

Practices for Avoiding Plagiarism and Using Sources Ethically

Student writers at Caltech can use this checklist to help confirm they have taken the needed steps to avoid plagiarism and use sources ethically. If you have not taken one or more of these actions, your work may contain plagiarism. In such cases, consult your professor for help with how to proceed.

Preparation and reading:

- I have read and understood the collaboration policy and plagiarism policies for this course.
- No one other than me (and my listed co-authors, if applicable) has/have generated language or other key features of this text.
- I approached research and writing with the desire to clearly attribute all sources, and I do not intend to deceive my reader about the sources of the language and ideas in this paper.
- I left myself ample time to do the research, reading, and writing required for this project.
- I read and re-read source texts until I understood their purposes, main ideas, uses, and limits.
- I took organized notes as I read all source texts, separating others' ideas and language from mine.
- If I used a citation management system (e.g. Zotero, EndNote), I made sure to input the correct information into the system and double-checked the accuracy of its output.
- I read reliable, credible sources I could proudly cite, instead of low-quality or questionable sources that I might feel reluctant to cite.

Writing:

- I cited while writing, instead of leaving it to be done at the end of the project.
- I used in-text citation to clearly distinguish original ideas, processes, data, or words from those I borrowed from other authors on a sentence-by-sentence basis.
- I put all borrowed language in quotation marks or block quotes with appropriate citation.
- I cited all my paraphrasing of other writers' ideas, processes, data, or words.
- I cited all summaries of other texts.
- If I used reference resources, I have cited any quotes, paraphrase, or summary from those sources.
- I avoided patchwriting by creating summaries and paraphrase from memory, not by copying and editing the original text.
- I included a works cited/references page containing accurate information about all of my sources.
- I avoided inadvertent appropriation by reviewing my notes and sources while writing to make sure I did not falsely present others' work as my own.
- When I had questions about audience expectations for citation, I talked with my professor or TA.
- When I had questions about how to effectively use a style system, I talked with my professor or TA.
- I consistently used the citation style system my readers expect me to use, and I looked up aspects of the system I might have forgotten or didn't previously understand.
- If I had a question about what could be left uncited as common knowledge, I asked my professor.
- If I re-used any writing I created for a previous assignment, in another class, or for another context, I received permission to do so from my professor.

Revising and Proofreading:

- I sought and responded to feedback from trusted readers, such as my professor, TA, or writing tutors.
- During the revision process, I carefully reviewed quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material as well as citations for accuracy and correctness.
- I can confidently take full responsibility for the uses of sources in this essay.