

## **Academic Honesty -- What did you read and what did you write?**

One of the basic principles of academic honesty is that you, as a student, have the responsibility to indicate to your reader what work you did to complete a paper. This boils down to using a standardized way of indicating:

- What you actually read in preparing the paper,
- What parts of the paper you actually wrote,
- What parts of the paper are your original ideas, and
- What parts of the paper are derived from others' work.

In Education, we use the format developed by the American Psychological Association (APA). Other common styles (formats) include the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the Chicago Manual of Style (Chicago).

Regardless of the differences in formatting, all of these styles have a way to clearly indicate what you read and what you wrote, and what ideas are yours and what ideas come from someone else. Failure to indicate this is a serious academic violation -- it is the same as if you claimed someone else's work as your work. Think about how you would feel if you painted a picture or wrote a play or recorded a song and someone else sold those things as their original work. By turning in a paper for a grade without making it clear that you used someone else's work, you are doing the very same thing and that is dishonest and a fraud!

### **What did you read?**

*Primary versus secondary sources.* This is very, very important. Your reader has the right to know: (a) whether you actually went out and found and read a number of different texts, like books or articles, in preparation of your paper or (b) whether you only read a few texts that had summaries of many other works which you included as if you actually read them. If you don't indicate that a text you include in your paper is something that you didn't actually read yourself, that is academic dishonesty.

If you base your paper on published reviews of the literature, in essence, you are using the work of someone else who went out and researched, read, and analyzed the literature. In some cases that is necessary and is acceptable to your instructor. Sometimes it can, in fact, be a good thing to compare several different people's interpretations of an important work. However, no matter when or why you do it, you need to indicate what you actually read versus what someone else read and wrote about. Think about it -- it is a kind of fraud to suggest that you went out and did some work yourself, when it was really someone else who did the work. By failing to clearly indicate that what you read was a only a reference to the original, not the actual original text, you are claiming someone else's work as yours!

**\*Important!** Using secondary sources is really frowned upon in academic writing. The only reasons you would do this is if it is ABSOLUTELY impossible to obtain a source yourself (i.e. it is an out-of-print book or a foreign language text) or if you want to discuss one author's interpretation of another's interpretation. Not enough time to go to the library is not a valid reason for not using original sources!

*Edited versus authored books.* Another problem that often shows up is when students don't realize that there is a difference between an edited and an authored book. Some books have been written by a number of different people -- each chapter will have different authors and the people listed on the cover of the book are the *editors* of the book (the ones who put the book together), **not** the authors of the book. Since the purpose is to indicate who wrote the work you are citing, you need to cite the chapter author(s), not the editors of the entire book. So, if you read something from two different chapters in an edited book, you will cite each chapter separately.

One way to tell if a book is edited, is to look and see if after the names on the front cover or on the first pages it says "editors". Another clue is if the chapters in the table of contents have names listed that are different from those on the front cover. A final clue is if the names listed at the start of each chapter are different from those listed on the cover of the book. All of these things indicate that it is an edited book and therefore, you need to list each chapter separately when you cite it. While this problem is not exactly a problem of dishonesty, it is a failure to give credit where credit is due. It also lets your reader know that you do not know the difference between an editor and an author or that you are a very sloppy student. Either one is not something that you want to let your reader to believe about you.

If you are citing from an authored book, in APA you do **not** cite each chapter separately. No matter which chapter you are citing from, you list it only once in the reference list. In the text of your paper, indicate the authors of the whole book and the year it was published.

## **What did you write?**

There are five different kinds of writing that you can include in a paper:

- Something that stems from your own, independent ideas.
- Something that is "common knowledge." For example, the fact that the world is round is now an accepted and common fact. You don't need a citation for something like that. But be careful here! Sometimes in a course, after you have read and re-read a lot of things, you get to the point that a lot of things start to seem like common sense. So, it is really important to look back and find which course texts talked about the idea you are writing about and to then include the name(s) of the texts' authors and the date of publication of their work in parentheses at the end of the sentence. If you didn't know it the first day of the class, then you need a citation for it.

- Your original interpretation of something else. With this though, you still need to indicate the source of the idea/words that you are interpreting.
- A **paraphrase** of something someone else wrote. A paraphrase is a summary or re-statement of another's work -- **in your own words and phrasing**. You must indicate the source of the original words (author(s), year of publication).
- A direct quote from someone else's work. You must write it down EXACTLY like it was in the original. For example, you can't skip around and take different sentences from different parts of the original text or change the verb tense. If you delete any text, like one sentence in the middle of two others, you need to indicate that with three periods in a row. You indicate a short quote by using quotation marks and indicating the author(s), year of publication, and number of the page where you got the quote. If the quote is longer than 40 words (in APA), you block indent the quote and don't use quotation marks. You must still include the name of the author(s), the year of publication, and page number.

The reason it is so important to indicate where you got the information is that the reader has a right to know if what you are writing is your own original idea or interpretation or whether someone else came up with the idea, theory, or interpretation. Readers may also want to follow up on interesting information or ideas. Providing the source allows readers to do just that. If you don't include the source of your ideas, it is like stealing. Failure to attribute either a direct quote or a paraphrase to the original source is a major kind of academic dishonesty.

*Paraphrasing.* One of the biggest problems students have is not truly paraphrasing material they read. It is not enough to change around the structure of the sentence (like from the active to the passive voice) or to switch around key vocabulary items. That is plagiarism. **You must re-write the entire passage.** This is hard to do, especially if you have the text open in front of you. A good idea is to read what the author wrote and then to close the book or article and imagine you are explaining it to someone else (what so-and-so is trying to say is...). It is a huge tip-off to a reader when you switch from your normal writing style to a very academic "tone" with words and phrasing that are found nowhere else in your paper. An acceptable paraphrase must be re-written in your own style and words. Paraphrased material still requires that you indicate that you took the ideas from someone else, by indicating the author(s) and date of publication.

If there are particular words or phrases that you think you absolutely must use from the original, that is fine. But then you need to leave it as a quote -- with quotation marks and page numbers. And remember with quotes -- you MUST type it EXACTLY as in the original text, you can't substitute words or change things "just a little" to make it read easier within your text.