
Plagiarism: Purposeful and Accidental

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What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the practice of taking someone else's words or ideas and pretending they are your own words or ideas.

Why is plagiarism a big deal?

When you plagiarize, you are stealing someone else's words or ideas and then lying by claiming those words and ideas as your own.

Purposeful and Accidental Plagiarism

Purposeful plagiarism occurs when a student knowingly copies words or ideas from another source.

Purposeful Plagiarism: Example 1

Chris has to write an essay on the significance of the Battle of Antietam. He failed to take good notes in class, so he has no idea what to write. Chris does an internet search for “the significance of the Battle of Antietam.” He then copies and pastes paragraphs from several webpages into an essay that he turns in as his own work.

Why is this plagiarism?

Purposeful Plagiarism: Example 2

Chris has to write an essay on the significance of the Battle of Antietam. He failed to take good notes in class, so he has no idea what to write. Chris knows that his friend Judith has finished her paper, so he asks her to email him a copy. Chris uses the same outline and examples as Judith, but he changes the wording of the sentences.

Why is this plagiarism?

Accidental plagiarism

It was easy to identify plagiarism in the last two examples because the student ***knowingly*** copied from someone else. However, sometimes a student can accidentally plagiarize a source. This usually happens because of carelessness during research or because the student does not know how to properly cite sources.

Accidental Plagiarism: Example 1

Clarice has been doing research for a National History Day project on women's suffrage. She has located great sources online and has been taking lots of notes. Sometimes Clarice paraphrases the source, but other times she just copies and pastes the section she needs into her notes. When Clarice writes the script for her documentary, she uses the information in her notes even though she cannot remember which sections are actually direct quotes.

Why is this plagiarism?

Accidental Plagiarism: Example 2

Diego is writing a research paper for National History Day. He knows that he is supposed to cite his sources, but he doesn't really know how to do that. Diego uses direct quotes from the sources in his paper, but he doesn't use quotation marks or give the author's name. He does include a list of his sources with his paper.

Why is this plagiarism?

Accidental Plagiarism: Example 3

Alex is creating a website for National History Day. She finds a great source that she wants to use. Alex knows she is supposed to “put the ideas into her own words” but she is not exactly sure how to do that. She copies and pastes the section she wants to use and then changes a few of the words, but leaves the sentence structure the same.

Why is this plagiarism?

Consequences of Plagiarism

In the last three examples, the students did not set out to plagiarize. However, they were all still ***guilty*** of plagiarism and subject to serious consequences.

Possible consequences of plagiarism

- National History Day project is disqualified
- Student receives a “zero” for the assignment
- Student loses computer privileges
- Student receives in-school or out of school suspension

Plagiarism in the “real” world

Students sometimes think that plagiarism is just something teachers complain about that doesn't matter in the “real” world. However, plagiarism and copyright infringement (a related issue) are serious issues for adults too. Click on the links below to read about plagiarism in the “real” world.

[Cassandra Clare sued for plagiarism](#)

[Pharrell Williams and Robin Thicke sued over Blurred Lines](#)

Avoiding Plagiarism

In the next lesson, you will learn how to avoid accidental plagiarism by:

- Writing good summaries
- Adequately paraphrasing
- Knowing when and how to use quotation marks
- Citing sources in your work and bibliography.