Citing Sources and Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity
It is important to represent yourself honestly in your academic work and to be transparent about where the ideas you are using originate. In some rhetorical traditions, there is not as much emphasis placed upon documenting sources used in research; however, in the conventions of American research writing, clearly citing outside work is imperative. Failing to cite sources, or to use them fairly and properly, can result in charges of academic dishonesty or plagiarism, which may carry serious repercussions and consequences. How do you navigate the challenges of incorporating outside research fairly while also using your own ideas? And how can you be sure to cite your sources thoroughly and fairly?

Citing Sources in Academic Work
As a member of an academic community, it is important to credit the sources you use in your research writing. Citation conventions vary across disciplines, and it is important to become familiar with what is expected within your particular field of study. Additionally, ideas about intellectual property vary from culture to culture, so what may be considered fair use in one location may be thought of as plagiarism in another. Generally speaking, you should credit *all sources* in your research, using the citation style appropriate to your field (e.g. MLA, APA, Chicago Style, etc.) whether you quote directly, paraphrase, or summarize what you have read.
- **Quoting**: a short passage of the original author's *exact words* inside quotation marks
- **Paraphrasing**: a segment of someone else's work that you have put into your own words
- **Summarizing**: presenting the overall idea of a work condensed into a compact format

To maintain academic integrity you must cite the sources you use in all three of these cases.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism can be defined as using someone else's words or ideas without properly identifying the source. Plagiarism can carry dire consequences for students who engage in it, including failing grades for the assignment or course, and in some cases, suspension[1]. There are three basic types of plagiarism that can compromise a student's academic integrity:
- **Intentional Misrepresentation** This occurs when a student deliberately attempts to present another's work as his or her own. This can include copying or paraphrasing someone else's writing without attributing the source, buying a paper online, having someone else write the paper, or a student "recycling" a paper written previously for another class or context.
- **Unintentional Misrepresentation** When a student is not familiar with community citation standards, or that these standards may be different in diverse locations, it is possible to plagiarize due to uncertainty or lack of knowledge. When in doubt, cite your sources.
- **Patchwriting** Rebecca Moore Howard (1993) defines "patchwriting" as "*copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes.*" This type of plagiarism is not always the result of dishonesty; sometimes it occurs because students are not familiar with the ideas or language they are attempting to incorporate. Nevertheless, it is still considered plagiarism *even if the sources are cited*.

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[1] For more information about the penalties for academic dishonesty, see:
http://www.xavier.edu/library/xu-tutor/Xaviers-Policy-on-Academic-Honesty.cfm

When Citation is NOT Necessary
In some cases, you may not need to cite a source, for instance, when referring to your own personal experiences or thoughts, original research you have conducted yourself, or when you use common knowledge or widely accepted facts. What constitutes "common knowledge" may vary widely, but is generally considered to be a fact that is easily accessible and consistent across many sources (e.g. the Declaration of Independence was ratified in 1776). However, if you are not sure if your information is considered common knowledge, *cite the source*.

Incorporating Sources
When utilizing outside sources, be sure to integrate the information with your own ideas. Although you may understand how a source supports or more fully clarifies your own work, it is important to explain that to your audience. Framing outside information will make your work more effective and also help you avoid accidental plagiarism:

- *Introduce* the integrated work with a short sentence or phrase that contextualizes the information for your reader.
- *Quote, Paraphrase, or Summarize* the work, including proper in-text documentation per citation style. Be sure to include all sources used in your Works Cited page or Bibliography.
- *Comment* on the work and how it relates to the argument or information you are presenting. This will help your reader understand how you interpret the work you are citing and its relationship to your own ideas.

Evaluating Sources
When choosing what work to utilize in your research, it is important to select credible, reliable sources. This will make your own work more informed and accurate, and also help establish credibility with your audience. Be aware of the conventions in your field of study – what do readers in your field value? What publications and authors are considered credible and reliable?

- *Credentials of the author*—What is the author's expertise in this area?
- *Credentials of the publication*—Is it an academic or popular publication? Does the publication specialize in a discipline? Is the website a .com, .edu or .org?
- *Stance of an author or publication*—Is it balanced or biased in some way?
- *Publication date*—In some fields, information changes quickly, and you want to base your writing on the most up-to-date findings.

Research can be seen as a conversation between various researchers and audiences. By framing the sources you use, you put your own ideas into dialog with the ideas of others while clearly giving them credit. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge the sources you use and to cite them clearly. Be aware of the citation and research conventions in your field of study, and what will be meaningful and credible to your audience. By incorporating reliable sources into your work, you enter the dialog of your discipline as a participatory member, and by citing your sources fairly, you establish yourself as an ethical member of that community.

For more information about particular citation styles and utilizing research:

- Purdue Owl – Using Research: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/9/
- Chicago Manual of Style: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org