

Avoiding Plagiarism

The most recognizable form of plagiarism is when students obtain an entire paper or section of their paper from another source and claim it as their own. This type of plagiarism is usually easy to spot.

But plagiarism can be accidental as well. *If you use information from an outside source without clearly indicating where it came from, you are plagiarizing.*

It is easy to properly integrate and cite sources as long as you keep track of where your information is coming from. There are three main ways to cite sources: **summarizing**, **paraphrasing**, and **quoting**.

Summary	Paraphrase	Quotation
A summary conveys the overall, main idea of your source. This is particularly useful when you need to use only the conclusions of a source.	A paraphrase relates individual facts or ideas from a specific part of your source using your own words. The ability to explain the material without direct quotes shows that you understand it.	A quotation reproduces the exact words of the author. This is often necessary when a passage is being analyzed or reviewed, or when the author states something so concisely that paraphrasing would be difficult.
To summarize, think about the overall progression of ideas in your source and explain them in your own words, crediting the author.	To paraphrase, think about how you would explain a particular section in your own words.	Incorporate the quotation into your text, but do not edit the quotation at all. Quotations always need quotation marks.
Because a summary deals with overall ideas and conclusions, you do not need to reference specific pages with page numbers.	If possible, provide page numbers to tell where the paraphrased information comes from.	You always need to include the page number of the quotation if it is available.
Make sure that your explanation accurately reflects the conclusions of the article or book.	Make sure you do not mix your own ideas with the paraphrase.	Make sure that the quote you select still makes sense when removed from its original context.

Another type of plagiarism can happen when you properly integrate and cite sources, but you misrepresent the intentions of the author. This can be intentional or accidental. Misrepresentation usually happens when a quotation is taken out of context or a paraphrase is misleading. To prevent unintentional misrepresentation, make sure that you save any criticisms you have for the discussion that comes after the source. You must be sure to make a clear distinction between your sources and your own arguments.

No matter what type of source integration you are using, you must remember to clearly introduce your material and include the proper citation information so that your reader can identify and locate your sources. Improper citations can often prevent your instructor from locating your source, which can lead to further accusations of plagiarism. See the various style guides (such as MLA, APA, or Chicago) for more help with forms for citation.