

## Plagiarism

**What is it?** Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words, information, or ideas *without giving that person credit*.

**Why is it wrong?** Plagiarism is fraud, since the plagiarist gets credit for someone else's work. That work may be the ideas or the particular way they are expressed. Plagiarism is dishonest. It is equivalent to stealing. Also, plagiarism makes it impossible to evaluate what the plagiarist knows or understands, since he or she is simply passing on someone else's material.

### Do not plagiarize.

If I detect what I consider to be intentional plagiarism in any assignment, the assignment will receive reduced or, usually, zero credit. Severe or repeated plagiarism from any source, including classmates, is grounds for an "F" in the course. I have failed students for plagiarism.

### University consequences

New policy as of May 2005: I am now required to notify the University of plagiarism and other forms of cheating. The University checks for repeat offenders. If I report plagiarism or cheating and it is not the first time, the University may impose sanctions, including probation, suspension, or expulsion, even if I do not choose to pursue it formally.

The University policy is online at <http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/policies/cheatingpolicy.htm>

### Uh-oh. What is it, again?

Copying words, information, or ideas from books, course readings, web pages, prepared lecture notes, another student's work, television, film, what someone tells you in an interview, or any other source *without giving credit* is plagiarism. If two students turn in work with identical phrases, at least one has plagiarized. If a distinctive phrase in a student's paper matches a book, article, or website, the student has plagiarized. Changing a few words or using just part of a sentence does not change the fact that material was copied.

Even if the wording in a paper is completely original, if it contains information that is not common knowledge and not something that the author knows from personal experience, *and the source is not given*, it is plagiarized.

### It is easy to avoid plagiarizing.

- *Use your own words.*
- If you copy exactly from any source, use quotation marks and *identify the source*.
- If you use ideas or information that is not an exact quotation, *still identify the source*.
- When you get information from any source, including a classmate, digest it and write it from scratch in your own words. One method is to describe the source, like "Smith (1997) argues that the moon is made of green cheese." Make sure your version does not resemble the original, so no one will think you edited copied words. You still must indicate the source.

- Any information that is not common knowledge and has not been discovered by you personally must be credited to a bibliographic reference. Common knowledge does *not* include most course material, nor much of what you find in reference books.
- While some textbooks list references at the end, without indicating which information came from which source, this is not acceptable for academic writing. You must identify the sources of individual quotations or facts, referring to the full reference in a note or bibliography.
- One reference can serve for everything in a sentence, several sentences, or a paragraph.
- If you have any questions about the proper use of information, please ask me.

*Exception:* For this course, you may use information (the ideas, *not* the wording) from class sessions and the assigned readings without citing the references. This is only acceptable because I am telling you here that I will assume the citation for information that I recognize. If you get information from anywhere else, give the source.

### A real example

**Plagiarized section of a student's paper:** "Oloirien land is located in Southeastern "Maasai-land", where the nomadic Maasai tribes live and raise cattle seasonally. For hundreds of years, the Maasai people have occupied this land. In the 1900s, British colonizers attempted to gain control and renamed it "Chulu National Park." However, the Maasai's strong tribal authority of elders and its fearless *Morrans*, or warriors, initially prevented the British from taking control of the land. Although the Massai are feared and respected to this day, the Kenyan government, in 1995, renamed the area "Makueni division" in an attempt to oust the native inhabitants."

**Website:** "Oloirien land is located in Southeastern Maasai-land in the Merrueshi scheme. Oloirien comes from the name of a widely used native tree that resembles ebony wood. For hundreds of years, the Maasai people of the Irkaputiei section occupied this land. In the 1900's, British colonizers attempted to gain control of this land by renaming it "Chulu National Park." However, the Maasai's strong tribal authority of elders and its fearless *Morrans* (warriors) of that time prevented the British colony from grabbing this land for its own use. In 1995, the Kenyan government renamed this area "Makueni division" in an attempt to wrestle control of this land away from the Maasai." (from <http://www.maasai-infoline.org/MaasaiLand.html>)

**Comments:** Notice that dropping and replacing words, changing punctuation, and rearranging or adding phrases does not make this material any less plagiarized. Even much more editing would not make the student the author of this paragraph. Even changing every single word would not make it original, since the student certainly does not know these facts personally.

**The same passage, properly written and cited:** Oloirien land is a region where nomadic Maasai have long lived and raised cattle seasonally. The British colonial government tried to take control of the area by declaring it "Chulu National Park," but the Maasai successfully resisted by force and political means. Although the Massai are feared and respected to this day, only ten years ago the Kenyan government again tried to oust the native inhabitants by renaming the area as the "Makueni division" (Maasai Association 2005).

**With a reference like this in the bibliography (many different formats are acceptable):**

Maasai Association

2005 "The Land Struggle Among the Maasai People of Kenya." <<http://www.maasai-infoline.org/MaasaiLand.html>>. Accessed May 2, 2005.