Avoiding Plagiarism: Strategies & Resources

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Based on a presentation by Stephen Kuntz, Associate Director, Writing Resources
A Preliminary Reflection

How to avoid concerning yourself with plagiarism:

Don’t read anything written by anyone.
Starting Points

CAUSES AND INCENTIVES
The Stats: Grad-Level Plagiarism

One British report “estimate[d] that plagiarism among taught postgraduate students was much higher than among undergraduates. For the former, the research found around 11.9 cases for every 1,000 students, and for the latter around 6.7.”

- Natasha Gilbert in The Guardian
  (June 24, 2008)
Pressures on Grad Students

• Higher stakes
• More acute time pressures
• Writing projects that involve:
  • longer, more complex texts
  • more sources
  • a higher level of analysis and originality
• Cultural and linguistic challenges
Why Rationalization is Tempting

• Notions of “justified” plagiarism
  • “Writing isn’t really that important for me in my future work”
  • Perception that knowledge is more important than the process
  • “Dissemination of knowledge” argument
Avoiding Plagiarism

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW
How is plagiarism defined?

What You Should Know, Pt. 1
Defining Plagiarism: The Student Code

“The submission by a student of the words, ideas, images, or data of another person as the student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, research project, or assignment in a course or program of study.”

U of A Code of Student Behaviour, Section 30.3.2 (1)
Breaking it Down: Plagiarism in Practice

Plagiarism involves using someone else’s

• exact words without quotation marks
• ideas paraphrased in your own words without indicating where you got them
• data and statistics without giving credit to your source
• pictures, graphics, images, tables and graphs, music, sounds, diagrams, and/or photographs without stating where you got them
Related Forms of Misconduct: Editorial Intervention

• **Section 30.3.2(2)c:** “No Student shall represent another’s substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as the Student’s own work.”

• **Implications:**
  • “Can’t I get help with my writing?”
    “Yes, but not **substantial** help.”
  • Not sure what that means? Find out!
Related Forms of Misconduct: Self-Plagiarism

• **Section 30.3.2(2)d:** “No Student shall submit in any course or program of study, without the written approval of the course Instructor, all or a substantial portion of any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project, assignment, presentation or poster **for which credit has previously been obtained** by the Student or which has been or is being submitted by the Student in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.”

• **Implications:**
  • You *can* plagiarize yourself.
  • Not sure what this means? Find out!
Which skills are involved?
Skills Involved in Avoiding Plagiarism

Most grad students struggle with at least some of these tasks:

• Writing prose that meets disciplinary expectations
• Managing time
• Keeping track of, and citing, sources
• Paraphrasing effectively

Those struggles may make plagiarism more likely.
A Special Challenge: Paraphrasing Effectively

Paraphrasing is especially complex – and challenging. A proper paraphrase must include all three of the following attributes:

• some of the **words** in the original must be changed;
• some of the **sentence structure** (word and phrase order) must be changed;
• the **source** must be acknowledged.
What You Should Know, Pt. 3

Where can I go for help?
Sources of Support

- Professors/supervisors
- Writing seminars/classes
- Time management workshops
- Plagiarism seminars
- Consultations
How We Can Help: Workshops

• **Writing Effectively**
  – Thesis-Writing Strategies
  – Crafting a Thesis or Dissertation Proposal
  – Writing a Literature Review

• **Managing Time**
  – Time Management and Procrastination

• **Citing Sources and Paraphrasing**
  – To Your Credit: Using the Words and Ideas of Others Correctly
How We Can Help: Consultations

*Personalized consultations offer an opportunity to work directly on a document in progress, in order to discuss strategies for paraphrasing and effective citation.*

- Consultations are available at:
  - the **Student Success Centre**
    (780-492-2682; 2-300 SUB)
  - the **Centre for Writers**
    (www.c4w.ualberta.ca)
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