

DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC PENALTY: Sanction sought for academic dishonesty will be considered an academic penalty if the initiator wishes to assess penalty for academic assignments only, such as a failing grade to the student for a particular course assignment, or for the course itself, or for other tests or program requirements involved in the incident. The academic penalty cannot be challenged.

DEFINITION OF DISCIPLINARY PENALTY: Sanction sought for academic dishonesty will be considered a disciplinary penalty if the initiator wishes to seek sanction in addition to those considered as academic. Disciplinary penalties could include, but are not limited to, the following sanctions: suspension, expulsion, transcript annotation(s). Students may challenge a disciplinary penalty regardless of whether the student accepts findings of academic dishonesty. All disciplinary penalties are automatically reviewed by the University Senate Committee on Student Discipline.

STUDENT DISCIPLINARY RECORD: The Dean of Students' Office maintains a disciplinary record for any student who has been reported for any disciplinary sanction, including cases of academic dishonesty. This record is not a part of the student's permanent academic record unless disciplinary sanction imposed is specifically designated to be public record (e.g., transcript annotation). If two or more incidents of academic dishonesty are filed against a student, or if record of other disciplinary problems exists, additional disciplinary sanctions may be imposed by the Senate Committee on Student Discipline.

SUMMARY OF REVIEW AND PROCESSING PROCEDURES: For the sake of brevity, the following review and processing summary is written from an "academic unit/college" perspective. Non-academic units (i.e., Testing Center) would substitute appropriate supervisory personnel at the respective levels.

1. The faculty member should discuss the incident with the student before filing a charge of academic dishonesty. The faculty member, in consultation with the department chair, prepares the Notice of Academic Dishonesty. The chair forwards the notice to the college dean, who sends the notification to the student by university email or by certified mail.
2. The student must appeal in writing to the College Dean within 10 business days of the date the email was sent or the certified mail was received if the student wishes to deny the finding of academic dishonesty.
3. If the student does not appeal within 10 business days, the College Dean forwards the notice of academic dishonesty to the Dean of Students.
4. If the student appeals the charges, a College Hearing Committee conducts a hearing and reports its findings to the College Dean regarding guilt or innocence. If the student is found not guilty, the faculty member is notified to assign an appropriate grade. If the student is found guilty, the College Dean forwards the notice of academic dishonesty to the Dean of Students.
5. Any recommendation for a disciplinary penalty and a challenge of that disciplinary penalty submitted by the student, if any, is reviewed by the University Senate Committee on Student Discipline. Based on the committee's recommendation, the provost makes a decision and takes action regarding any disciplinary sanction.
6. The Dean of Students maintains the disciplinary records on all findings of academic dishonesty and is responsible for forwarding notice of multiple findings to the Senate Committee on Student Discipline for review. Multiple findings may result in a disciplinary penalty even if one was not recommended by the faculty member.

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If you were charged with plagiarism, you may find this handout to be helpful.

Social Sciences Research and Instructional
Council

Teaching Resources Depository:
Other Teaching Tools

Plagiarism

by

Earl Babbie

**Plagiarism is the presentation of
another's words or ideas as your own.**

It is a *bad* thing.

Don't do it.

Turning in a paper actually written by your room-mate and saying "I wrote this" would be a flagrant example of plagiarism. The same would be true if you were to buy a term paper from a "paper mill."

The lightest punishment for plagiarism of this sort would be a grade of **zero** for the paper. Other common punishments are **failing** the course or even **expulsion** from school. As you can see, plagiarism is a very serious offense in academia.

Plagiarism is wrong for several reasons.

First, it is **lying**. If you have been asked to write something as evidence that you have grasped the materials of the course you are taking, offering someone else's work as evidence is a lie. It is no different from having someone else take an examination in your name.

Second, it is an **insult** to your fellow students. When you plagiarize, just as when you cheat on an exam, you treat unfairly those who play by the rules. You seek an unfair advantage over them, and inevitably, you will find yourself looking down on those who devote their time and energy to the task which you have cheated on.

Third, when you use other people's words and ideas without their permission, it is **stealing**. It would be wrong to sneak into a factory and steal the products manufactured there during the day, and in the academy, words, ideas, paintings, compositions, sculpture, inventions, and other creations are what we produce. It is wrong to steal them and claim them as your own.

Plagiarism is a big deal in the academy.

There are many forms of plagiarism, some less flagrant than the examples I began with. However, you need to understand and avoid all forms of plagiarism. Presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own--in any form--constitutes plagiarism. Some forms of plagiarism are probably not obvious to you, so I want to spell them out in detail. I think much plagiarism is inadvertent and unknowing. I want to help you avoid that potential embarrassment.

Let's suppose you were assigned to write a book review of Theodore M. Porter's book, *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). In preparing to write your paper, you come across a book review by Lisa R. Staffen, published in *Contemporary Sociology* (March, 1996, Vol. 25, No., 2, pp. 154-156).

Staffen's review begins as follows:

It has become fashionable to reject the notion of absolute objectivity on the grounds that objectivity is simply unattainable or, even if attainable, is undesirable.

Staffen's opening is good, active prose. Let's suppose you like it. More important, you imagine that your instructor would like it *a lot*. You decide to start your paper as follows. (I've indicated Staffen's original comment in red.)

Plagiarism: I feel it has become fashionable to reject the notion of absolute objectivity on the grounds that objectivity is simply unattainable.

This would be a clear case of plagiarism and therefore unacceptable. Adding "I feel" at the beginning is a nice

personal touch, but it doesn't change anything. Let's tell the truth: you have probably not spent a lot of your waking hours agonizing over "the notion of absolute objectivity," much less worrying about whether others would reject the notion or embrace it with passion.

Plagiarism: I feel **it has become** stylish **to reject the** idea of **absolute objectivity** **on the grounds that objectivity** cannot be achieved.

Even editing the passage as I've done above would constitute plagiarism. While you have changed some of the words--"stylish" for "fashionable", "idea" for "notion," etc.--the idea being expressed, along with many of the phrases, have been taken from someone else, without acknowledging that fact.

Leaving off "I feel," by the way, wouldn't absolve the sin. Anything you write in a term paper, unless you indicate otherwise, is assumed to be your own, original thought. It's fine to have original thoughts, incidentally. In fact, we encourage it. We're happiest when your thoughts and opinions are based in evidence and reasoning rather than rumor and belief, but don't feel that your professors are somehow perversely thrilled by the mindless parroting of ideas they already know about. (I know it sometimes seems like that.)

Plagiarism: Many people today have **rejected the** idea that there is such a thing as **absolute objectivity** since they do not believe that it can be achieved.

Even though few of the original words remain in the passage above, the thought expressed has been taken from another writer and offered as your own. Even if you found a way to express Staffen's idea without using *any* of her original words, that would still constitute plagiarism. Sorry. If you're going to use someone else's words and/or ideas, you have to give them due credit.

Use someone else's words and ideas, go to jail. Well, it's not quite that bad, but academics don't have much sense of humor about cheating. I'll admit, I kind of enjoyed the student who turned in a paper his friend had written for the same course

the preceding semester. He just whited-out his friend's name and typed his own over it--and you could read the original name from the back of the page. He took the course again.

There is nothing wrong with presenting someone else's words and ideas in a term paper or in a published, scholarly work. In fact, any field of thought evolves as people read each other's ideas, learn from and build on those ideas. The key to doing this properly lies in *acknowledgement* and *citation*.

When we borrow words and ideas from others, we acknowledge that we are doing so, and we give our readers a full bibliographic reference so they would be able to locate and read the original.

It might be useful for you to leaf through some academic journal articles. It will be clear that academics think it's fine to use other people's words and ideas. It's just important to use them appropriately. Use them as resources for building your own unique contribution to the ongoing conversation of ideas.

You might want to create a sculpture of an elephant. No problem. Get a block of granite and chip away everything that doesn't look like an elephant. Just don't pretend that you created the granite. (Unless you did, in which case I *really* apologize.)

Here's an example of how you might properly include Staffen's comment in your term paper, with a bibliographic entry at the end of the paper.

Proper use: Lisa Staffen (1996:154) begins her review of Porter's book by suggesting "It has become fashionable to reject the notion of absolute objectivity on the grounds that objectivity is simply unattainable or, even if attainable, is undesirable."

This gets the information out for the reader, and it would be accompanied by an appropriate bibliographic citation at the end of your paper:

Bibliography: Lisa R. Staffen, "Featured Essays," *Contemporary Sociology*, March, 1996, Vol. 25, No., 2, pp. 154-156.

Here are some other acceptable ways to use Staffen's passage. Each would be accompanied with a bibliographic entry at the end of the paper.

Proper use: In her review of Porter's book, Lisa Staffen (1996:154) says the idea of absolute objectivity is now commonly rejected as "simply unattainable or, even if attainable, [as] undesirable."

Proper use: According to Lisa Staffen (1996:154), it has become fashionable to reject the idea of absolute objectivity altogether.

In summary, it is quite acceptable -- even desirable -- to include the ideas of others in your term paper. This can be a sign of good scholarship, as well as assuring your instructor that you've done some of the reading for the course. (We like to think you read some of it.)

However, it's important that you *acknowledge and cite materials properly*. The key is that your reader know what you are borrowing and how to look up the original materials.

By the way, if your instructor asks you to write a report on plagiarism, don't copy what you've just read here unless you cite it properly...

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