

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

The following is adapted from "How To Avoid Plagiarism," Department of English, Lafayette College.

The College will not tolerate academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is considered serious misconduct and is subject to severe disciplinary action. Your writing is expected to be your own, except for duly acknowledged borrowings. Plagiarism, the dishonest omission of such acknowledgment, makes another person's fact, idea, opinion, line of argument or wording appear as your own, whether you copy it (use the exact words), paraphrase it (put it into your own words), summarize it or adopt its line of argument. Whatever the use, with or without quotation, each borrowing must be documented (common knowledge need not be documented, however.)

Here are some guidelines for avoiding the academic sin of plagiarism

Quotation

Even one or two words, if distinctive, must be identified as a quotation. Ordinarily, this is done by using quotation marks. A longer quotation however more than four lines of prose or two of verse should be set out as a block quotation, indented. (With block quotations, quotation marks are omitted as redundant.) Quotations must be reproduced with letter perfect accuracy, any additions or changes being carefully placed within brackets [like this] and any deleted matter being replaced by an ellipsis (three spaced dots).

Documentation

While a footnote is the most familiar acceptable form, there are a number of others. Proper documentation must show a book's author, title, city of publication, publisher and date of publication, as well as under most systems of documentation the page(s) where the borrowed material occurs. For a periodical article, documentation will indicate author, article title, periodical title, volume number, year of publication and the page(s) containing the borrowed matter. Intentionally false documentation is, of course, dishonest.

If you have any doubt about whether documentation is needed, consult the instructor before handing in the paper. Err on the side of safety by fully documenting the sources.

Some examples

In order to clarify the boundaries between the acceptable and the unacceptable, consider the following sentences, all based on a passage from Paul Fussell, "The Stationary Tourist," *The Random House Reader*. Ed. Frederick Crews. New York: Random House, 1981. 233-244.

In "The Stationary Tourist," Paul Fussell contends that tourism "began more than a century ago, in England [when] the unwholesomeness of England's great soot-caked cities

made any place abroad ... appear almost mystically salubrious, especially in an age of rampant tuberculosis” (233-34).

Direct quotation, documented. Acceptable

The English considered foreign travel almost mystically salubrious according to Fussell (234).

Quotation without quotation marks. Unacceptable even though documented.

The English considered foreign travel “almost mystically salubrious,” according to Fussell (234).

Partial paraphrase, documented with the brief quotation properly identified. Acceptable

Tourism started more than a century ago in England. The great soot-caked cities were so unwholesome that any place abroad seemed almost mystically healthful by comparison (233-34).

Half-baked paraphrase: the original with a few words changed around. Unacceptable even though documented.

Paul Fussell believes tourism grew out of nineteenth century urban squalor: cities became so dirty and unhealthy that people took vacations to escape (233-34).

Complete paraphrase, documented. Acceptable.

Tourism grew out of nineteenth century urban squalor: cities became so dirty and unhealthy that people took vacations abroad to escape.

Paraphrase, undocumented. Unacceptable.