

## PART 5: USING AND CITING INFORMATION ETHICALLY AND RESPONSIBLY

Hello and welcome to Part 5 of Research 101. I'm Christy Stevens, and today we're going to talk about using and citing information ethically and responsibly. Specifically, we'll talk about quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing. We'll also discuss plagiarism and citing your sources.

When you conduct research, you're usually not doing it just for the heck of it. Generally, you want to use that information in some way, whether that involves something academic, like writing a paper, or something more personal, like making an informed health care related decision.

The most common ways you'll use the information you've found in your academic projects is through quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing.

### QUOTING

Quoting is when you take a passage, word for word, from a source, and put quotation marks around it. It's a good idea to use a quotation when you want to capture not only the information in the quotation but also the author's particularly noteworthy use of language, which would get lost if you paraphrased it. Keep in mind that quotations should not be merely plopped into your text. Rather, they should be introduced, with an introductory phrase such as,

According to Michael Pollan, author of *In Defense of Food*, "it used to be that food was all you could eat" but now "there are thousands of other edible food-like substances in the supermarket" (1).

Follow the quotation with your own analysis. In other words, don't assume the quotation speaks for itself. It's your job to actively integrate it into your paper. You can do that by explaining, expanding, and commenting upon the quotation, connecting it back to your own ideas.

### SUMMARIZING AND PARAPHRASING

You can also integrate information from your research into your own projects through summarizing and paraphrasing. Summaries provide a brief explanation of what a text is about. They focus on the main point of a given text, omitting most of the details.

Like summaries, paraphrases are written in your own words. However, paraphrases restate the ideas from specific passages in a text rather than summarizing the entire text.

### PLAGIARISM

When using information for projects in your classes, it's important to keep in mind that you are expected to abide by ethical and legal information use rules. In the U.S., using other people's words and

ideas without giving them credit is considered a form of stealing, taking something that doesn't belong to you, as well as a form of dishonesty, passing someone else's writing or ideas off as your own.

Another word for this kind of stealing and dishonesty is plagiarism. Cal Poly defines plagiarism as intentionally or knowingly presenting words, ideas or work of others as one's own work. Plagiarism includes copying homework, copying lab reports, copying computer programs, using a work or portion of a work written or created by another but not crediting the source, using one's own work completed in a previous class for credit in another class without permission, paraphrasing another's work without giving credit, and borrowing or using ideas without giving credit" (<http://dsa.csupomona.edu/judicialaffairs/academicintegrity.asp>).

Some forms of plagiarism, such as downloading a paper from the Internet or submitting a paper your friend wrote as your own, are pretty obvious no-nos. Other forms of plagiarism can be more confusing, and some students find that they accidentally committed plagiarism simply because they didn't understand what's considered appropriate use of information in the academic setting.

For example, some people think that it is ok to copy and paste sentences from various texts, believing that as long as they use multiple sources and don't take longer passages from one source, they aren't committing plagiarism. But they would be wrong. Any time you copy and paste someone else's words into your own text, you need to either:

- PUT THE COPIED PASSAGE IN QUOTATION MARKS AND CITE IT, OR
- REWRITE THE PASSAGE, PUTTING THE IDEAS IN YOUR OWN WORDS, AND CITE IT.

Notice that in both cases, citations are required.

Another misconception is that as long as you change some of the words in the original source, you are not committing plagiarism. So what some students do is they copy a passage, and then try to change a few words, without changing the sentence structures, the order of the sentences and ideas, nor the basic style of the passage. Other students keep most of the words the same, but reorganize the sentence structure and/or reorder the sentences in the passage. However, neither of these strategies are a successful defense against a plagiarism charge. Your job as a writer is not to change a few words of someone else's prose but rather to write your own text, synthesizing and citing other people's ideas using your own language and sentences.

## HOW DO I AVOID PLAGIARISM?

The first important step to take to make sure you avoid plagiarism is to always credit the sources you use. This is called citing your sources, and there are a number of different styles for doing so that we will talk about in the next section. If an idea or fact is not considered common knowledge, you need to cite

it. For example, you would not need to cite the fact that the capital of California is Sacramento, but you would need to cite a political scientist's take on why the capital should be moved to San Francisco.

Academic research projects, both yours and those your professors engage in, build upon prior research. One of the important reasons for crediting the research you are building upon is that it provides fellow researchers with a roadmap to how you arrived at the conclusions you came to. People interested in your topic can then go back and look at the documents you used to see if they would interpret and use them in similar or different ways. It also allows others to verify that the evidence you've used to support your ideas is accurate and authoritative.

To avoid plagiarism when you are paraphrasing material from other sources, don't copy and paste material into your paper. Instead, read the passage you want to paraphrase closely, then put it aside and attempt to put the information in your own words without looking back at the original source. If you are having trouble, go back and study the original passage, not to memorize the words but rather to make sure you understand the ideas. If you can't paraphrase a passage without looking back at the text, it's likely that you don't fully understand the ideas presented in the passage yet.

Keeping good notes on the sources you use and starting early, so that you give yourself the time you need to complete the research project in enough time without cutting corners or accidentally leaving out citations can also help you to avoid plagiarism.

Finally, keep in mind that it's pretty easy to get caught plagiarizing. Your professors can easily spot the differences between your writing style and the style of the author you took material from. Then all they have to do is Google a phrase you used to find the original source.

## CITING SOURCES

So citing your sources is key to avoiding plagiarism, but it's not always clear how to go about doing it. In most of your courses, your professors will tell you what citation style to use. If they don't, ask! Three of the most common styles include:

- *THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA)*, WHICH IS USED IN PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
- *THE CHICAGO STYLE*, WHICH IS USED THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, HUMANITIES, AND SCIENCES.
- *THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION (MLA)*, WHICH FREQUENTLY IS USED IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES DISCIPLINES, SUCH AS ENGLISH.

There are other styles as well, such as the Council of Science Editors (CSE). Each of these styles are outlined in style manuals, which can be found in the library. They can help answer formatting questions, such as font size and margins, as well as help you figure out how to cite your various sources. Examples include:

- *THE CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE*  
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003

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- **MLA HANDBOOK FOR WRITERS OF RESEARCH PAPERS**  
New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2009  
Cal Poly Pomona Library: Ready Ref, or 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Call Number LB2369 .G53 2003
- **PUBLICATION MANUAL OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION**  
Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001  
Cal Poly Pomona Library: Ready Ref or 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Call Number BF76.7 .P83 2001

There are also a variety of online tools that can help you manage and create citations. For example, Zotero is an easy-to-use powerful research tool that helps you gather, organize, and analyze sources. It's an extension to the web browser Firefox that includes the ability to store citation information with the click of a button. It can sense when you are viewing a book, article, or other object on the web, and—on many major research and library sites—find and automatically save the full reference information for the item in the correct fields. You can then export that information as a formatted reference in a variety of styles, from APA to MLA. Zotero also allows you to tag and search through your sources in advanced ways. You can also remotely back up your library as well as cite from within Microsoft Word.

Many databases also have citation features that allow you cite the articles you find there in a variety of formats. For example, in Ebsco's Academic Search, you can access the "Cite this Article" icon after clicking on an article in your results list. Click the icon and then copy the citation in the appropriate style required by your professor.

## CONCLUSION

We've now reached the end of Part 5 of Research 101. In this unit, we discussed the differences among quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. We also defined plagiarism and talked about ways of avoiding it. Finally we looked at citation styles and various ways of generating citations efficiently. For more information about library research, don't hesitate to contact Christy Stevens, Cal Poly Pomona University Library's Information Literacy Coordinator.