GUIDELINE DOCUMENT 5: (STUDENTS) HOW TO AVOID PLAGIARISM CHECKLIST

Note:
The following information regarding a checklist for avoiding plagiarism is provided by Turnitin.com and Research Resources. Turnitin allows free distribution and non-profit use of this document in educational settings.[8]

"In a research paper, you have to come up with your own original ideas while at the same time using work that's already been done by others. But how can you tell where their ideas end and your own begin? What's the proper way to include sources in your paper? If you change some of what an author said, do you still have to cite that person?

Confusion about the answers to these questions often leads to **plagiarism**. If you have similar questions, or are concerned about preventing plagiarism, we recommend using the checklist below.

A.   Consult with your instructor

Have questions about plagiarism? If you can't find the answers on our site, or are unsure about something, you should ask your instructor. He/she will most likely be very happy to answer your questions. You can also check out the guidelines for citing sources properly. If you follow them, and the rest of the advice on this page, you should have no problems with plagiarism.

B.   Plan your paper

Planning your paper well is the first and most important step you can take toward preventing plagiarism. If you know you are going to use other sources of information, you need to plan **how** you are going to include them in your paper. This means working out a balance between the ideas you have taken from other sources and your own, original ideas. Writing an outline, or coming up with a thesis statement in which you clearly formulate an argument *about* the information you find, will help establish the boundaries between your ideas and those of your sources.

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http://www.plagiarism.org/resources/documentation/plagiarism/learning/preventing_plagiarism_students.doc

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C.   Take effective notes

One of the best ways to prepare for a research paper is by taking thorough notes from all of your sources, so that you have much of the information organised before you begin writing. On the other hand, poor note-taking can lead to many problems – including improper citations and misquotations, both of which are forms of plagiarism!

To avoid confusion about your sources, try using different coloured fonts, pens, or pencils for each one, and make sure you clearly distinguish your own ideas from those you found elsewhere.   Also, get in the habit of marking page numbers, and make sure that you record bibliographic information or web addresses for every source right away – finding them again later when you are trying to finish your paper can be a nightmare!

D.   When in doubt, cite sources

Of course you want to get credit for your own ideas. And you don't want your instructor to think that you got all of your information from somewhere else. But if it is unclear whether an idea in your paper really came from you, or whether you got it from somewhere else and just changed it a little, **you should always cite your source**. Instead of weakening your paper and making it seem like you have fewer original ideas, this will actually strengthen your paper by: 1) showing that you are not just copying other ideas but are processing and adding to them, 2) lending outside support to the ideas that are completely yours, and 3) highlighting the originality of your ideas by making clear distinctions between them and ideas you have gotten elsewhere.

E.   Make it clear who said what

Even if you cite sources, ambiguity in your phrasing can often disguise the real source of any given idea, causing inadvertent plagiarism. Make sure when you mix your own ideas with those of your sources that you always clearly distinguish them. If you are discussing the ideas of more than one person, watch out for confusing pronouns. For example, imagine you are talking about Harold Bloom's discussion of James Joyce's opinion of Shakespeare, and you write: 'He brilliantly portrayed the situation of a writer in society at that time.' Who is the 'He' in this sentence? Bloom, Joyce, or Shakespeare? Who is the 'writer': Joyce, Shakespeare, or one of their characters? Always make sure to distinguish **who** said **what**, and give credit to the right person.

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F. Know how to paraphrase

A paraphrase is a restatement **in your own words** of someone else's ideas. Changing a few words of the original sentences does NOT make your writing a legitimate paraphrase. You must change **both** the **words** and the **sentence structure** of the original, **without** changing the content. Also, you should keep in mind that paraphrased passages **still require citation** because the ideas came from another source, even though you are putting them in your own words.

The purpose of paraphrasing is not to make it seem like you are drawing less directly from other sources or to reduce the number of quotations in your paper. It is a common misconception among students that you need to hide the fact that you rely on other sources. Actually it is advantageous to highlight the fact that other sources support your own ideas. Using quality sources to support your ideas makes them seem stronger and more valid. Good paraphrasing makes the ideas of the original source fit smoothly into your paper, emphasising the most relevant points and leaving out unrelated information.

G. Evaluate your sources

Not all sources on the web are worth citing – in fact, many of them are just plain wrong. So how do you tell the good ones apart? For starters, make sure you know the **author(s)** of the page, where they got their information, and when they wrote it (getting this information is also an important step in avoiding plagiarism!). Then you should determine how credible you feel the source is: how well they support their ideas, the quality of the writing, the accuracy of the information provided, etc. We recommend using Portland Community College's 'rubrics for evaluating webpages' as an easy method of testing the credibility of your sources."

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