# Avoiding plagiarism

Research has Identified three kinds of plagiarism that the reader can encounter.

## Plagiarism Types

### Intentional Plagiarism

- The copying of large sections of text without citation of quotation marks
- The copying of ideas without citation

The author intends to deceive the reader into believing that another person's work is actually the work of the author. This type of plagiarism sometimes occurs when students feel overwhelmed by assignments or the writing of a thesis or dissertation.

### Patchwriting

- Sections of text are copied and pasted from the source with only a few minor changes; there are no quotation marks, but there are citations

The author attempts to cite the sources for his or her information but does not sufficiently change the original text during paraphrasing. The version in the author's text is too similar to the original text. This suggests a lack of writing competence or an uncertainty about the rules of source-use and citation.

### Textual Plagiarism

- There are problems with source-use (citation and/or quotation) but the reason for these is unclear (i.e., a lack of knowledge about source-use or an intentional attempt at deception).

It must be noted that all three are instances of inappropriate source-use and will have a negative consequence for the author. It is, therefore, imperative that writers, especially student writers, make every effort to avoid any misuse of sources in their writing.

# 3 TIPS TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

1. Cite everything. Remember that there are many reasons to cite, not just to give credit to another researcher. Many citations will create an impression in the reader of a more professional and well-researched paper. This is especially true for students, who must display their knowledge of the field in their assignments, theses, and dissertations. In addition, sign-posting is greatly appreciated by readers as it allows them to find sources that are of interest to them.

2. Be careful when taking notes. Unintentional plagiarism is often the result of careless and sloppy note-taking. Students will sometimes paraphrase research in their notes and will sometimes copy and paste from the source into their notes. When it comes time to include that source information into their texts, they forget which notes were paraphrased and which were copied and end up reproducing text without quotation marks. You may choose to paraphrase or to copy and paste from your sources, but make sure that you are consistent in your strategy. That way, you will know if you need to alter the text from your notes or not

3. Don't worry about your originality. Many student writers worry that if they cite too much, the reader will think that the writer has contributed little to the text. Remember that you contribution comes from the synthesis of sources, the collection of new data, the analysis of that data, and the discussion and interpretation of your findings. In short, the vast majority of your paper will be reporting on what other researchers have done.

# Paraphrasing

Many writers, especially English-learner writers, find it difficult to paraphrase the sentences from sources that they wish to include in their own texts. This can lead to excessive quotation, patchwriting, or even intentional plagiarism. It is therefore important that writers hone their paraphrasing skills. With some effort, it is possible for writers to become quite adept at paraphrasing.

## Recommended Paraphrasing Technique

### Step 1.

When reading a text, the researcher should read with his or her own research questions in mind. Anything that is relevant to the researcher's research question should be highlighted or copied into another document. When the researcher has finished reading a section of the text, **he or she should close the original text and any copied notes and write from memory how the information from that source relates to the researcher's research question.** Once finished, the researcher can then check the highlighted information in the original text or the document with copied passages from the original text to make sure that they have remembered accurately. This process will develop the researcher's paraphrasing skills very quickly and should be done for the first 10 papers the researcher reads.

### Step 2.

Now that his or her paraphrasing skills have been developed, the researcher can paraphrase as they read. This will save time but should not be attempted before the researcher feels confident in their ability to paraphrase.

### *Citation Activity 5*

Look at the text on the opposite page. Read the text with the following research question in mind and underline/highlight any relevant information:

What factors influence a professor's grading of a student research paper?

Adapted from Petric, B. (2007). Rhetorical functions of citations in high- and low-rated master's theses. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *6*, 238-253.

Further differences in citation use in the two groups of theses [high-rated and low-rated] are revealed when citations are compared for each section of the thesis: introduction, literature review, context of the study, methods, data analysis and discussion, and conclusion (see Tables 2 and 3). The data confirm the low-rated theses' tendency towards greater descriptiveness since they use citations for attribution [Harwood's Credit] to a greater extent than the high-rated theses in all thesis parts. The most remarkable differences include the five times higher percentage of evaluation citations [Harwood's Engaging] in the theoretical chapter in the high-rated theses (7.12% as compared with 1.40%) and the four times higher percentage of application citations [Harwood's Supporting or Building] in the analysis chapter in the high-rated theses (15.2% as compared with 3.61%). These figures can be interpreted in light of the functions of these thesis parts. The literature review, for example, serves a variety of complex purposes (Ridley, 2000; Swales & Lindemann, 2002), including justification of the focus of the research and the choice of the theoretical framework, operationalisation of major concepts and establishment of the grounds for the analysis that follows. This complexity requires the use of a variety of types of citation. The prevalence of attribution citations, then, suggests the type of literature review that writing teachers often complain about, where a selection of studies is summarised and presented without much elaboration on the links among them or on their relevance to the writer's own research. Interestingly, citation density in the literature review chapters in the low-rated theses is slightly higher (15.31 citations per 1000 words as compared with 14.17 in high-rated theses), indicating more frequent reference to sources, but more often for the purposes of attribution. In contrast, in literature reviews in the high- rated theses, writers refer to the work of others for a greater variety of rhetorical purposes, most frequently to establish links among sources and to evaluate them. (pp. 248-249)

Now turn the page and write from memory how this source helps to answer you research question.

**Notes** on Petric, B. (2007). Rhetorical functions of citations in high- and low-rated master's theses. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *6*, 238-253.

Now, check the original text to make sure your memory is accurate.

Finally, convert your notes into at least one paragraph.