3

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

The last chapter included some basic ideas about writing papers honestly. In this chapter, I'll expand on them and show you how to avoid problems.

The biggest problem is misrepresenting someone else's work as your own. That's plagiarism, and it's a serious breach of academic rules, whether it's borrowed words, proofs, data, drawings, or ideas. When it's caught — and it often is — it leads to severe consequences, anything from failing a paper to failing a course. In extreme cases, it leads to suspension or expulsion. It's not a parking ticket. It's a highway crash. If it looks deliberate, it's a highway crash without seat belts.

Plagiarism is rare, but it does happen occasionally. The reason is sometimes a simple, innocent mistake. If book notes are garbled, a student may be unable to separate another author's words from his own. Later, when those notes are used for writing a paper, he might inadvertently treat the other author's words as his own original language. Even if it's an accident, it's no fun trying to prove that to a skeptical professor or dean.

Fortunately, this problem is easily prevented. I'll show you a few simple techniques, beginning with Q-quotes, to keep your notes straight. Using them, you can tell exactly what you wrote and what someone else did. Problem solved.

Of course, bad notes are not the only reason for plagiarism. Students rushing to finish a paper may forget to include the necessary citations. Some students are just sloppy, and others don't understand the citation rules. Sadly, a few cheat deliberately.[1]

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1. It is always wrong to use others' work without proper attribution. The most troubling cases involve intentional use of another author's work without full attribution. That is the classic definition of plagiarism. Some use a wider definition, which includes

Whatever the cause, plagiarism is a serious violation of academic rules — for undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. Misrepresenting someone else's words or ideas as your own constitutes fraud. Remember the basic principles of academic integrity: When you say you did the work yourself, you actually did it. When you rely on someone else's work, you cite it. When you use someone else's words, you quote them openly and accurately. When you present research materials, you present them fairly and truthfully. Quotations, data, lab experiments, and the ideas of others should never be falsified or distorted.

CITE OTHERS' WORK TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

Citation rules follow from these basic principles of openness and honesty. If the words are someone else's, they must be clearly marked as quotations, either by quotation marks or block indentation, followed by a citation. It's not enough merely to mention an author's name. If it's a direct quote, use quotation marks and a full citation. If it's a paraphrase of someone else's words, use your own language, not a close imitation of the work being cited, and include a proper reference.

The same rules apply to visual images, architectural drawings, databases, graphs, statistical tables, spoken words, and information taken from the Internet. If you use someone else's work, cite it. Cite it even if you think the work is wrong and you intend to criticize it. Cite it even if the work is freely available in the public domain. Cite it even if the author gave you permission to use the work. All these rules follow from the same idea: acknowledge what you take from others. The only exception is when you rely on commonly known information. When you discuss gravity, you don't need to footnote Isaac Newton.

The penalties for violating these rules are serious. For students, they can lead to failed courses and even expulsion. For faculty, they can lead to demotion or even loss of tenure. The penalties are severe because academic honesty is central to the university.

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unintentional copying and borrowing. I call that "accidental plagiarism." Even if it's accidental borrowing—the spoiled fruits of sloppy notes rather than deliberate theft—it is still a serious problem. Whether or not you call it plagiarism, it's a major breach of academic rules.

Tips on avoiding plagiarism: When in doubt, give credit by citing the original source.

- If you use an author's exact words, enclose them in quotation marks and include a citation.
- If you paraphrase another author, use your own language. Don't imitate the original. Be sure to include a citation.
- If you rely on or report someone else's ideas, credit their source, whether you agree with them or not.

TAKING NOTES WITH Q-QUOTES

Some honest writers find themselves in hot water, accused of plagiarism, because their notes are so bad they cannot not tell what they copied and what they wrote themselves. You can avoid that by clearly distinguishing your words from others'.

All you need is a simple way to identify quotes and keep them separate from your own words and ideas.

The common solution — using ordinary quotation marks in your notes — doesn't actually work so well in practice. For one thing, quotation marks are small, so it's easy to overlook them later when you return to your notes to write a paper. Second, they don't tell you which page the quote comes from, something you need to know for proper citations. Third, if there's a quote within a quote, it's hard to keep your markings straight.

There's a better way. To avoid all this confusion, simply use the letter Q and the page number to begin all quotations in your notes. To end the quote, write Q again. It's painless, and it's easy to spot the Q's when you read your notes and write your papers.

