How to Avoid Plagiarism*

Assuming you're not just a dirty rotten scoundrel who is plagiarizing on purpose.

What Is Plagiarism?

Every piece of writing you turn in should be your own work. If the work is not yours, you are cheating, and you will have to face whatever consequences your teacher and the school deem appropriate (e.g. zero for the assignment, zero for the class, academic probation, etc.). For some writing assignments, you will be expected to include material from sources that were written by someone else (i.e. direct quotations, paraphrases, summaries); however, this material will be used as evidence, examples, or support, and it will need to be properly documented. The documentation shows where you found the information, and it tells your instructor that you are not plagiarizing.

There are three forms of plagiarism: blatant, unintentional, and recycling.

Blatant Plagiarism
- Turning in someone else's work as your own (i.e. borrowed or purchased papers).
- Copying and pasting material into your paper and making it look like yours.
- Borrowing the structure or framework of someone else's work (e.g. making the same points, using the same examples, etc.).

Unintentional Plagiarism
- Not properly documenting sources.
- Not properly creating paraphrases or summaries.

Recycling (or Self-Plagiarism)
- You are supposed to write new papers for each assignment and class. If you try to "recycle" papers from previous assignments or classes, this is considered self-plagiarism, and most instructors will not accept them.

How Do I Use Source Material Without Plagiarizing?

There are two necessary steps to avoiding plagiarism:

1) Documentation
- You must carefully document all direct quotations, paraphrases, and summaries.
- Include a *citation* for each direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary.
- Include a *works cited entry* for each source.
- When in doubt, document!

2) Proper Use of Direct Quotations, Paraphrases, and Summaries

Direct Quotation
A direct quotation is a passage that is copied directly, word-for-word, from a source and used in a paper as evidence, an example, or support.

> *For example:*
>
> **Original**
> "For years we created an altogether forgiving world, in which whatever slight effort you gave was all that was demanded" (Neusner 261).
>
> **Direct Quotation**
> In "The Speech the Graduates Didn't Hear," Professor Jacob Neusner of Brown University claims that schools create "an altogether forgiving world," where students are only required to put in minimal effort (261).

Paraphrase
A paraphrase is when you put information from a source into your own words. Whenever you plan to include a paraphrase, it is important to remember that a paraphrase is *not* changing out a few words for synonyms or simply shifting the syntax (word order). A true paraphrase is **completely rewording** source material while maintaining the original meaning.

> *For example:*
>
> **Original**
> "In the crucial years leading up to his first major phase, the problematic but ultimately productive tension that Kafka experienced between the office and his writing was deepened by further dichotomies, which, incidentally, reflected Prague's geographical position as a meeting point between east and west" (Adler 55).
>
> **💣 Plagiaristic Paraphrase**
> The tension experienced by Kafka in the critical years before his first phase was a problem, but also productive. This tension was between his office and his writing and reflected the geography of Prague which was a meeting point between the east and the west (Adler 55).
>
> **True Paraphrase**
> Kafka's vocational obligations began to conflict with his intense devotion to writing; however, this struggle only served to further develop his skills as an author (Adler 55).

Summary
A summary is condensing the ideas expressed in a source into a sentence or short paragraph. As with a paraphrase, you should completely reword the material without changing the original meaning.

> *For example:*
>
> In *The Hundred-Year Lie*, Randall Fitzgerald explores how three particular industries (processed food, pharmaceutical, and chemical) have dominated the U.S. economy while simultaneously destroying the health and well-being of the American public (23).