

Publication: Academic Integrity at Princeton (2011)

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Acknowledging Your Sources

There are a variety of reasons for acknowledging the sources upon which you have built your own work. At right are the key reasons:

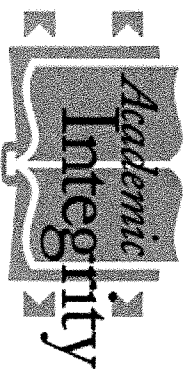
- **To distinguish your own work** from that of your sources.
- **To receive credit for the research** you've done on a project.
- **To establish the credibility and authority** of your knowledge and ideas.
- **To place your own ideas in context**, locating your work in the larger intellectual conversation about your topic.
- **To permit your reader to pursue your topic further** by reading more about it.
- **To permit your reader to check** on your use of source material.

In all of these reasons, the essential element is intellectual honesty. You must provide your reader with an honest representation of your work so that he or she may evaluate its merits fairly. Proper citation demonstrates the depth and breadth of your reading—in effect, documenting the hard work you've put into your research. Proper citation permits a reader to determine the extent of your knowledge of the topic. And, most important, proper citation permits a reader to more readily understand and appreciate your original contribution to the subject. In contrast, a very well-informed, complex, or sophisticated piece of work, without adequate or accurate acknowledgment of sources, will only provoke your reader's concern or suspicion.

Such intellectual honesty is important, not only for your reader, but also for you as the author. For example, you may footnote a paper diligently only to discover that you can hardly find an original idea or sentence of your own. Then you'll know you have more work to do in order to develop a substantial original idea or thesis.

This booklet emphasizes the positive reasons for properly citing your sources rather than the negative consequences for failing to do so. You need to know, however, that those consequences can be severe. Failure to acknowledge the sources — textual, personal, electronic — upon which you've relied is a serious breach of academic integrity. Such a failure can lead to the accusation of **plagiarism** — defined as the use of any source, published or unpublished, without proper acknowledgment. Plagiarism is a very serious charge at Princeton, which can result in disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion. The disciplinary process is explained later in this booklet.

The most important thing to know is this: **if you fail to cite your sources, whether deliberately or inadvertently, you will still be found responsible for the act of plagiarism.** Ignorance of academic regulations or the excuse of sloppy or rushed work does not constitute an acceptable defense against the charge of plagiarism. As a Princeton student, you're expected to have read and understood the University's academic regulations as described in this booklet and in *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities*. In fact, you must type the following sentence and sign your name on each piece of work you submit: **"This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations."** For electronic submissions, you may type your name preceded by the notation /s/, which stands for "signature." This signed pledge symbolizes your adherence to the University's core values of honesty and integrity in intellectual work.



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When to Cite Sources

You'll discover that different academic disciplines have different rules and protocols concerning when and how to cite sources, a practice known as "citation." For example, some disciplines use footnotes, whereas others use parenthetical in-text citations; some require complete bibliographic information on all works consulted, whereas others require only a list of "Works Cited." As you decide on a concentration and begin advanced work in your department, you'll need to learn the particular protocols for your discipline. Near the end of this booklet, you'll find a brief sampling of commonly used citation styles.

The five basic principles described below apply to all disciplines and should guide your own citation practice. Even more fundamental, however, is this general rule: **when in doubt, cite.**

You'll certainly never find yourself in trouble if you acknowledge a source when it's not absolutely necessary; it's always preferable to err on the side of caution and completeness. Better still, if you're unsure about whether or not to cite a source, ask your professor or preceptor for guidance before submitting the paper or report.

1. Quotation. Any verbatim use of a source, no matter how large or small the quotation, must be placed in quotation marks or, if longer than three lines, clearly indented beyond the regular margin. The quotation must be accompanied, either within the text or in a footnote, by a precise indication of the source, identifying the author, title, place and date of publication (where relevant), and page numbers. Even if you use only a short phrase, or even one key word, you must use quotation marks in order to set off the borrowed language from your own, and you must cite the source.

2. Paraphrase. Paraphrase is a restatement of another person's thoughts or ideas in your own words, using your own sentence structure. A paraphrase is normally about the same length as the original. Although you don't need to use quotation marks when you paraphrase, you absolutely do need to cite the source, either in parentheses or in a footnote. If another author's idea is particularly well put, quote it verbatim and use quotation marks to distinguish his or her words from your own. Paraphrase your source if you can restate the idea more clearly or simply, or if you want to place the idea in the flow of your own thoughts—though be sure to announce your source in your own text ("Albert Einstein believed that..") and always include a citation. Paraphrasing does not relieve you of the responsibility to cite your source.

