



AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

“Help! Lecturers expect me to research information for my assignments, but, at the same time, they keep telling me ‘not to plagiarise’. I’m confused.”

Here are a few questions you may ask about avoiding plagiarism



“What is Plagiarism?”

Plagiarism literally means ‘stealing’ someone else’s intellectual property. Most students probably don’t do it deliberately, but if it’s difficult to understand what you are reading, or you haven’t got time to express the information in your own words, you might just copy a passage straight from a book or download material from the Internet.



“But copying shows I’ve done the research. What’s the problem?”

If you don’t acknowledge where information comes from, it looks as though you’re claiming it as your own idea.



“What if my ideas are the same as what I’ve read?”

Then you use the ideas you have read to support your views with expert opinions. Doing this adds to your academic credibility.



“How would anyone know I’d plagiarised?”

Plagiarism is easy to recognise. Imagine you’re marking the following essay. Which sentence stands out?

One of Yeats’ best-known poems is called ‘A Vision’. It was written in 1925. Yeats’ poetry is really complicated. Some critics think his work is supple and muscular in its rhythms and sometimes harshly modernist, while others find his poems barren and weak in imaginative power.

Answer: the last sentence



“Oh, O.K. So the information should have been referenced?”

Yes, you must acknowledge the source of everything you use in your work. There are many different referencing styles (e.g. APA, Harvard, Chicago B). Your School should give you guidelines on which one to use.



Related resources:
Paraphrasing Effectively
Referencing FAQs

Student Learning | Te Taiako
victoria.ac.nz/student-learning
student-learning@vuw.ac.nz
+64 4 463 5999



This is how the essay should look (using the Harvard referencing system):

One of Yeats' best-known poems is called 'A Vision'. It was written in 1925. Yeats' poetry is really complicated: "Some critics think his work is supple and muscular in its rhythms and sometimes harshly modernist, while others find his poems barren and weak in imaginative power" (Williamson 1996, 67).



"You just put the author's name, publication date and page number in parentheses after the quote, or in a footnote at the bottom of the page? That's easy!"

Yes, that's how to avoid plagiarising. However, just citing other people's ideas still doesn't show whether you've understood the material, or how it relates to what you want to say.



"You mean I'm more likely to get an 'A' if I demonstrate the connection between what I've read and what I think?"

Yes! The best essays use information from a range of sources (arguments for and against an issue, studies from different countries, periods, theoretical perspectives, etc) as a way of demonstrating your understanding of the topic.

The section **Making the most of your research** in this handout.



"Should I have lots of quotes, then?"

No. The best way to show your understanding is by rewriting material in your own words, or paraphrasing.



"If I express the information in my own words, I don't need to acknowledge the source then, do I?"

You must always acknowledge the source!

Check with your course outline, SLSS handouts and the Library's online resources for correct formatting.



"How do I use the material in my essay?"

Show your understanding by rewriting in your own words:

For short passages:

- Break up long sentences
- Combine short sentences
- Use synonyms [use a Thesaurus]

For longer passages:

- Close the book
- Write down what you remember

Making the most of your research

Read with a purpose

- Try and find a range of articles: those that support your opinion, as well as opposing views

Take careful notes

- Record all bibliographic details. Add your own comments
- Differentiate your words from the original: "..."

Incorporate the material into your essay, establishing its context and significance

- According to Jackson (1998, 23), " ... "
- A recent survey of consumers (Vodafone 2002) indicated that...

NB: Always indicate how the material relates to your own your argument: (This shows...)

Acknowledge the source — in two places

- Within the essay
- At the end, in a list of References

Using information from your reading in your writing

Example 1

Original: C. Zhou. *The Asian Economy*. (Oxford, OUP, 2002) p. 33

When Singapore gained independence in 1965, it was faced with major pollution problems. The government introduced taxation on motor vehicles and tobacco sales, and enacted anti-littering laws to solve the problem. Because of the cleaner environment resulting from these policies, many multinational companies have since invested in the country.

Paraphrase

= all in your own words

- When it became independent in 1965, Singapore was heavily polluted. To address this problem, the government began taxing owners of motor vehicles and tobacco users, as well as fining people for littering. This legislation resulted in cleaner surroundings that have attracted many international corporations to invest in Singapore (Zhou 2002, 33).

Example 2:

Original: J.C. Flugel. *The Psychology of Clothes*. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1950), page 75.

Garments can become symbolic of severity of moral standard and purity of moral conscience — an ethical symbolism that plays a very considerable role in the more austere and formal costumes of modern men. In the thickness of material and solidity of structure of their tailored garments, in the heavy and sober blackness of their shoes, in the virgin whiteness of their shirtfronts, men exhibit to the outside world their would-be strength, steadfastness and immunity from frivolous distraction.

Paraphrase

= all in your own words

- The clothes we wear serve to represent our ethical principles and sense of virtue. Such moral implications are an important aspect of contemporary traditional men's outfits. Business suits, made of heavy fabric according to a fixed design, conservative black footwear and pristine white shirts send a message to others that their wearers are powerful, trustworthy, and take things seriously (Flugel, 1950, p. 75).

Integrate

= use the information to support your own views

- ...Clothing serves as an outward manifestation of our inner values. Because of this, we can influence people's perceptions simply by changing our garments. For example, a student is likely to exchange his everyday jeans and t-shirt for a suit and tie before going to a job interview. **In psychological terms, by adopting a traditionally conservative uniform, the candidate presents himself as someone potential employers recognise as being trustworthy and reliable** (Flugel, 1950, p. 75). Even though this value-laden interpretation dates from last century, it still holds true, with business women nowadays also 'power-dressing' for effect.