

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Plagiarism means presenting someone else's words and/or ideas as your own

Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional, ranging from buying a paper from an Internet paper-mill and submitting it as your own work to improperly citing a source or forgetting to use quotation marks when necessary.

Academic integrity is maintained through your interaction with other scholars' work

Academic integrity is about more than mindlessly following citation rules to escape the perils of plagiarism—it's about how you as a writer *interact* with the work of other scholars. You maintain your integrity as a scholar-writer when you treat the writings of the people you encounter during your research with the respect they deserve by crediting them for the knowledge they have created. Integrity is also preserved when you leave a trail of your research that others can follow.

Respect and sharing knowledge—the care you take to properly attribute credit and the authentic way you interact with material from other authors—show others the kind of writer/researcher/thinker *you are*.

Maintaining academic integrity as a scholarly writer

Unintentional plagiarism can be difficult for *you* to detect *after* you have finished writing the paper because you are so close to your own text. However, it can be relatively easy for others to identify a change in voice or a patchwork of other people's ideas drowning out your own. Rather than worry about avoiding plagiarism, avoid the stress by thinking about *resources* as *other peoples' work*, engaging in a written conversation with those people, and letting your reader know exactly who says what. Aspire to the best practices of a scholarly writer—join the academic conversation.

- **Evaluate your sources.** When choosing which sources to use in your own research, be sure to check the credibility of the author—look at the person behind the words—and the accuracy of the content. Look at how the paper is written, when it was written, and what kind and how the evidence is used.
- **Take good notes.** Develop a system that helps you keep other scholars' ideas separate from your own, and start your bibliography early. When transferring other scholars' words or ideas from your notes to your paper, take care to transfer the citations as well.
- **Use technology, but use it with care.** Technology has made gathering research easier. However, easier doesn't always mean better. When using the "cut-and-paste" method to gather research from the Internet to include in your notes, be sure to capture the citation as well as the text. Then, when using other people's ideas or words in your work, avoid the "copy-and-drop" syndrome, which results in a patchwork of other people's words and ideas. Integrate, rather than "plop," other scholars' work into your own. Don't risk drowning out your voice.
- **Learn how, and how much, to summarize, paraphrase, and quote.** These are the three ways to interact with other scholars' work and to integrate it into your own.
- **Cite as you write.** Don't wait until you finish your paper to add citations or create your reference page. This practice has a double bonus: you will be more certain of the

correctness of your citations, and when you finish writing your paper, your reference page will also be finished.

- **Use sources to support your ideas.** Your job as a scholarly writer is to create new knowledge, not to report knowledge already created. Converse with the authors, explain this conversation to your reader, and build on their ideas to help present your original thinking.
- **Think about your reader.** Use citations to make sure that your reader knows which words and ideas belong to which writer: you or your source.
- **Over-cite rather than under-cite.** If you're unsure whether or not to cite, remember that it's better to have more citations than you need, rather than fewer.
- **When in doubt, ask your instructor.** Always.

Resources

Knowledge is power. Know and understand the policies, then use the following resources to learn how to interact with other scholars' work and how to use your voice to present your original work, strongly and confidently.

- **Capella University's Academic Honesty Policy:**
 - https://www.capella.edu/portal/learner/scontent/centers/learner/policies/academic_honesty.aspx
- **The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* discusses:**
 - plagiarism in section 8.05
 - the reference list in sections 4.0 – 4.16
 - in-text citations in sections 3.34 – 3.41 and 3.94 – 3.103
 - online resources at www.apastyle.org
- **The Capella Writing Program offers:**
 - sessions at Residential Colloquia on Academic Honesty and APA Editorial Style—check your binders for days and times
 - face-to-face consultations with Writing Program faculty at Residential Colloquia in the Mobile Writing Center
 - multimedia modules on “Academic Honesty” and “APA Style and Formatting,” and handouts accessible through the Online Writing Center
 - research and writing courses for graduate learners
 - online consultations with e-structors through SMARTHINKING