

How to succeed@avoiding plagiarism

This leaflet gives you valuable advice and techniques' to use to make sure you avoid that deadliest of academic perils - plagiarism. Make sure you get good grades by knowing what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

Remember that you can get lots of study tips and resources from succeed@solent on myCourse.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism defined

Plagiarism is taking the words, theories, creations or ideas of another person and passing them off as your own. Plagiarism can occur in lots of different ways:

- copying a chunk of text from someone else's writing without citing the source
- paraphrasing what someone else said but not showing who said it or where the idea came from
- putting your references into your bibliography, but not indicating in the text of your paper where these sources are used
- copying anything that is created by someone else, such as images, tables, graphs, etc, into your paper and not naming the source
- copying from another student's paper, or even from one of your own papers
- acquiring a complete essay from another source, such as buying it off the net. This **really** is academic misconduct!

Imprint it on your brain - Plagiarism is **always wrong**; there are no times when it is acceptable. If you use someone else's words or ideas, you must **always** reference them.

Academic misconduct

Plagiarism is one of most serious forms of academic misconduct. Southampton Solent University has very clear guidelines on student academic conduct and procedures for how instances of academic misconduct will be dealt with. Make sure you are familiar with these. You can access these through the portal.



Inadvertent plagiarism

It can easily happen that you write ideas that you have in mind, though you don't know where you got them from. This is *inadvertent plagiarism*. Usually a writer is unaware of doing this. At other times you may have an inkling that you heard this somewhere, but use it anyway. Never have an inkling! Find the source.

A very good strategy to avoid inadvertent plagiarism is to be thorough in recording all the books, websites, journals, etc, that you read while you do your research.

Common knowledge

Common knowledge is something generally known or found in many different sources; there is no single or specialist source you need to look up to get that information.

You *do not* need to reference a source for common knowledge, and it's not plagiarism to use common knowledge facts in your writing. However, if in doubt, it's safest to give a source.

Examples of common knowledge:

- ✓ Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius.
- ✓ Winston Churchill was born on 30 November 1874.
- ✓ Southampton Solent University is located on East Park Terrace in Southampton.

How do you avoid plagiarism?

Reference correctly

The key to avoiding plagiarism is to learn how to reference correctly. First of all, you must know what reference system your department prefers you to use. At Solent University, the majority of subjects use the Harvard Referencing System. However, there are also at least two other methods in use: **APA** for psychology students and the **Law** system. There are detailed explanations of how to use each of these in the tutorial 'How to succeed@referencing', which you can find in succeed@research on myCourse.

References must be provided for all source material:

- In text: name, date and page number are given (usually in brackets) next to a quote or paraphrase.
- In the reference list: a full citation for the source is given in the reference list (or bibliography) at the end of your paper.

Note: a 'reference list' is a list of all sources quoted or paraphrased in the paper; a 'bibliography' is a complete list of all source materials consulted when preparing the paper, whether these are quoted or not.

Quote effectively

To quote is to write out the ideas of another author using exactly the same words as the original.

Why quote?

- When referring to a passage that is short enough to reproduce in its original form
- To show your knowledge of other opinions on your topic
- To support your own arguments

Key features of a quote:

- Taken from a source text
- Written using exactly the same words as the original
- Uses quotation marks
- Used with a reference to the source

Dangers of quotation:

- Over-reliance on quotations
- Over-long quotations
- Quotations placed in an illogical place in your own writing
- Quotations placed in your text in a grammatically incorrect way

Mechanics of quotation:

You have three options:

1. Retain the full sentence structure of the original sentence, e.g. *Doig (2008, p.1) says, 'Academic essays benefit from thorough planning and thorough research.'*
2. Include part of the original sentence in your own sentence, e.g. *Doig (2008, p.1) tells us that university essays are improved through 'thorough planning and thorough research'. You must* make sure that the sentence section holds together grammatically. A poor example of this is, *According to Doig (2008, p.1) academic essays are improved 'thorough planning and thorough research'.* This example needs a word like 'through', 'from' or 'by' before the quotation in order to be grammatical. To check you've got it right, read the sentence including your quote out loud and make sure it reads normally. And always remember to get someone else to read your writing.
3. When you use a quotation of three or more lines of text, you have to use a **block quote**. This means that you write the quote on a new line, indented from your side margin and without quotation marks (if you're using the Harvard system). You're best to use an introductory phrase to set up the quotation, e.g.

There are some key elements to consider when you are writing your university essays. As Doig says,

Academic essays benefit from thorough planning and thorough research. These are perhaps the most important elements in ensuring that your work comes across as well-thought-out and of an appropriately academic standard. Without these, writing tends towards opinionated ranting.

(Doig, 2008, p.1)

Paraphrase effectively

To paraphrase is to write out the ideas of another author using different but similar wording - a 'parallel phrase' to the original.

Why paraphrase?

- When referring to passages that are too long to quote
- To show your knowledge of other opinions on your topic
- To support your own arguments

Key features of a paraphrase:

- Taken from a source text
- Written in your own words
- Does not use quotation marks
- Usually shorter than the original passage
- Retains the meaning of the original
- Used with a reference to the source

Dangers of paraphrasing:

- Using a mixture of your own words and the original's - any original text used must be given in quotation marks
- Rewriting in such a way that the original meaning is lost or confused
- Rewriting in such a way that the original author's opinion is misrepresented

NOTE: Always make sure that you get the original author's opinion across in exactly the way it was intended, even though you are putting it in your own words.



Mechanics of paraphrasing:

There are various ways you can change the original words but retain their meaning:

- Synonyms - using words that have the same meaning as the original words, e.g.
Original: *academic writing / thorough planning*
Paraphrase: *university writing / in-depth planning*
- Change the word order, e.g.
Original: *Academic writing benefits from thorough planning.*
Paraphrase: *Thorough planning is a benefit to academic writing.*
- Change the sentence order, e.g.
Original: *Academic essays benefit from thorough planning and thorough research. These are perhaps the most important elements in ensuring that your work comes across as well-thought-out and of an appropriately academic standard. Without these, writing tends towards opinionated ranting.*
Paraphrase: *Writing can tend towards opinionated ranting if the work does not come across as well-thought-out and or as being of an appropriately academic standard. Import elements in avoiding this are thorough planning and thorough research.*
- Shortening the original content. For instance, the long quote above could be given as:
Thorough planning and research help ensure that writing appears well thought out and appropriately academic.
- A combination of these techniques usually works best to ensure that you are paraphrasing, rather than quoting. For example, the above long quote could be given as:
Doig (2008, p.1) tells us, in-depth planning and research allow essays to reach the expected university standards.

Further help

You will find the following tutorials in succeed@solent:

'How to succeed@avoiding plagiarism'

'How to succeed@referencing'

Included in the referencing tutorial is a very useful list of all of the different sources you may use to write a paper with details of how to write a citation for each.