

UNION

COLLEGE

Statement on Plagiarism

Office of the Dean of Studies (Science and Engineering S100)
Revised September, 2014, links updated April, 2017

Maintaining a scholarly environment of mutual trust is part of the mission of Union College. Trust among students requires that no student has an unfair advantage over another; trust between faculty and students requires that the effort both parties put into preparation and evaluation of assigned work is not wasted, but can truly advance understanding and learning for students.

Just as professions, businesses, and organizations depend on trust and a commitment to quality and honesty, scholarly communities depend on research and teaching carried out with integrity as well as disciplined learning. Union College is committed to helping students understand and live by those values so that they become ethical contributors to society.

What does academic integrity mean for students? Charles Lipson, author of *Doing Honest Work in College* (2008), explains:

- “When you say you did the work itself, you actually did it.”
- “When you rely on someone else’s work, you cite it. When you use their words, you quote them openly and accurately, and you cite them too.”
- “When you present research materials, you present them fairly and truthfully. That’s true whether the research involves data, documents, or the writings of other scholars.” (p. 3)

At Union College, all written assignments must represent the student’s own intellectual work. Academic writing typically requires the inclusion of other people’s words and ideas. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a writer composing “original” material that is free from any influence, even though the work may represent an original combination of existing sources or new implications for existing materials. Mastering the conventions for distinguishing your ideas as a writer from the ideas of others is an important element of learning to write academically. We expect you to learn to incorporate outside sources honestly by marking and acknowledging the words, ideas, or data of someone else using correct documentation methods. Representing someone else’s work as your own, even unintentionally, is plagiarism.

1 Examples of Plagiarism

These are all examples of plagiarism due to failure to cite sources properly.

Word-for-word copying without citation or without indication of direct quotation

- If you copy words and present them as your own writing, without indicating in any way that the words are someone else’s, it is plagiarism.
- If you copy words and cite the source, but do not indicate that the copied words are a direct quotation, it is plagiarism. All quoted words must be put in quotation marks or indented as block quotations.

Paraphrasing or summarizing the ideas of others in your own words without citation

- If you present someone else's ideas without citing the source of the ideas — even if you use your own words — you are plagiarizing.

Using sources and supplying incomplete, vague, or fake citations

- If you draw an idea from a source — and include a bibliography entry for the source — but do not make it clear that you drew that idea from the source, you are plagiarizing.
- Making up sources or pretending to have used a source when you have not is also academic fraud, and therefore a violation of the Honor Code.

Including uncited images, graphs, figures, or other media from sources

- If you use any form of media from another person or source, without citing the source, you are plagiarizing.

These actions are all subject to penalty under the Union College Honor Code.

Sometimes students may be tempted to plagiarize because they have not allowed enough time to complete the work or because they are experiencing frustration in understanding complex ideas. These are not, however, acceptable excuses for plagiarizing. Talk to your course instructor about your difficulties; do not undermine the trust within our community by claiming to have completed work for which others should be credited.

2 Why Is Citing Important?

It is standard academic practice

Citing the words and ideas of others is standard practice for academic writing by scholars and students in all fields of study. Your professors cite sources to show their understanding and acknowledgement of the ideas others have contributed to a topic. As a member of our academic community, we expect you to do the same.

It gives you credibility

Citing the words and ideas of others gives credibility to a writer's argument by demonstrating that you have sought out and considered a variety of viewpoints on the topic.

It helps readers

Citing the words and ideas of others allows readers to find your research sources. This is a way of showing the influences on your thinking and of allowing readers to look further at the sources you have used.

3 What Must You Cite?

All of the following forms of information can be included within academic writing. However, they need to be cited appropriately to give credit to the original source.

Direct quotations

If you use someone else’s words, clearly mark them as quotations. Use either quotation marks or block indentation followed by an immediate citation.

The use of passages that themselves include citations

If you borrow someone else’s paraphrase or quotation of another source, you must clearly indicate what you used from *both* sources.

Consider, for example, Gordon Best’s discussion of several opinions of the health care systems of the United States and Great Britain:

Although neither writer attempts to reach an overall judgment as to the relative merits of the two systems, it is clear that both feel that the NHS has much to recommend it. Roberts comes closest to making an overall judgment: “But this austere, inefficient [NHS] system is fair. Everyone gets a doctor free of charge, and nearly everyone stands in the same queue. British doctors claim it is a safe system: financial constraints mean that needless tests are avoided, often because the tests are simply not available nearby.”⁶ Later in the same paragraph he quotes approvingly a British philosophy professor: “In the United States doctors are paid to do more; in England they are paid to do less. I feel safer in England.” (Best, 1991, p. 862)

❶
❷
❸
❹
❺

This passage is marked to indicate how conventions for quotation and citation help the reader.

1. The passage, as it appears in this document, is itself a quotation. It is formatted as a block quotation: indented, with space above and below (❶).
2. Best uses quotation marks to set off the text he draws from Roberts (1991) (❷). Within this quotation, he signals that he alters some of the original text by enclosing material in square brackets. The reader knows that the text in square brackets is not a direct quotation.
3. Best also supplies bibliographic information so the reader can find the article by Roberts (❸). In Best’s article, the text of footnote 6 is: “Roberts, J. Navigating the seas of change. *BMJ* 1991;**302**: 34-7.”
4. Best not only signals what text he draws from Roberts; he also notes when he is using material that Roberts quoted from someone else: the quip from the unnamed British philosophy professor (❹). He does not need to supply another footnote because the beginning of his sentence signals that he is drawing the text from the same source: “Later in the same paragraph”
5. Finally, the whole quotation that this document draws from Best comes with a citation — (Best, 1991, p. 862) (❺) — and the full bibliographic information appears at the end of this document.

