

# PLAGIARISM

## What plagiarism is and how to avoid it

### WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

Plagiarism, a form of academic cheating, is treated as a serious offense by colleges and universities and can lead to penalties such as failure and expulsion. As defined by Dawson College's Institutional Student Evaluation Policy, plagiarism is "the presentation or submission by a student of another person's work as his or her own."

These are cases of deliberate fraud—submission of entire essays or assignments that are not your own:

- buying an essay or paper and submitting it as your own work
- having someone write an essay for you and handing it in as your own
- downloading a passage from the internet and disguising it as part of your essay

### UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM:

- **If you fail to cite the author**, even though it may be **unintentional**, you are taking credit for that author's ideas. It is still considered plagiarism. You must cite all information, insights, and opinions of other people in your work.
- If you **paraphrase** instead of quoting, you still have to cite.
- In the MLA example below, the first sentence is written by the student, but the opinion comes from Berton. It is considered plagiarism. To credit the author, the source must be identified:
  - X** • **It is possible that Peary did not reach the North Pole in 1909 as he claimed.**
  - ✓** • **It is possible that Peary did not reach the North Pole in 1909 as he claimed (Berton 254).**
  - ✓** • **Pierre Berton, in his book *Arctic Grail*, suggests that Peary might not have reached the North Pole in 1909 as he claimed (254).**
- See other **Examples of Unintentional Plagiarism** on next page.

### TAKING CREDIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S STYLE:

- **Writing style** consists of the unique word choices, sentence structures, and ways of phrasing ideas that identifies an author's writing as distinctly theirs.
- **It is considered plagiarism to copy the writing style of someone else**, like an author, a tutor, or a friend, *even if* the information has been cited properly.
- If you borrow **distinctive, memorable words** (like "scintillate" or "enraptured") from an author and their word choices are not part of your discussion, you will have to **rephrase**. All phrases **three or more** words long should be rephrased or quoted.
- To avoid this type of plagiarism, record information from sources in **point form** using your own words. When **drafting** your paper, refer to these notes instead of copying phrases directly from the other text.
- If you make **superficial changes** to another's writing, you may also be committing plagiarism. You must do more than change a few words.
  - See **Examples of Unintentional Plagiarism** on next page.



# PLAGIARISM

Continued

## EXAMPLES OF UNINTENTIONAL PLAGIARISM:

- Most often, students do not set out to plagiarize intentionally. Here are some examples of common errors and their solutions.
- All citations are provided in MLA style and are based on "Animal Minds" by Virginia Morell (Morell, Virginia. "Animal Minds." *National Geographic*, March 2008, 36–61).

Error Type:	Error:	→	Solution:
Uncredited quotation:	It has been demonstrated that western scrub jays "can know another bird's intentions."	→	<b>Add a citation:</b> It has been demonstrated that western scrub jays "can know another bird's intentions" (Morell 53).
Copying exact words without quotations, even if you cite:	Morell says dolphins are highly social and cosmopolitan (54).	→	<b>Add quotation marks:</b> Morell says, "Dolphins are highly social and cosmopolitan" (54).
		→	<b>Paraphrase in your own words:</b> Dolphins, Morrel says, have sophisticated social skills (54).
Not all text from the source is in quotes:	Morell says that "our last common ancestor with all birds" was a reptile that lived over 300 million years ago (52).	→	<b>Quote every word taken from the original:</b> Morell says, "Our last common ancestor with all birds was a reptile that lived over 300 million years ago" (52).
Only superficial changes made to original:	<b>Original:</b> In the wild, a chimpanzee may use four sticks of different sizes to extract the honey from a bee's nest.	→	<b>Rephrase and reword:</b> To take honey from bees, wild chimpanzees can make tools from sticks (Morell 52).
	The author says that in the jungle, a chimpanzee may use up to four twigs of various lengths to remove the honey from a bee's nest (Morell 52).		

For more information, contact the Academic Skills Centre.