

## Working with sources

When writing that Social Science report, and searching the web for information, sometimes it is only too tempting to sneak in a couple of lines or ideas from a smart expert on the matter. That, however, is **plagiarism**.

In its simplest form, plagiarism means that you take someone else's text and claim that you wrote it, or take someone else's idea or theory and pretend that it is yours. It goes without saying that this is wrong, and the higher up in the educational system you come the harder plagiarism is punished. A university student trying to pass someone else's lines off as their own would be expelled immediately.

However, avoiding to copy other people's texts or ideas is not the same as avoiding them altogether. Drawing inspiration from other texts is what builds knowledge, and it is not only necessary but very good practice to become better writers ourselves. We just need to know how to do it properly, using these techniques:

- \* Quotations
- \* Summary of thoughts
- \* Paraphrasing

Imagine you are working on an article and want to use the information in the following paragraph without being accused of plagiarism:

*Music is something that almost all of us have encountered and that most have a relationship to. In our everyday lives, we meet music in many different ways: through TV, radio, and even in public places like in stores. Every time we go to the movies, the experience is enhanced with music that helps reinforce the drama or suspense of the movie.*

Avdic & Fredriksson (2005), bachelor thesis in Psychology. University of Örebro.

## Quotations

When quoting you use the exact same words as the original. If you leave out words or sentences, mark those with [...]. Indicate the excerpt with quotation marks and directly in the text state the name of the author and the year of the publication.

*Just like Avdic and Fredriksson (2005) say: "In our everyday lives, [...] we meet music in many different ways". This is all very true and I believe that ...*

## Summary of thoughts

When summarizing, you trim a long text down to a few sentences. You do not use quotation marks, but still make a reference to the original writers because the ideas are clearly theirs. Also, make sure you understand what you have read so as to make a correct summary.

*What seems to be the core of the matter, according to Avdic & Fredriksson (2005), is that we have music all around us in our lives and it seems to be used for many different purposes.*

## Paraphrasing

This is the most difficult one. It is not as exact as a quotation, but it is more detailed than a summary. The challenge is to *extract the information* but use your own words. Paraphrasing can be described as "how you would have written it if you had created the idea".

*We all know that music is all around us, and if we go out, we cannot avoid it. It is everywhere and we cannot choose whether we want to listen to it or not: like when going to the movies, or going shopping. (Avdic & Fredriksson, 2005)*

### A good way to paraphrase is to...

- 1 Read the source.
- 2 Write down a list of facts.
- 3 Write your own text based on those facts (not on the text in the source).

### ORIGINAL TEXT

*Shakespeare wrote the majority of his work between the years 1589 and 1613. His early plays were mostly comedies, a genre that he raised to the peak of perfection and artistry by the end of the 16th century.*

### EXTRACTED INFORMATION

*Most work 1589–1613  
Early work: comedies  
He perfected the genre by the late 1500s*

### YOUR TEXT

*Most of what Shakespeare produced, he wrote between 1589 and 1613. In the beginning of his career, he mainly wrote comedies. The genre of comedies was made a lot better, or even perfect, towards the end of the 1500s, very much thanks to his work.*

The basic rule when working with sources is to ask yourself: Are these really my words? If they are: fine! If you feel that you may have copied a bit too much: make sure to change it more, or use a quotation or summarize the ideas making a reference to the source. And, no matter how much you change, *always* give credit to the original author—you would like that yourself if it was your idea.

For more on assessing the credibility of your sources, see p. 157.

### Quote—summarize—paraphrase

Choose a paragraph from any text and pretend that it is your source. Then practice:

- Quotations
- Summary of thoughts
- Paraphrasing

With a partner compare and discuss your results. Read each other's texts carefully and warn your partner if they border on plagiarism. Discuss with your teacher if you have questions about what is acceptable.

## Referencing systems

The main point of citing your sources is to give proper credit to the person (or people) who have provided you with information for your work. Anything else is plagiarism. Also, people who read your work might want to check your sources to see if you are a credible writer. Basically, there are two steps to learn:

1. Choose a referencing system
2. Write a reference list

There are two standards of referencing systems: Oxford and Harvard (named after the two influential universities). They are techniques used to cite sources *within* the body of your text.

### THE HARVARD SYSTEM

*As proven earlier, the results can be seen in different ways (Porter, 2008, p.22).*

In the text, use brackets that point directly to the source. This means that you have found your information and give credit to someone named Porter, whose work was published in 2008, and the page number of that work.

### THE OXFORD SYSTEM

*As proven earlier, the results can be seen in different ways<sup>1</sup>.  
(Go to the bottom of the page to find the source).*

Use a footnote number right after the information you have “borrowed” and create footnotes at the bottom of the page to give complete information on your source.

Most people would say that the Harvard system is better in order to quickly spot the source, while the Oxford system makes the text easier to read, since it uses small footnotes instead of clumsy brackets.

On the other hand, if there are a lot of different sources, the Oxford system can fill almost a whole page with footnotes and leave little room for the actual text. Choose the system that you like best, but *stick to one of them* throughout your text. (Some teachers will tell you which system they want you to use.)

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1. Porter, J.H., 2008. *Basic Psychological applications*, 3rd edition. New York: Macaroni Press Ltd.

## Reference lists

Citing sources is one thing that everybody needs to do, but when writing texts of a higher academic standard, you also need to make **a list of references** on a separate page at the end.

Always place your sources in alphabetical order by the authors' last names. Use capital letters for all main words in titles (not prepositions, pronouns and conjunctions). There are different ways of referring to different kinds of sources, and for a complete guide visit: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

- **Printed book:** Author's last name, initial of first name. (year in brackets). title of book. where it was published: publisher/printer.

Graham, P. (1990). *Excellent Tricks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- **Article (scientific):** Author's last name, initial of first name. (year in brackets). title of article. name of publication in italics, page reference.

Acher, D. (2001). Language Development in Children. *British Journal of Linguistics*, 3, 55–59.

- **Article (newspaper):** Author's last name, initial of first name. (year and date published in bracket). title of article. name of publication in italics, page reference.

Candy, R. (1999, December 12). Obesity Affects Status. *The Guardian*, p. 18

**Internet source (newspaper article):** Author's last name, initial of first name. (year and month published in brackets). title of article. title of newspaper in italics. webpage, date when the information was retrieved.

Leek, S. (2011, January). Psychologists Build a Culture of Peace. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>, January 12, 2011

- **Internet source (general, with unknown author):** Subject. name of webpage if any. date of retrieval, web address/URL.

Psychology. Wikipedia. Retrieved October 14, 2009, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology>

- **Internet source (general, untitled webpage, alternative):** full web address/URL. date of retrieval.

<http://www.usfap.com/writing/referenc/fryfram.htm>. Retrieved: August 23, 2013