

Plagiarism Pamphlet

Why should I care about plagiarism?

Washington and Lee University is an intellectual community that thrives on the exchange of ideas among professors and students. Essential to this exchange and the academic character of our university are respect for the intellectual property of others and the trust that ideas presented as one's own are indeed one's own. As a student at Washington and Lee, you should take pride in your work and want your professors to know what is your work and, more importantly, what isn't. Furthermore, properly citing your work is important to your grade and integrity.

In the two academic years from 2008-2010, 62.5% of the Executive Committee's guilty verdicts in honor hearings concerned instances of plagiarism. Because the students of Washington and Lee University have considered plagiarism a violation of the Honor System in the past, all forms of plagiarism, including internet plagiarism, are taken very seriously. Violations may be due to students not knowing or misunderstanding the rules of academic citation, and ignorance concerning plagiarism does not excuse the act. With this pamphlet, the E.C. hopes to better inform students about proper citation and plagiarism.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism describes the use of another's words or ideas without proper acknowledgment. Plagiarism takes many forms, including the unacknowledged copying of phrases or texts, or the use of ideas without indicating the source. Facts not considered to be common knowledge must also be properly acknowledged. Plagiarism has been called a combination of lying, cheating, and stealing.

How can I do right?

Plagiarism is easy to avoid; if you include words or ideas that are not your own, acknowledge whose they are and put verbatim text in quotation. Some facts that are considered common knowledge do not need to be cited, but you will not be penalized for acknowledging where you verified a fact.

I still don't understand; what should I do?

- ◆ Obey this safe rule of thumb: when in doubt, cite.
- ◆ Talk to your professor about what sources are allowed, what citation style he/she prefers, and any questions you might have about citation.
- ◆ Visit <http://go.wlu.edu/plagiarism> for resources about citing properly and avoiding plagiarism.

Can I have some examples of what not to do and what to do?

Excerpt from Daniel Boorstin's *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (p.34):

“The Quakers lacked neither courage nor energy. It was not so much the actual content of their creed as it was the uncompromising obstinacy with which they hung on to it and their attitude toward themselves, which were decisive. The two flaws fatal to the influence of this remarkable people on American culture were, first an urge toward martyrdom, and a preoccupation with the purity of their own souls; and second, a rigidity in all their beliefs. The first led their vision away from community and inward to themselves; the second hardened them against the ordinary

accommodations of this world. Neither the martyr nor the doctrinaire could flourish on America soil.”

1. Example of Verbatim Plagiarism of Boorstin:

The Quakers were both energetic and courageous. It was not so much the content of their belief as the uncompromising stubbornness with which they clung to it and their attitude toward themselves, which were decisive. The two problems that prevented the influence of these remarkable people on American culture were 1) urge toward martyrdom, and a preoccupation with personal spiritual purity and 2) a rigidity in all their beliefs. The first pushed their vision away from society and inward to themselves; the second hardened them against the ordinary accommodations of this world. Neither the martyr nor the doctrinaire could prosper in America.

Explanation: Even though the writer makes a variety of word substitutions, this is a compelling example of plagiarism. The passage is in no way the writer’s own work, since neither the language nor the ideas are original. It would still be plagiarism even if the source were indicated because it presents Boorstin’s words as the writer’s own without quotation marks.

2. Example of Plagiarism of Boorstin’s Ideas:

Although the Quakers possessed various important virtues, principally courage and energy, a strong adherence to their creed posed two barriers to their leaving a lasting impact on American cultural history. A tendency toward individual sacrifice and martyrdom prevented them from forming communities, while their inflexible spirituality made them intolerant of the ways of others.

Explanation: The student generally manages to avoid Boorstin’s phrasing and language and to reorder the sentences and clauses. But, the student fails to acknowledge that the pair of causes of the limited cultural effect of Quakerism is derived from Boorstin’s analysis. The idea is plagiarized even though the language is not parallel. The writer needs to indicate the source, either through a footnote or an in-text citation.

3. Example of Proper Use and Acknowledgment:

Daniel Boorstin claims that the Quakers had little permanent effect on American culture and identifies two related “flaws” of self-centeredness in their outlook: “an urge toward martyrdom... [and] a rigidity in all their beliefs.” He feels that these qualities made them inflexibly asocial, unable to adapt to what he calls, “the ordinary accommodations of this world” (Boorstin 34). While stressing the introversion of the Quaker worldview, though, he underestimates the extraordinary communal energy that it produced. The qualities he describes produced a highly functional – though admittedly self-contained and isolate – social subculture, dependent largely upon itself, which has persisted throughout American history.

Explanation: The writer has quoted some of Boorstin’s prose directly and has paraphrased other ideas and cited this use. This citation is an example of the parenthetical style.