Begin your notes for each new item by writing down the author, title, and other essential data. (The exact information you need is described in part 2, in the citation chapters.) You'll need this information for each book, article, and Web site you use. With this publication data plus Q-quotes, you'll

Tip on using Q-quotes to identify exact words:

Q157 Churchill's eloquence rallied the nation during the worst days of the war.Q

be able to cite effectively from your own notes, without having to return to the original publication.

This system is simple, clear, and effective. It works equally well for typed and handwritten notes. It easily handles quotes within quotes. Looking at your notes, you'll know exactly which words are the author's, and which page they are on. You'll know if he is quoting anyone else. And you'll know that anything *outside* the Q-quotes is your own paraphrase.

Tip on paraphrasing: Make sure your paraphrase does not closely resemble the author's words. When in doubt, double-check your wording against the original.

Because quotes can be complicated, let's see how these Q-quotes work in more detail. First, some quotes begin on one page and end on another. To show where the page break falls, insert a double slash (//) inside the quote. (A double slash stands out, just as Q does.) That way, if you use only part of the quote, you can cite the correct page without having to chase down the original again. To illustrate:

> Q324–25 Mark Twain's most important works deal with his boyhood on the river. He remembered // that distant time with great affection. He returned to it again and again for inspiration.Q

The first sentence is on page 324; the next one is on both pages; the third is only on page 325. Using Q-quotes with a double slash gives you all this information quickly and easily.

Quotes can be complicated in other ways, too. You may wish to cut out some needless words or add a few to make the quote understandable. Fortunately, there are straightforward rules to handle both changes.

SHORTENING QUOTATIONS WITH ELLIPSES . . .

Although quotes need to be exact, you are allowed to shorten them if you follow two rules. First, your cuts cannot change the quote's meaning. Second, you must show the reader exactly where you omitted any words. That's done with an ellipsis, which is simply three dots . . . with spaces before and after each one.

If the omitted words come in the middle of a sentence, an ellipsis is all you need.

Original I walked downtown, which took at least thirty minutes, and saw her.

Shortened I walked downtown . . . and saw her.

If the two parts of your quote come from two separate sentences, use an ellipsis plus a period (that is, three dots plus a period) to separate the two parts.

Original I walked downtown. After walking more than thirty minutes, I rounded the corner and saw her.

Shortened 1 I walked downtown. . . . and saw her.

Shortened 2 I walked . . . . more than thirty minutes.

Explanation Both shortened sentences use three ellipses plus a period. In the first, the period comes immediately after the word "downtown," because that's where the period falls in the original sentence. In the second, there is a space before the period because the original sentence continues.

Because ellipses are sometimes confusing, it may help to go over them again. Remember that they have a simple purpose: to signal deliberate omissions from any text you quote. These omissions can come in three places, and each is handled slightly differently.

	LOCATION OF OMISSION	HOW YOU SIGNAL THE OMISSION
A	In the middle of a single sentence	Simple ellipsis
B	Immediately after the end of a sentence	Period in its normal place, followed by an ellipsis
C	Starting in the middle of a sentence, ending at the conclusion of that sentence or later	Ellipsis, followed by a period

Now let me illustrate A, B, and C, using a simple example.

Example: Granted, this example is easy and simple. Perhaps it is silly. But I hope it is clear and useful.

	LOCATION OF OMISSION	ILLUSTRATION
A	In the middle of a single sentence	Granted, this example is . . . simple.
B	Immediately after the end of a sentence	Granted, this example is easy and simple. . . . But I hope it is clear and useful.
C	Starting in the middle of a sentence, ending at the conclusion of that sentence or later.	Granted, this example is easy . . . . But I hope it is clear and useful.

Omissions like these are perfectly acceptable as long as you signal them (with ellipses) and you don't change the quoted author's meaning.

ADDING WORDS [IN BRACKETS] TO CLARIFY A QUOTE

Occasionally, you need to add a word or two to clarify a quote. Perhaps the original sentence uses a pronoun instead of a person's name. For clarity, you might wish to include the name. Again, you cannot change the quote's meaning, and you need to signal the reader that you are modifying it slightly. You do that by using [brackets] to show exactly what you have inserted. Consider this original text:

Original text Q237 Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's closest advisor, was speaking in New York that day. The President called and asked her to return to Washington immediately.Q

Now, let's say you want to quote only the second sentence. An exact quote wouldn't make much sense since the reader won't know whom the president was summoning. To correct that, you need to add a few words and bracket them to make it clear that you've added them to the original:

Your quote with brackets
"The President called and asked [his National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice] to return to Washington immediately."

