

#3) Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

The exchange of ideas and information is an essential part of the purpose and identity of a college or university. The act of learning involves becoming familiar with ideas and developing new ones. By contributing to this exchange, students and professors increase knowledge and insight for themselves and others. A student who copies ideas, words, phrases, passages, or entire papers from another source and turns them in as his or her own work violates this fundamental understanding and undermines the purpose of education: to gain knowledge and insights. In addition, the original creators of this information are not credited for the “knowledge work” they have performed. All universities therefore have policies to ensure that students receive credit for only their own work and will be penalized if they try to pass someone else’s as their own.

Here is the definition of academic dishonesty used by the University of Arkansas (from the [UA Catalog](#)):

- ... Submitting as one’s own any theme, report, term paper, essay, computer program, other written work, speech, painting, drawing, sculpture, or other art work prepared totally or in part by another.
- ... Submitting, without specific permission of the instructor, work that has been previously offered for credit in another course.
- ... Plagiarizing, that is, offering as one’s own work the words, ideas, or arguments of another person without appropriate attribution by quotation, reference, or footnote. Plagiarism occurs both when the words of another are reproduced without acknowledgment or when the ideas or the arguments of another are paraphrased in such a way as to lead the reader to believe that they originated with the writer.

The University of Arkansas’ policy states that students, faculty, and administration all have the responsibility to understand the issue. **Saying, “I didn’t know it was plagiarism” will not get a student off the hook.** In addition to the university’s policy, students should also be familiar with the policies laid out in the course syllabi they receive from their instructors.

Many course assignments involve the use of secondary sources. It may be difficult to figure out how to incorporate that outside information into your own writing in a way that clearly distinguishes between your own ideas and those of others. Robert A. Harris, in his book *Using Sources Effectively*, offers the following guidelines for deciding which type of information must be cited:

You MUST cite someone else’s . . .	You do NOT have to cite your own . . .
words you quote words you summarize words you paraphrase idea (interpretation, opinion, conclusion) data graph photograph drawing table of information experiment example unique concept apt phrase expression of common knowledge solution to a problem speech video source (TV, film) the structure or sequencing of facts, ideas, or arguments	words idea (interpretation, opinion, conclusion) data graph photograph drawing table of information experiment example unique concept apt phrase expression of common knowledge solution to a problem

Strategies to Avoid Plagiarism

1. **Start early.** Don't wait until the last minute to begin working on your writing assignment—you might be tempted to take “short cuts” to make up for lost time. If you do find yourself strapped for time, ask your instructor for an extension. Even if you wind up getting a grade penalty for lateness, a “B” or “C” is preferable to an “F” on the paper or even for the course when your instructor discovers that you have plagiarized.
2. **Don't read outside sources unless it's part of your assignment.** To make sure that your ideas are your own, rely on your own reading and interpretations rather than on others' interpretations.
3. **Accurately document outside sources.** If outside research is part of your assignment, be sure to take notes effectively. Write down the bibliographical information (title, author, publishing information, etc.) before you start taking notes. When you are recording information, be sure to use quotation marks and record the source word-for-word (you can work on summarizing and paraphrasing when you're working on your own text). And even if you go ahead and summarize a source in your notes, be sure to indicate applicable page numbers. If you are using an online source, print off the document and notice that the URL and date are usually automatically printed at the bottom/top of each page. Refer to your handbook or the [QWC's handouts](#) for documenting and incorporating outside sources.
4. **Don't borrow someone else's notes.** Using someone else's notes could result in plagiarism of your friend's ideas and plagiarism of whatever source your friend may have used.
5. **Don't read someone else's paper on the same topic/for the same assignment.** Even if you just want to get a “feel” for or an example of the assignment, you're setting yourself up for potentially “borrowing” ideas and/or work, and if you do not cite the other person's contribution, you are committing plagiarism. If you would like extra guidance on the assignment, talk to your instructor about it; perhaps he/she will give you some pointers or even a sample of writing from a previous course/assignment.
6. **Don't work with someone else unless co-authorship is permitted and clearly indicated.** Working with a tutor who assists your progress is one thing, but do not let someone else write portions of your paper unless that is part of the assignment and both names appear on the final product.
7. **If you feel overwhelmed, talk to your instructor or a tutor.** Sometimes the pressures of the academic setting can cause us to panic and take drastic measures in order to clear hurdles. Before you resort to turning in someone else's work for your own (which could lead to course failure or even more serious academic sanctions), discuss your situation with your instructor who may give you extra time, extra guidance, or, in extreme situations, even an “Incomplete” for the course until you fulfill the class requirements. Or, meet with a tutor who can help get you on the right track with the assignment.
8. **Don't try to sound more knowledgeable than you are.** When you try to use terminology, language, and sentence structures that you are not familiar with, it usually means that you are borrowing the language from the sources you're reading. Put information in your own words (cover up the source and say out loud, in your own words, what the main ideas are) or quote directly using quotation marks. Your instructor will appreciate your own processing of information rather than your repeating someone else's reasoning. Remember that your instructor does not expect your work to be at the same level as the work of the professionals and scholars who are writing the sources you're referring to.
9. **Save your document often and print off hard copies.** It may sound obvious or silly, but losing work is something that does happen to most of us at one time or another, especially when working on computers that could experience power failures or malfunctions. You don't want to get yourself into a situation of losing days or weeks of work with the assignment due in a matter of hours—which might lead you to resort to drastic actions. If this DOES happen, however, tell your instructor right away. Again, points taken off for lateness are preferable to the consequences of plagiarism.

Useful Sources on Plagiarism

University of Arkansas Policies:	http://catalogofstudies.uark.edu/current/studies/06_Acad_Reg.pdf
Harvard handbook on misuse of sources:	www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/sources/chap3.html
Center for Academic Writing, Central European University:	www.ceu.hu/writing/sources