes or paraphrasing that has little of your own thoughts or contributions • Using too many block/long quotes from a text
Reasons it might occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling unsure about how to paraphrase or weave one's own voice into the paper • Procrastination/rushing to get a paper done
Resources for prevention and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could recommend they speak to you help if unsure • Recommend the Writing Center for help with practicing and understanding how to paraphrase Marian E. Wright Writing Center: 810-766-6602 • Recommend students use Writing Center appointments as a time management tool to keep on task so they have time to research, write and cite, revise, and edit

Self-Plagiarism	
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turning in a paper wrote for one class and passing it off as an original work for another class without instructor's knowledge and consent
Reasons it might occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not know self-plagiarism was unethical and/or not allowed • Didn't think the professor would know or find out • Feeling stressed about time and used a shortcut
Resources for prevention and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain your preferences about building on previous work • Explain what self-plagiarism is and why it doesn't contribute to their learning and growth

Blatant Plagiarism	
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying papers and passing them off as one's own work • Using a classmate's, friend's, or someone else's work and passing it off as one's own • Copying and pasting text without citations and passing it off as one's own • Fabricating sources to fill in information in a paper

Reasons it might occur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Didn't think the professor would know or find out • Feeling stressed about time and using a shortcut
Resources for prevention and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that professors can and do figure this out. A student's voice and a source's voice are distinct. Choices like this can and are discovered. If a student is stressed, may explain it's better to accept a failing grade for the paper, than risk expulsion or failure from the course for turning in a paper that isn't theirs. • Explain if students are stressed and tempted to buy or use someone else's work, invite them to talk with you about possible extensions, tutoring, or support • If life/school is getting overwhelming, recommend CAPS, the Campus Counseling and Psychological Services center for support. They may also be able to act as a potential advocate for other classes too. • CAPS: 810-762-3456 "CAPS provides services to enrolled students that help to maximize their academic and personal potential. Students are provided with counseling, and therapy. Workshops are available on topics such as stress management, time management, and healthy relationships. All services are provided at no charge to students" (CAPS, 2019).

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