

Hi, welcome to this online session on plagiarism. This is one of three online sessions that will be available through this Lent term.

I'm Liz and I'm the college librarian.

In this session, we hope that you will learn more about what plagiarism is, so you'll be able to define it, will be able to look at strategies to avoid plagiarizing. And also we'll learn a bit about good techniques for taking notes.

So what is plagiarism, some of you may be thinking in your head of a definition that you give? Well, the university says the plagiarism is defined as submitting as one's own work, irrespective of intent to deceive that which derives in part or in its entirety from the work of others without due acknowledgment. It is both poor scholarship and a breach of academic integrity. That's from the university wide statement on plagiarism if you want to read the whole thing. You probably have no intention of committing plagiarism. However, I've got a couple of somewhat surprising facts for you.

Almost half of the students in this survey plagiarized during their time in Cambridge, and whilst this survey is from 2008, I don't think you should feel things have drastically changed. Some of the reasons given included heavy workloads and pressure to meet deadlines. And certainly those haven't changed in 12, 13 years. But also, many of the people responding to that survey said it hadn't been made clear to them really what counted as plagiarism and what was OK. So in this session, we're going to go through that in a bit more detail. As the university's statement said, plagiarism is about using the work of others without due acknowledgment. So let's unpack some examples.

Example one, Joe quotes directly from a textbook to reinforce the point he's making using quotation marks.

Is this plagiarism? You might want to make notes at home and give yourself a score, see how well you do on these.

Now, this is direct quotation, so actually Joe's doing exactly the right thing, as long as he also acknowledges his sources. He's put the items from the textbook in quotation marks signifying that they are not his own words.

So let's see example two, this is Simon, he's using an indirect quotation from a book, he rewrites it to fit the structure of his sentence and paragraph.

Is that plagiarism?

Well, it could be, but it's no problem to use indirect quotation, provided that Simon is acknowledging his source.

Let's move on. Example three.

Ellen uses an idea from a journal article in her essay without quoting from it directly.

This is similar to example two, paraphrasing rather than indirect quotation, Ellen is summarizing completely in her own words. This is also fine, provided she again acknowledges where she got these ideas from using clear citation.

Example four Stephen and C.J. attended the same seminar, C.J. noted down an interesting idea that Stephen had. He uses this in his essay.

Is this plagiarism? Now we're getting into slightly dangerous territory. It is plagiarism if you don't acknowledge your classmate, if you have used their idea.

I think this is something that's often quite overlooked. It doesn't matter whether the person having the idea is the academic at the front of the room or the person sitting next to you, it's someone else's idea. You need to acknowledge that fact.

Example five Priya and Steph each have the same assignment to write, they decide to collaborate during the research and reading phase and share notes with each other. They then write their assignments. So we've got a prime example of collaboration here, to be honest, I would recommend avoiding detailed collaboration unless you are working on something that has been designated a group assignment. It's really hard to try and unpick who has contributed what to finished essays if you have worked very closely together. That doesn't mean you can't sit in the library together and talk about things, but keep your work somewhat separate unless you are supposed to be working together.

Example six. George has had a really busy week and hasn't had the time to complete the work he needs to hand in for supervision, Sunil is in the year above and has given George his work from last year to help. George hands in Sunil's work as his own. Well, that's pretty clearly plagiarism. In fact, it's straight cheating. Submitting someone else's work or parts of someone else's work is absolutely not allowed. I really hope that most of you would not even contemplate doing that, but I think it can be tempting with the pressures of time.

Next example, Niamh directly quotes from a number of sources in her work, she does not create a bibliography, but does include brief footnotes for each quotation. So Niamh is nearly doing the right thing, she's done half her job here. She's included footnotes, but without a bibliography, that information isn't really enough to track down what her sources are. So she hasn't properly cited her sources. She will probably get marked down when her work is actually an assessed essay or dissertation.