That's an accurate quote even though you added several bracketed words. If you added the same words without brackets, however, it would be a misquotation.

One important rule: These additions [with brackets] and omissions (with ellipses . . .) should not change the quote's meaning in any way. The statement belongs to another writer, not to you. You're welcome to praise it or to damn it, but not to twist it.

QUOTES WITHIN QUOTES

The phrase you are quoting may itself contain a quotation. One advantage of using Q-quotes for your notes is that you can simply put quotation marks wherever they appear in the text. For example: Q47 He yelled, "Come here, quick," and I ran over.Q Since you are using Q's to mark off the entire quote, there will be no confusion later when you write a paper with these notes.

USING Q-QUOTES TO HANDLE COMPLICATED QUOTATIONS

Now that we've covered the basics of Q-quotes plus ellipses, brackets, and quotes within quotes, you are equipped to handle even the most complex quotes, first in your notes and then in your papers. To illustrate that, let's combine all these elements in one example:

> Q157–58 Some of Churchill's most famous speeches // were actually recorded by professional actors imitating his distinctive voice and cadence. . . . The recordings were so good that [one friend] said, "I knew Winston well and still can't tell who is speaking."Q

This notation makes it clear that

- the first few words appear on page 157 and the rest are on page 158;
- some words from the original are omitted after the word "cadence";
- there is a period after "cadence" and then three dots, indicating that the first sentence ended at the word "cadence" and that the omission came after that;
- the bracketed words "one friend" are not in the original text; and
- the final words are actually a quotation from someone else. They are included as a quote by the author you are citing.

With clear notation like this, you will be able to cite portions of this complicated quote later, without returning to the original article and with no chance of accidental plagiarism. It's not difficult. Actually, it takes more time to explain it than to use it!

USING THE INTERNET WITHOUT PLAGIARIZING

You need to be especially alert to these citation issues when you use the Web. Internet research is very efficient, especially when you don't need to read long stretches of text. You can do extensive targeted searches, quickly check out multiple sources, access sophisticated databases, click on article summaries or key sentences, and then drag-and-drop material into your notes. That's all perfectly fine. In fact, it's often the best way to conduct research. But it's also crucial to be a good bookkeeper. You need to use a simple, consistent method to keep straight what some author said and what you paraphrased.

The easiest way is to stick with the method you use for printed books and articles: *put Q-quotes around everything you drag-and-drop from electronic sources.* You can supplement that, if you wish, by coloring the author's text red or blue, or by using a different font. Just be consistent. That way you won't be confused in three or four weeks, when you are reviewing your notes and writing your paper.

One more thing: be sure to write down the Web site's address so you can cite it or return to it for more research. Just copy the URL into your notes. It's probably a good idea to include the date you accessed it, too. Some citation styles ask for it. If the item appears in a database and has a document identification number, copy that, too.

QUOTING AND PARAPHRASING WITHOUT PLAGIARIZING: A TABLE OF EXAMPLES

A simple example can illustrate how to quote and paraphrase properly, and how to avoid some common mistakes. The following table shows the main rules for citation and academic honesty, using a sentence written by "Jay Scrivener" about Joe Blow. I'll use footnote 99 to show when that sentence is cited.

QUOTING WITHOUT PLAGIARIZING

Joe Blow was a happy man, who often walked down the road whistling and singing.	**Sentence in the book *Joe Blow: His Life and Times*, by Jay Scrivener**

WHAT'S RIGHT

"Joe Blow was a happy man, who often walked down the road whistling and singing."[99]	**Correct:** Full quote is inside quotation marks, followed by citation to *Joe Blow: His Life and Times*.
According to Scrivener, Blow "often walked down the road whistling and singing."[99] "Joe Blow was a happy man," writes Scrivener.[99]	**Correct:** Each partial quote is inside quote marks, followed by a citation. The partial quotes are not misleading.
According to Scrivener, Blow was "a happy man," who often showed it by singing tunes to himself.[99]	**Correct:** Partial quote is inside quotation marks; nonquoted materials are outside. The paraphrase (about singing tunes to himself) accurately conveys the original author's meaning without mimicking his actual words. Citation properly follows the sentence.
Joe Blow seemed like "a happy man," the kind who enjoyed "whistling and singing."[99]	**Correct:** Two partial quotes are each inside quotation marks; nonquoted materials are outside. Citation properly follows sentence.
Joe appeared happy and enjoyed whistling and singing to himself.[99]	**Correct:** This paraphrase is fine. It's not too close to Scrivener's original wording. The citation acknowledges the source.

