
Plagiarism: To Do or Not To Do? That Is The Quest

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Getting to grips with this writing thingy can be a fiddlesome object of contention between desire for speed and quality of content. My already discombobulated brain has to come to some agreement with itself on how to master crucial literary rules. Thus allowing my own bank account to retain whatever meagre profits I make from bundling words, and not that of the courts.

The bearded bastards of academia take a dim view of unattributed copying. Woe betide the student, scientist or author of fiction who sacrifices literary integrity to go out and party; substituting a 5 minute cut and paste session for a three hours of original thought, well brain activity anyway.

In fiction and non-fiction the possibility of plagiarism is ever present. To date its effect on you may have been a vague tweak of conscience, "Have I done the dirty deed or not?"; followed by a rapid move on to the next sentence without so much as a backward glance.

For the first time I have decided to really nail its meaning, its consequences and its cure. To do this I am going to COPY a piece of text on the subject off the web, as you do :-), and share it with you along with my take on what I should do to avoid plagiarism and a knock on the door by a burly bailiff.

Copied Text Starts

What is Plagiarism?

Many people think of plagiarism as copying another's work, or borrowing someone else's original ideas. But terms like "copying" and "borrowing" can disguise the seriousness of the offense:

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means

- to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own
- to use (another's production) without crediting the source

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- to commit literary theft
 - to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.

In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward.

But can words and ideas really be stolen?

According to U.S. law, the answer is yes. The expression of original ideas is considered intellectual property, and is protected by copyright laws, just like original inventions. Almost all forms of expression fall under copyright protection as long as they are recorded in some way (such as a book or a computer file).

All of the following are considered plagiarism:

- turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not (see our section on "fair use" rules)

Most cases of plagiarism can be avoided, however, by citing sources. Simply acknowledging that certain material has been borrowed, and providing your audience with the information necessary to find that source, is usually enough to prevent plagiarism. See our section on citation for more information on how to cite sources properly.

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"What is Plagiarism?" Plagiarism.org. Accessed On October 26th, 2009.
<http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/what_is_plagiarism.html>

End Of Copied Text

My blog stuff follows these rules in a roundabout way but I still have to do some research on the placement of citations within the body of text so its obvious but not intrusive. I think there is an element of personal style involved, the difference between a citation and reference may be small. It may just be a difference in the usage of American and British English, whatever you do don't quote me on this.

Anyway here are some definitions www.plagiarism.org left out

APA - American Psychological Association

MLA - Modern Language Association of America

Here are some citation examples from ezine and the links are well worth reading

- MLA Style Citation:
Bush, Janet "What is APA Format and Why is it Important?."
[What is APA Format and Why is it Important?](http://ezinearticles.com/?What-is-APA-Format-and-Why-is-it-Important?&id=235442).
3 Jul. 2006 EzineArticles.com.
26 Oct. 2009 <<http://ezinearticles.com/?What-is-APA-Format-and-Why-is-it-Important?&id=235442>>.
- APA Style Citation:
Bush, J. (2006, July 3). What is APA Format and Why is it Important?.
Retrieved October 26, 2009, from <http://ezinearticles.com/?What-is-APA-Format-and-Why-is-it-Important?&id=235442>
- Chicago Style Citation:
Bush, Janet "What is APA Format and Why is it Important?." What is APA Format and Why is it Important?
EzineArticles.com. <http://ezinearticles.com/?What-is-APA-Format-and-Why-is-it-Important?&id=235442>

In summary I now have a set of working guidelines for what I should and shouldn't do and how to do it if I do, copy.

Some little nuggets came out of this exercise. For instance I am happy I put (c) Max Crean

2009 in previous posts but now I am going to add all rights reserved as well. Though I am not entirely clear what this means, this extract from Wikipedia will do for now.

"All rights reserved" is a phrase that originated in copyright law as part of copyright notices. It indicates that the copyright holder reserves, or holds for their own use, all the rights provided by copyright law, such as distribution, performance, and creation of derivative works; that is, they have not waived any such right. Copyright law in most countries no longer requires such notices, but the phrase persists. The original understanding of the phrase as relating specifically to copyright may have been supplanted by common usage of the phrase to refer to any legal right, although it is probably understood to refer at least to copyright.

MLA Style Citation:

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia "All Rights Reserved."

18 October 2009 wikipedia .com.

26 Oct. 2009 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_rights_reserved>.

Which academic institutions would seriously be interested in my ruminations quite frankly scares me. I scare myself sometimes, but just in case, the framework and links to the stuffy, august bodies that get anal about this sort of thing are herein presented for my protection and reference. Yours too if you like but be sure to wear a metaphorical pair of asbestos gloves.

To be continued after further research

What is the difference between a citation and reference?

How do you register copyright?

How do you establish copyright?

Further Reading

Berkely University has some pretty straightforward rules on plagiarism. You can find them here. In addition you can get the APA and MLA guides as pdf's from links on their page

Note

I have learned that I really shouldn't put my copyright notice beneath this post because it is mostly written by others, so I won't. Instead I have invented my own legal standard footnote to cover partial copyright. Whether or not it will achieve international recognition remains to be seen.

Some bits of this post are the copyright 2009 of Max Crean :-)