Paraphrases of passages

If you paraphrase someone else’s text, use your own wording — not a close imitation of the words from the source — and include a citation.

Acceptable paraphrasing requires crafting your own sentences based on the ideas and words in the original text. A paraphrased idea should be clearly credited to the author. Citation is always required.

Suppose that you would like to paraphrase the following passage, quoted directly from the article by Roberts.

The British practice medical minimalism, spending far less on medical care than any other Western country. So it amazes visitors that Britons are so loyal to their National Health Service. Public opinion polls consistently show that more than 75% of the population support the NHS. Among those who have used a doctor recently support runs higher than 90%. (Roberts, 1991, p. 34)

The following is an acceptable paraphrase: *Though the National Health Service costs very little to run, it is extremely popular in Great Britain. It is especially popular among those who have used it recently.* (Roberts, 1991, p. 34)

The following is *not* an acceptable paraphrase: *The British spend less on medical care than any other Western country. So it surprises visitors that Britons are so happy with their National Health Service. polls show that more than 75% of the population support the NHS.* (Roberts, 1991, p. 34) This passage is not just a close imitation: it is an extremely close imitation. While it includes a citation, it is not marked as using the phrasing from Roberts (1991).

The text you include in your papers must be marked clearly to indicate how you produced it. Starting with someone else's text and changing "enough" of a passage is not an acceptable practice. Even if you change quite a lot, you will be obscuring how you produced the text.

Ideas originated by others

Make sure you accurately represent or summarize the ideas of others. Acknowledge their work, even if you are not quoting or paraphrasing any particular passage, and cite the source.

Images, graphs, figures, or other media from any source

Cite them! You must document the source of any material you incorporate into work you present as your own. Even material that is in the public domain must be cited. If you do not cite what you incorporate, you are falsely claiming to have created it.

Help from a professor or peer

If you have spoken with a peer or professor who helped you substantially in formulating your ideas for a written assignment, it is appropriate to acknowledge that within your paper, as scholars themselves do. The acknowledgement may be in the form of a footnote at the point where you discuss the specific idea, or it can be a footnote near the beginning of your paper or a short note at the end. E.g.: "My ideas about fracking derive in part from a conversation with Prof. X." "I am grateful to Ann Jones for her help in understanding the implications of x process/for her suggestion of this idea."

Common Knowledge

You do not need to cite common knowledge: widely known facts, events, or concepts. An understanding of what constitutes common knowledge within a discipline develops as students progress in their courses. When in doubt, cite, or ask your instructor.

- E.g.: *Lincoln was the 16th U.S. President and was assassinated in office in 1865.* This information is obviously not a student's original idea, but it consists of undisputed facts available from any source on Lincoln. Such facts do not require citation.

It is required that you cite the phrasing of common knowledge if it is lengthy or distinctive. Again, when in doubt, ask your instructor.

4 Several tips to avoid plagiarism

4.1 Keep track of your sources

Keep track of your sources as you conduct research. It's easy to cut and paste text into a paper or report. But it's not a good strategy, even if your intentions are good. Instead, create a document for your sources that is separate from the paper you will submit as your own — or even a separate document for each source — so you can keep track of the original and its source.

4.2 Cite as you write

Whenever you paraphrase or quote from a source, cite it immediately. It is much more difficult to reconstruct the citations later on.

4.3 Set aside source material when paraphrasing

When paraphrasing, read the source text, but then look away before reconstructing it with different words. When looking at someone else's text, it is very difficult to see ways to reform it with your own wording. The key is to look away from the original!

4.4 Do not paraphrase by changing some words

Trying to change enough of the wording in a passage is a very bad strategy. When you paraphrase appropriately, you understand the ideas well enough to use your own words without consulting the original.

4.5 Talk through the material you intend to paraphrase

Some people find that explaining an idea to a friend helps them more naturally restate the idea. Always check back with the source to see that you paraphrased accurately. And cite!

5 How Do You Cite?

Citing and documenting sources in academic writing is done in two places:

1. Citing within the text (right after a source is used) allows readers to distinguish your ideas from those of others. Use either of the following:
 - Parenthetical citations, such as (Lipson 3) or (Lipson, 2008, p. 3)
 - Footnotes, indicated by superscript numbers such as this.¹
2. List sources at the end of the paper using one of the following:
 - Alphabetical list of all sources used in the paper with full bibliographical information (author, title, publisher, city of publication, etc.)
 - Endnotes, listed by number as they occurred in the paper

Sometimes the two forms of citation are combined. Most courses at Union allow you to use brief parenthetical citations within the text along with a list of references at the end. Ask your instructor which style of referencing you should use.

All general or discipline-specific documentation styles are available on the internet — check Schaffer Library's Reference section.²

¹Lipson (2008), p. 3.

²<http://libguides.union.edu/citationguides>

6 Student Responsibility

Students need to exercise integrity in making decisions regarding their academic conduct in and outside of the classroom. Learn and use the academic conventions and follow the guidelines for each course. All students are encouraged to ask their course instructors for clarification regarding questions about collaboration, citations, and plagiarism. Every student is responsible for ensuring that his or her work follows the rules set out here and in the Academic Honor Code.

References

- Best, G. (1991). Through American eyes: They see the NHS from both sides. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 302(6781):862–863. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29711083>.
- Lipson, C. (2008). *Doing Honest Work in College*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Roberts, J. (1991). Navigating the seas of change. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 302(6767):34–37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29709964>.