WHAT'S WRONG

Joe Blow was a happy man, who often walked down the road whistling and singing. (no citation)	**Wrong:** It is plagiarism to quote an author's exact words or to paraphrase them closely without *both* quotation marks and proper citation. Acknowledge your sources!

Joe Blow was a happy man, who often walked down the road whistling and singing.[99]	**Wrong:** These are actually Scrivener's exact words. It is plagiarism to use them without indicating explicitly that it is a quote. It is essential to use quotation marks (or block indentation for longer quotes), *even if* you give accurate citation to the author. So, this example is wrong because it doesn't use quotation marks, even though it cites the source.
Joe Blow was a happy man and often walked down the road singing and whistling. (no citation)	**Wrong:** Although the words are not exactly the author's, they are *very similar.* (The words "singing" and "whistling" are simply reversed.) Either use an exact quote or paraphrase in ways that are clearly different from the author's wording.
Joe Blow was a happy man. (no citation)	**Wrong:** There are two problems here. First, it's an exact quote so it should be quoted *and* cited. Second, even if the quote were modified slightly, Scrivener should still be cited because it is *his personal judgment* (and not a simple fact) that Joe Blow is happy.
Joe Blow often walked down the road whistling and singing. (no citation)	**Wrong:** Same two problems as the previous example: (1) exact words should be both quoted and cited; and (2) Scrivener's personal judgment needs to be credited to him.

Joe Blow appeared to be "a happy man" and often walked down the road whistling and singing.[99]	**Wrong:** Despite the citation, some of Scrivener's exact words are outside the quotation marks. That creates the misleading impression that the words are original, rather than Scrivener's. This is a small violation, like going a few miles over the speed limit. But if such miscitations occur often or include significant portions of text, then they can become serious cases of plagiarism.
"Joe Blow was an anxious man, who often ran down the road."[99]	**Wrong:** The quote is not accurate. According to Scrivener, Joe Blow was not anxious; he was "happy." And he didn't run, he "walked." Although this misquotation is not plagiarism, it is an error. You should quote properly, and your work should be reliable. If such mistakes are repeated, if they are seriously misleading, or, worst of all, if they appear to be intentional, they may be considered academic fraud. (Plagiarism is fraud, too, but a different kind.)
Joe Blow "walked down the road" quietly.[99]	**Wrong:** The words inside the partial quotation are accurate, but the word following it distorts Scrivener's plain meaning. Again, this is not plagiarism, but it does violate the basic principle of presenting materials fairly and accurately. If such mistakes are repeated or if they show consistent bias (for example, to prove Joe Blow is a quiet person or hates music), they may be considered a type of academic fraud. At the very least, they are misleading.

The table refers to single sentences, but some citation issues involve paragraphs or whole sections of your paper. Let's say you are writing about urban poverty and that William Julius Wilson's analysis of the subject is central to one section. Whether or not you quote Wilson directly, you should include several citations of his work in that section, reflecting its importance for your paper. You could accomplish the same thing by including an explanatory citation early in the section. The footnote might say, "My analysis in this section draws heavily on William Julius Wilson's work, particularly *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 87–122." Or you could include a similar comment in the text itself. Of course, you still need to include citations for any direct quotes.

PARAPHRASING

When you paraphrase an author's sentence, don't veer too close to her words. That's plagiarism, *even if it's unintentional and even if you cite the author.*

So, what's the best technique for rephrasing a quote? Set aside the other author's text and think about the point *you* want to get across. Write it down in your own words (with a citation) and then compare your sentence to the author's original. If they contain several identical words or merely substitute a couple of synonyms, rewrite yours. Try to put aside the other author's distinctive language and rhythm as you write. That's sometimes hard because the original sticks in your mind or seems just right. Still, you have to try. Your sentences and paragraphs should look and sound different from anyone you cite.

If you have trouble rephrasing an idea in your own words, jot down a brief note to yourself stating the point you want to make. Then back away, wait a little while, and try again. When you begin rewriting, look at your brief note but *don't look at the author's original sentence.* Once you have finished, check your new sentence against the author's original. You may have to try several times to get it right. Don't keep using the same words again and again. Approach the sentence from a fresh angle. If you still can't solve the problem, give up and use a direct quote (perhaps a whole sentence, perhaps only a few key words). It should either be a direct quote or your distinctive rephrasing. It cannot be lip-synching.

