



7th Edition

# Avoiding Plagiarism and Self-Plagiarism

There are two common types of plagiarism: (a) improper use of someone else's **words** and (b) improper use of someone else's **ideas**. Both forms of plagiarism involve using someone else's words or ideas **without appropriately acknowledging the author or source**.

**Word plagiarism** occurs when you use another author's exact words or phrases without quotation marks.

- Whenever possible, [paraphrase sources](#) in your own words rather than directly quoting them. Paraphrasing helps you to synthesize ideas and integrate them into the context of your paper.
- Use [direct quotes](#) sparingly and only when it is important to reproduce both what was said and how it was said.
- If you use an author's words directly, even your own words from a previous paper, you must use quotation marks (in addition to an in-text citation) to let readers know that these are not your original words.
- The most blatant form of word plagiarism occurs when students copy an author's exact words and knowingly do not use quotation marks or include an in-text citation.
- A more common type of word plagiarism is when students think they can use an author's exact (or very similar words) and include only an in-text citation. (The citation gives the author credit for the ideas, but the quotation marks give the author

credit for the wording of the idea.) If you use an author's exact words, quotation marks and location information must accompany the in-text citation.

- Another common type of word plagiarism occurs when students mistakenly think they have paraphrased an author's words because they added or removed a few words or replaced some of the words with synonyms. This is called [patchwriting](#). If your wording has a similar sentence structure and uses the same words and phrases of the original author, you are patchwriting. (See the example next.) Paraphrase the idea in your own words instead.

**Example passage from Ward et al. (2006):** Findings indicate that media content is not uniformly negative. Information about sexual health, risks, and thoughtful decision-making is sometimes present.

**Plagiarized (patchwritten) example:** According to Ward et al. (2006), media content is not all negative, and information is sometimes present concerning sexual health, risks, and thoughtful decision-making.

## Avoiding Word Plagiarism

- It is important to paraphrase other authors' works in your own words.
- When reading a description of an idea or study, it can be hard to represent that idea or finding as clearly and succinctly as the author did without plagiarizing. The easiest way to avoid repeating sentence structure or lifting phrases is to read a section of a work, and then put the work down and write notes in your own words.
- As a general rule, paraphrase when taking notes on a source. Do not write the author's words verbatim without putting them in quotation marks and including the source location in your notes.
- Always attribute every idea, fact, or finding you put in your paper when you write it.

## Idea plagiarism occurs when you present an idea from another source without citing the author and year.

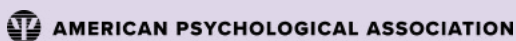
- Any time you write about a concept or idea in a paper without including an in-text citation (or clearly linking it to a previous sentence containing an in-text citation), you are claiming the idea as your own (if it is not, that is plagiarism). For examples, see Sections 8.1 and 8.24 in the seventh edition *Publication Manual* on [appropriate level of citation](#) and long paraphrases.
- The most blatant form of idea plagiarism occurs when students see a good argument or idea in a paper and then represent that argument or idea as their own.
- A more common form of idea plagiarism is when students cite a source incorrectly because they do not follow proper in-text citation guidelines, as described in Chapter 8 of the *Publication Manual*.

For example, they may write a whole paragraph about a study and then cite the study's author and year in the last sentence in parentheses, thinking that citation covers the previous sentences. Instead, the in-text citation should appear at the beginning of the paraphrased passage, to establish its origin at the outset.

- Another common form of idea plagiarism is when students remember a fact they learned in class and put it in their paper without citing it or when they write about a fact they heard somewhere and mistakenly assume it is common knowledge.

## Avoiding Idea Plagiarism

- To avoid idea plagiarism, use (a) signal phrases (e.g., "I believe that") to designate your own idea, or (b) include an in-text citation to a source to signal someone else's idea.
- Most important, always search the literature to find a source for any ideas, facts, or findings that you put in your paper.
- See Chapter 8 of the *Publication Manual* and the [In-Text Citations](#) and [Instructional Aids](#) pages of the APA Style website for more information on creating in-text citations, integrating source material, and paraphrasing and quoting from a work.



More information on avoiding plagiarism and self-plagiarism can be found in Sections 8.2 and 8.3 of both the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.) and the *Concise Guide to APA Style* (7th ed.).

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CREDIT: TRACI GIULIANO, SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY