

Top tips for avoiding plagiarism



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1. Learn what plagiarism is.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's words or ideas and is a form of academic dishonesty. Consult your course outline or the Durham College website to learn about the college's Academic Integrity policy and the consequences if not followed.

2. Understand the assignment criteria.

Ensure you carefully listen to your professor's instructions and follow the guidelines on the assignment rubric, an assessment tool that clearly indicates marking criteria. Ask for clarification if something is not clear, and refer to the rubric to stay on track.

3. Don't procrastinate.

Get started early and establish a realistic time frame to complete each stage of the assignment. Students who wait until the last minute are more likely to take shortcuts and run the risk of plagiarizing.

4. Use credible sources.

Academic writing requires that you use credible sources to support your position. These could include books, articles, websites and documents found online.

5. Take research notes.

It is important to carefully note the source of each piece of information you intend to use in your paper. Use a Research Notes form available from Student Academic Learning Services (SALS) to record the source information, page numbers, content and your plan for using the information. Indicate whether the information is a quotation, a paraphrase or a summary of the information. Include quotation marks in your notes if you have quoted material word for word.

6. Understand what needs to be referenced.

Information you have quoted, paraphrased or summarized must be referenced. Statistics and graphics or images that you did not create must also be cited. Your opinion and common knowledge do not need to be referenced. If you are unsure whether you should reference something, ask your professor. It is generally better to reference than not.

7. Learn and apply the referencing requirements for your discipline.

American Psychological Association (APA) is generally used in the applied, health and social sciences. Modern Language Association (MLA) is used in the humanities, business and many communications courses. Pick up a citation style guide from the library and attend a workshop at SALS to learn how to reference correctly both in text and on a references/works cited page.

8. Integrate research.

Clearly identify that you are using someone else's ideas in your writing. Use phrases such as 'According to' or 'The Ministry of Health concluded' to show your reader the source of the information.

9. Allow time to review your work.

Give your paper a final review before submitting it. Be sure you have acknowledged your sources throughout.

10. Use the academic support available.

Speak with your professor about the assignment requirements and use the resources available at the Campus Library. Visit SALS and meet with a peer writing tutor or writing specialist to learn more about academic integrity and how to avoid plagiarism.