So what it boils down to with plagiarism really is very simple, it's acknowledging your sources, if you use an argument that you have read, whether you directly quote it or whether you paraphrase it in completely different words, if you use someone else's ideas, whether it's an author or a classmate you've collaborated with, you must acknowledge the other person properly. Otherwise, it is plagiarism. And obviously, if you submit someone else's work and try to pass it off your own, that's downright cheating. The thing is, if you are caught plagiarizing, even without intent, this could have serious consequences for your academic career if you submit an assessed piece of work to the university that includes plagiarized elements. If you are discovered the best case scenario really is that you'll be given zero for that paper. In many cases, that's going to irretrievably affect the final grade of your course. I don't want to scare you with this, but it is good to cultivate a healthy low level of paranoia when it comes to crediting sources.

Basically, academic writing is a dialogue, your arguments will have more weight if they're supported by other authors, you were building on other people's work, so you must give them credit and give enough information that your reader could follow up a reference to find more. Just as you might follow up reference when you're reading a book or article, in turn, you would expect to get recognition for the hard work you've

done yourself, both in terms of your essay mark, and also one day in the distant future when you may be being quoted by others, including students, for your academic work.

I apologize for the fuzziness of this slide, but there are many tools available to your supervisors and markers to help detect plagiarism. This is an example of a really terribly plagiarized essay that's been put through the Turnitin software. There's a 90 percent match here to sources that are not cited, but often supervisors don't even need to use this kind of technology to spot plagiarism. Be aware that they do know the subject. That's why they're teaching you. In all likelihood, they may have read what you are citing, especially if it appears on a reading list. They will recognize things they have read before. And they also get to know your writing style. If your paragraph suddenly reads quite differently then they will be suspicious that it's not your own work.

A final word of advice, if you do inadvertently plagiarize, and it can happen, own up, particularly if it's a weekly essay with your supervisor, there's no grand consequences to it. Be honest, perhaps you got stressed about your deadline, made a poor choice. Or ran out of time to just do all of your citation properly. It's better to admit this. It might even lead onto a good conversation with your supervisor about deadlines and time management.

The best way to avoid plagiarizing is to reference correctly. The first step to creating good references is accurate notetaking. So here's a few tips on how to note things down. Firstly, be consistent, however you want to take your notes. Be consistent, develop a style of your own that works for you and means that everything is easy to understand and access when you come to look over that later. What that style is could be many things.

Do you want your notes to be ink or electronic? There isn't a right answer here. Do whichever you prefer. If you like stationary, enjoy yourself and some lovely, nice pens and notebooks.

Keep your notes safe. If you do keep your notes electronically, make sure that you've got a backup copy. You might want to use cloud storage like Dropbox or Google Drive so you can easily access them wherever you are. And if you prefer paper, make sure

they're organized and labeled so you can find them again and keep them away from cups of coffee.

You might think about color coding and annotating as you take your notes, make sure that you're being clear about what's a direct quotation from the text, which is a summary from the text, and what is your own original thought in relation to that text. You might want to use different color pens or annotate with doodles to make this clear. Don't think that you will remember by the time you revisit your notes.

So do it the first time around. Come up with your own coding system that, again, is consistent and you understand.

When you read things online, bookmark the page wherever possible. You might need to use that in your reference and it saves you searching for it again, you can even make folders in your bookmarks for your different papers or topics.

One word of warning. If you are bookmarking things like electronic articles, the best thing may be to bookmark the result in iDiscover and that way you'll definitely get access without any problems. If you bookmark the page itself, it may not recognize you as a Cambridge student and you may not be able to log back in.

But what sort of points should you be noting down specifically for reference purposes? Well, always take the bibliographic details, don't worry about what that means. It's just a really fancy way to say make sure you write down the author or authors, the full title, the publisher, the year and page numbers. And for journals, the authors, the journal title, volume and issue number if it has them, year and pages.

This will make life so much easier when you are referencing, you don't need to go back to the original source for those details. For more information, you can contact the library via email. You can take a look at the university pages on plagiarism and academic misconduct. And your faculties and departments may also offer sessions.

Thank you very much for listening to this, please keep an eye out for two more sessions, looking at assessing sources and more information on referencing.