3. Summary. Summary is a concise statement of another person's thoughts or ideas in your own words. A summary is normally shorter than the original — a distillation of the source's ideas. When summarizing other people's ideas, arguments, or conclusions, you must cite your sources — for example, with a footnote at the end of each summary. Taking good notes while doing your research will help you keep straight which ideas belong to which author. Good note-taking habits are especially important when you're reviewing a series of interpretations or ideas on your subject.

4. Facts, Information, and Data. Often you'll want to use facts or information to support your own argument. If the information is found exclusively in a particular source, you must clearly acknowledge that source. For example, if you use data from a scientific experiment conducted and reported by a researcher, you must cite your source, probably a scientific journal or a website. Or if you use a piece of information discovered by another scholar in the course of his or her own research, you must cite your source. But if the fact or information is generally well known and accepted—for example, that Woodrow Wilson served as president of both Princeton University and the United States, or that Avogadro's number is 6.02×10^{23} —you do not need to cite a source. Note that facts are different from ideas: facts may not need to be cited, whereas ideas must always be cited. Deciding which facts or pieces of information require citation and which are common knowledge, and thus do not require citation, isn't always easy. For example, finding the same fact or piece of information in multiple sources doesn't necessarily mean that it counts as common knowledge. Your best course of action in such a case may be to cite the most credible or authoritative of the multiple sources. Refer to a later section in this booklet, "Not-So-Common Knowledge," for more discussion of how to determine what counts as common knowledge. But remember: when in doubt, cite.

5. Supplementary Information. Occasionally, especially in a longer research paper, you may not be able to include all of the information or ideas from your research in the body of your own paper. In such cases, insert a note offering supplementary information rather than simply providing basic bibliographic information (author, title, place and date of publication, and page numbers). In such footnotes or endnotes, you might provide additional data to bolster your argument, or briefly present an alternative idea that you found in one of your sources, or even list two or three additional articles on some topic that your reader might find of interest. Such notes demonstrate the breadth and depth of your research, and permit you to include germane, but not essential, information or concepts without interrupting the flow of your own paper.

Additional claims or analysis of your own that you want to include in your essay without distracting readers from the central line of argument may also appear in footnote form. In these cases, the footnote will not include a citation because the ideas or findings presented belong to you.

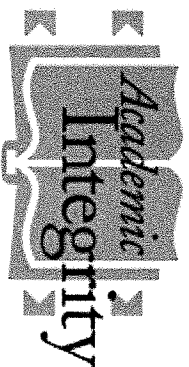
In all of the cases above, the standards of academic integrity require both citing the source in the text of your essay and its incorporation into your bibliography. To be clear, it is not enough to simply list a source in your bibliography if it deserves explicit citation in the essay's body. Failure to provide that citation may result in being charged with plagiarism.

Sometimes, though rarely, a source merits inclusion in your bibliography even when it doesn't merit a particular citation in your paper's text. This most often occurs when a source plays a critical role in your understanding of your topic, but never lends a specific idea or piece of evidence to your essay's argument. For example, imagine you're writing a paper about totalitarian

regimes, and your thinking about such regimes is heavily influenced by your reading of George Orwell's 1984. Imagine further that nothing from the novel appears explicitly in your essay, and your strongest reference to the book is describing these regimes as "Orwellian" in passing. Here there would be no need to cite 1984 directly, but it would be appropriate to list it in your bibliography. As always, if you're unsure about a particular case, err on the side of providing a citation and a bibliography entry.

For international students, it's especially important to review and understand the citation standards and expectations for institutions of higher learning in the United States. Students who have done their college preparation at schools in other countries may have learned research and paper-writing practices different from those at Princeton. For example, students from schools in East Asia may learn that copying directly from sources, without citation, is the proper way to write papers and do research. Students in France, preparing for the Baccalaureate examination, may be encouraged to memorize whole passages from secondary sources and copy them into papers and exam essays. Those cultural differences can sometimes lead to false assumptions about citation practices and expectations at Princeton. Make sure you understand the University's academic regulations and ask for assistance from your professors or preceptors if you're not sure.

The Writing Center, located in Whitman College, is also a key resource for students wanting to learn more about proper note-taking and citation practices. To make an appointment, visit www.princeton.edu/writing/appt or drop in without an appointment Sunday through Thursday evenings.



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Examples of Plagiarism

The examples below demonstrate a few varieties of textual plagiarism, from verbatim copying to thorough paraphrasing. The comments that follow the examples offer guidance about how a source may be used and when a source must be cited. (These examples can also be found in *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities*.)

Text example 1

Original source (text)

Alvin Kernan, *The Playwright as Magician*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. pp. 102–103.