Why not use direct quotes in the first place? Sometimes that's the best

solution — when the author's language is compelling, or when it says something important about the writer. When Franklin Roosevelt spoke about the attack on Pearl Harbor, he told America: "Yesterday, December 7, 1941 — a date which will live in infamy — the United States was suddenly and deliberately attacked . . . ."[2] No one would want to paraphrase that. It's perfect as it is, and it's historically significant. When you analyze novels and poems, you'll want to quote extensively to reveal the author's creative expression. Other phrases speak volumes about the people who utter them. That's why you might quote Islamic fundamentalists calling the United States "the Great Satan" or George W. Bush responding that they are "evil." These quotes convey the flavor of the conflict.

Because there are so many times when direct quotations are essential, you should avoid them where they're not. Overuse cheapens their value. Don't trot them out to express ordinary thoughts in ordinary words. Paraphrase. Just remember the basic rules: Cite the source and don't mimic the original language.

These rules apply to the whole academic community, from freshmen to faculty. A senior professor at the U.S. Naval Academy was recently stripped of tenure for violating them. Although Brian VanDeMark had written several well-regarded books, his *Pandora's Keepers: Nine Men and the Atomic Bomb* (2003) contains numerous passages that closely resemble other books.[3] Most were footnoted, but, as you now know, that doesn't eliminate the problem.[4]

Here are a few of the questionable passages, compiled by Robert Norris. (Norris compiled an even longer list of similarities between VanDeMark's work and his own 2002 book *Racing for the Bomb.*)[5]

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2. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan, December 8, 1941, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/oddec7.html. Accessed June 1, 2004.

3. Brian VanDeMark, *Pandora's Keepers: Nine Men and the Atomic Bomb* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2003).

4. Jacques Steinberg, "U.S. Naval Academy Demotes Professor Over Copied Work," *New York Times* (national edition), October 29, 2003, A23.

5. Robert Norris, *Racing for the Bomb: General Leslie R. Groves, the Manhattan Project's Indispensable Man* (South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 2002); Robert Norris, "Parallels with Richard Rhodes's Books [referring to Brian VanDeMark's *Pandora's Keepers*]," History News Network Web site, http://hnn.us/[illegible] June 22, 2004. For convenience, I have

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Brian VanDeMark, *Pandora's Keepers* (2003)	Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (1986) and *Dark Sun* (1995)
". . . Vannevar Bush. A fit man of fifty-two who looked uncannily like a beardless Uncle Sam, Bush was a shrewd Yankee . . ." (60)	"Vannevar Bush made a similar choice that spring. The sharp-eyed Yankee engineer, who looked like a beardless Uncle Sam, had left his MIT vice presidency . . ." (*Making of the Atomic Bomb*, 336)
"Oppenheimer wondered aloud if the dead at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not luckier than the survivors, whose exposure to radiation would have painful and lasting effects." (194–195)	"Lawrence found Oppenheimer weary, guilty and depressed, wondering if the dead at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not luckier than the survivors, whose exposure to the bombs would have lifetime effects." (*Dark Sun*, 203)
"To toughen him up and round him out, Oppenheimer's parents had one of his teachers, Herbert Smith, take him out West during the summer before he entered Harvard College." (82)	"To round off Robert's convalescence and toughen him up, his father arranged for a favorite English teacher at Ethical Culture, a warm, supportive Harvard graduate named Herbert Smith, to take him out West for the summer." (*The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, 120–121)
"For the next three months, both sides marshaled their forces. At Strauss's request, the FBI tapping of Oppenheimer's home and office phones continued. The FBI also followed the physicist whenever he left Princeton." (259)	"For the next three months, both sides marshaled their forces. The FBI tapped Oppenheimer's home and office phones at Strauss's specific request and followed the physicist whenever he left Princeton." (*Dark Sun*, 539)

Source: Robert Norris, "Parallels with Richard Rhodes's Books [referring to Brian VanDeMark's *Pandora's Keepers*], History News Network Web site, http://hnn.us/articles/1485.html. Accessed June 22, 2004. For convenience, I have rearranged the last two rows in the table, without changing the words.

