Types of Plagiarism

Anyone who has written or graded a paper knows that plagiarism is not always a black and white issue. The boundary between plagiarism and research is often unclear. Learning to recognize the various forms of plagiarism, especially the more ambiguous ones, is an important step towards effective prevention. Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense.

1. "The Ghost Writer"
The writer turns in another's work, word-for-word, as his or her own.

2. "The Photocopy"
The writer copies significant portions of text straight from a single source, without alteration.

3. "The Potluck Paper"
The writer tries to disguise plagiarism by copying from several different sources, tweaking the sentences to make them fit together while retaining most of the original phrasing.

4. "The Poor Disguise"
Although the writer has retained the essential content of the source, he or she has altered the paper's appearance slightly by changing key words and phrases.

5. "The Labor of Laziness"
The writer takes the time to paraphrase most of the paper from other sources and make it all fit together, instead of spending the same effort on original work.

6. "The Self-Stealer"
The writer "borrows" generously from his or her previous work, violating policies concerning the expectation of originality adopted by most academic institutions.

Sources Cited (But Still Plagiarized)

1. "The Forgotten Footnote"
The writer mentions an author's name for a source, but neglects to include specific information on the location of the material referenced. This often masks other forms of plagiarism by obscuring source locations.

2. "The Misinformer"
The writer provides inaccurate information regarding the sources, making it impossible to find them.

3. "The Too-Perfect Paraphrase"
The writer properly cites a source, but neglects to put in quotation marks text that has been copied word-for-word, or close to it. Although attributing the basic ideas to the source, the writer is falsely claiming original presentation and interpretation of the information.

4. "The Resourceful Citer"

The writer properly cites all sources, paraphrasing and using quotations appropriately. The catch? The paper contains almost no original work! It is sometimes difficult to spot this form of plagiarism because it looks like any other well-researched document.

5. "The Perfect Crime"

Well, we all know it doesn’t exist. In this case, the writer properly quotes and cites sources in some places, but goes on to paraphrase other arguments from those sources without citation. This way, the writer tries to pass off the paraphrased material as his or her own analysis of the cited material.
What is Plagiarism?

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source
- to commit literary theft
- to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)
Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism.

**Fair Use Policy**

The overall question to ask yourself when analyzing a source for Fair Use is: Is the use you want to make of another's work transformative—that is, does it add value to and repurpose the work for a new audience—and is the amount of material you want to use appropriate to achieve your transformative purpose?

**The Four Fair Use Factors:**

If you can provide these answers to the four questions, then it is highly likely that your use of a source will stand up under Fair Use policy. But, it is always a good idea to provide attribution to the creator/author of the original work just to be fair and cover yourself.

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<th>What is the character of the use?</th>
<th>Criticism</th>
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<td>Parody</td>
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<td>Repurposing a work, providing a new context, or otherwise adding value to the work</td>
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<th>What is the nature of the work to be used?</th>
<th>Fact</th>
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| How much of the work will you use? | Small amount (ex: 1 chapter, 10%) |
|-----------------------------------| An appropriate amount for a transformative purpose |

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<th>What effect would this use have on the market for the original or for permissions if the use were widespread?</th>
<th>Proposed use is transformative and not merely duplicative (first factor) and amount used is appropriate for the transformative purpose (third factor)</th>
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<td>Proposed use is not transformative, but amount is small (10%/1 chapter)</td>
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<td>Original is out of print or otherwise unavailable</td>
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**Copyright Does Not Protect**

Unprotected Works such as:

a. Works that lack originality
   i. logical, comprehensive compilations (like the phone book)
   ii. unoriginal reprints of public domain works
b. Works in the public domain

c. US Government works

d. Facts

e. Ideas, processes, methods, and systems described in copyrighted works