From time to time this submerged or latent theater in becomes almost overt. It is close to the surface in Hamlet's pretense of madness, the "antic disposition" he puts on to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from plucking out the heart of his mystery. It is even closer to the surface when Hamlet enters his mother's room and holds up, side by side, the pictures of the two kings, Old Hamlet and Claudius, and proceeds to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made, presenting truth by means of a show. Similarly, when he leaps into the open grave at Ophelia's funeral, ranting in high heroic terms, he is acting out for Laertes, and perhaps for himself as well, the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Verbatim plagiarism, or unacknowledged direct quotation (lifted passages are underlined)

Almost all of Shakespeare's Hamlet can be understood as a play about acting and the theater. For example, there is Hamlet's pretense of madness, the "antic disposition" that he puts on to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from plucking out the heart of his mystery. When Hamlet enters his mother's room, he holds up, side by side, the pictures of the two kings, Old Hamlet and Claudius, and proceeds to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made, presenting truth by means of a show. Similarly, when he leaps into the open grave at Ophelia's funeral, ranting in high heroic terms, he is acting out for Laertes, and perhaps for himself as well, the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Comment for example 1

Aside from an opening sentence loosely adapted from the original and reworded more simply,

this entire passage is taken almost word-for-word from the source. The few small alterations of the source do not relieve the writer of the responsibility to attribute these words to their original author, Alvin Kernan. A passage from a source may be worth quoting at length if it makes a point precisely or elegantly. In such cases, copy the passage exactly, place it in quotation marks, and cite the author.

Text example 2

Original source (text)

From time to time this submerged or latent theater in *Hamlet* becomes almost overt. It is close to the surface in Hamlet's pretense of madness, the "antic disposition" he puts on to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from plucking out the heart of his mystery. It is even closer to the surface when Hamlet enters his mother's room and holds up, side by side, the pictures of the two kings, Old Hamlet and Claudius, and proceeds to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made, presenting truth by means of a show. Similarly, when he leaps into the open grave at Ophelia's funeral, ranting in high heroic terms, he is acting out for Laertes, and perhaps for himself as well, the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Lifting selected passages and phrases without proper acknowledgment (lifted passages are underlined)

Almost all of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* can be understood as a play about acting and the theater. For example, in Act 1, Hamlet adopts a pretense of madness that he uses to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from discovering his mission to revenge his father's murder. He also presents truth by means of a show when he compares the portraits of Gertrude's two husbands in order to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made. And when he leaps in Ophelia's open grave ranting in high heroic terms, Hamlet is acting out the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Comment for example 2

This passage, in content and structure, is taken wholesale from the source. Although the writer has rewritten much of the paragraph, and fewer phrases are lifted verbatim from the source, this is a clear example of plagiarism. Inserting even short phrases from the source into a new sentence still requires placing quotations around the borrowed words and citing the author. If even one phrase is good enough to borrow, it must be properly set off by quotation marks. In the case above, if the writer had rewritten the entire paragraph and used only Alvin Kernan's phrase "high heroic terms" without properly quoting and acknowledging its source, the writer would have plagiarized.

Text example 3

Original source (text)

From time to time this submerged or latent theater in Hamlet becomes almost overt. It is close to the surface in Hamlet's pretense of madness, the "antic disposition" he puts on to protect himself and prevent his antagonists from plucking out the heart of his mystery. It is even closer to the surface when Hamlet enters his mother's room and holds up, side by side, the

pictures of the two kings, Old Hamlet and Claudius, and proceeds to describe for her the true nature of the choice she has made, presenting truth by means of a show. Similarly, when he leaps into the open grave at Ophelia's funeral, ranting in high heroic terms, he is acting out for Laertes, and perhaps for himself as well, the folly of excessive, melodramatic expressions of grief.

Paraphrasing the text while maintaining the basic paragraph and sentence structure

Almost all of Shakespeare's Hamlet can be understood as a play about acting and the theater. For example, in Act 1, Hamlet pretends to be insane in order to make sure his enemies do not discover his mission to revenge his father's murder. The theme is even more obvious when Hamlet compares the pictures of his mother's two husbands to show her what a bad choice she has made, using their images to reveal the truth. Also, when he jumps into Ophelia's grave, hurling his challenge to Laertes, Hamlet demonstrates the foolishness of exaggerated expressions of emotion.

Comment for example 3

Almost nothing of Kernan's original language remains in this rewritten paragraph. However, the key idea, the choice and order of the examples, and even the basic structure of the original sentences are all taken from the source. This is another clear example of plagiarism. When paraphrasing, it's absolutely necessary (1) to use your own words and structure, and (2) to place a citation at the end of the paraphrase to acknowledge that the content is not original.

A note on plagiarism in computer programs:

The organization of courses involving computer programming varies throughout the University. In many courses, you will work with other students in pairs or in larger groups. In those cases where individual programs are submitted based on work involving collaboration, you must acknowledge the extent of the collaboration when the program is submitted. Expectations for citing the use of code in completing a computer programming assignment may vary from course to course, so it is particularly important for you to check with the faculty member in charge of the course on citation policies when completing programming assignments.