Unfortunately, VanDeMark does not cite Rhodes or quote him directly in any of these passages. Some, like the last one, are virtual quotations and would raise red flags even if they occurred only once. A few others are a little too close for comfort, but raise problems mostly because there are so many of them in VanDeMark's book.[6] This is only one of several tables, covering VanDeMark's poor paraphrasing or unquoted sources. Each was prepared by a different author who felt violated. According to the Naval Academy's academic dean, "The whole approach to documenting the sources of the book was flawed."[7] The dean and VanDeMark himself attributed the problem to sloppiness rather than purposeful theft (which is why VanDeMark was demoted rather than fired outright). Still, the punishment was severe and shows how seriously plagiarism is taken at every level of the university.

PLAGIARIZING IDEAS

Plagiarizing doesn't just mean borrowing someone else's words. It also means borrowing someone else's ideas. Let's say you are impressed by an article comparing *Catcher in the Rye* and *Hamlet*.[8] The article concludes that these works are variations on a single theme: a young man's profound an-

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6. Besides copying words and phrases from Richard Rhodes and Robert Norris, VanDeMark took passages from Greg Herken, William Lanouette, and Mary Palevsky without proper quotations or full attribution. Some passages are *not* obvious cases of plagiarism—deliberate or accidental—but some are nearly identical to other works and still others are too close for comfort. The overall pattern is troubling.

These parallels between VanDeMark's work and other books are documented online with similar tables. See History News Network, "Brian VanDeMark: Accused of Plagiarism," May 31, 2003, http://hnn.us/articles/1477.html. Accessed February 26, 2004. That page links to several tables comparing VanDeMark's wording to various authors'.

7. Nelson Hernández, "Scholar's Tenure Pulled for Plagiarism: Acts Not Deliberate, Naval Academy Says," *Washington Post*, October 29, 2003, B06, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A32551–2003Oct28.html (accessed March 5, 2004).

8. Although I thought of this comparison between Hamlet and Holden Caulfield myself, I suspected others had, too. Just to be on the safe side, I decided to do a Google search. The top item offered to sell me a term paper on the subject! After this depressing discovery, I decided to search for "Catcher in the Rye + phony." I was deluged with offers. What a delicious irony: to buy a term paper on Holden Caulfield's hatred of all things phony.

guish and mental instability, as shown through his troubled internal monologues. If your paper incorporates this striking idea, credit the author who proposed it, *even if every word you say about it is your own.* Otherwise, your paper will wrongly imply you came up with the idea yourself. Holden Caulfield would call you a phony. The moral of the tale: It's perfectly fine to draw on others' ideas, as long as you give them credit. The only exception is when the ideas are commonplace.

DISTORTING IDEAS

A recurrent theme of this chapter is that you should acknowledge others' words and ideas and represent them faithfully, without distortion. When you paraphrase them, you should keep the author's meaning, even if you disagree with it. When you shorten a quote, you should indicate that you've shortened it and keep the essential idea.

There are really two goals here. The first is to maintain honesty in your own work. The second is to engage others' ideas fully, on a level playing field. That's the best way to confront diverse ideas, whether you agree with them or not. That's fair play, of course, but it's more than that. It's how you make your own work better. You are proving the mettle of your approach by passing a tough, fair test — one that compares your ideas to others without stacking the deck in your favor.

The danger to avoid is setting up flimsy straw men so you can knock them down without much effort. That's not only dishonest; it's intellectually lazy. Believe me, your own position will be much stronger and more effective if you confront the best opposing arguments, presented fairly, and show why yours is better.

CONCLUSION: THE RIGHT WAY TO PARAPHRASE AND CITE

The rules for paraphrasing and citation are based on a few core ideas:

- You are responsible for your written work, including the ideas, facts, and interpretations you include.
- Unless you say otherwise, every word you write is assumed to be your own.
- When you rely on others' work or ideas, acknowledge it openly.
  - When you use their ideas or data, give them credit.

  - When you use their exact words, use quotation marks plus a citation.
  - When you paraphrase, use your own distinctive voice and cite the original source. Make sure your language doesn't mimic the original. If it still does after rewriting, then use direct quotes.
- When you draw on others' work, present it fairly. No distortions. No straw men.
- When you present empirical material, show where you acquired it so others can check the data for themselves. (The exception is commonly known material, which does not need to be cited.)

These principles of fairness and disclosure are more than simple rules for citation. They are more than just "good housekeeping" in your paper. They are fundamental rules for academic integrity. They promote real learning. They apply to teachers and students alike and encourage free, fair, and open discussion of ideas — the heart and soul of a university.