

Avoiding Plagiarism

Universal Orlando
Foundation Library

This guide is designed to define plagiarism, to help you avoid plagiarism, and to give you some practical examples of plagiarism vs. proper use. For more assistance, come see us in person, visit our website below, or call us at 407-903-8100.

What Is Plagiarism?

Webster's Third New International Dictionary (2002) defines the word **plagiarize** as follows: “to steal and pass off as one's own (the ideas or words of another): use (a created production) without crediting the source... to commit literary theft: present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.” In other words, plagiarism is a form of *cheating* in which the words or ideas of another are used without giving credit to the original author(s).

Plagiarism undermines the mission and purpose of higher learning, negatively impacts student learning, and can tarnish the reputation of students and professors. For those reasons, UCF students caught plagiarizing can lose credit for an assignment, be removed from a course with a grade of “F,” or even face suspension or expulsion.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

Most students plagiarize *unintentionally*, as many have never learned proper research techniques. However, ignorance is no excuse, and you could face academic disciplinary measures whether an instance of plagiarism is intentional or not.

Following are some tips for avoiding unintentional plagiarism:

- Take good notes while doing research for papers and projects, and make sure to record important information (title, author, publisher, page number, etc.) about each source you use in case you need to cite it later.
- Always cite your source when giving a direct quote (and include the page number or other reference point). Also cite your source(s) whenever you paraphrase another’s ideas or whenever someone else’s work has been important in the development of your ideas (to **paraphrase** is to restate a passage in your own words). By citing sources, you:
 - Give proper credit to the original author
 - Allow others to recreate your research or to follow up on your ideas
 - Protect yourself from criticism if the cited information turns out to be incorrect
 - Indicate the amount of research you have done on the topic
 - Lend support to your ideas
- Use a standard citation style guide, such as APA, MLA, or Chicago (or one appropriate to the discipline you are writing about).
- Try to discover your own voice and style, rather than relying heavily on others’ words and means of expression.
- Start early on writing assignments and leave yourself time for revisions, further research, etc.

Plagiarism vs. Proper Use

Imagine that a student comes across the following passage in the course of researching for a paper on the topic of meeting venues:

In a sense, cruise ships are floating hybrids of retreat centers, conference centers, and full-service resorts. To leave it there, however, would be to do them a disservice. Cruise ships seem underrated as meeting venues, but with proper planning, they can provide a satisfying meeting experience.

Source: Fenich, G. G. (2005). *Meetings, expositions, events, and conventions: An introduction to the industry*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education/Prentice Hall, pp. 120.

Now imagine that the student decides to incorporate this information into a paper on the topic. The student includes the citation (in APA style) for the book in the bibliography of the paper. Can you tell which of the following passages would be considered plagiarism?

- 1 When most people think of cruises, they imagine overflowing buffets and fun-seeking vacationers. But cruise ships are actually floating hybrids of retreat centers, conference centers, and full-service resorts. In fact, cruise ships are underrated as meeting venues and, with proper planning, can provide good meeting experiences.
- 2 When most people think of cruises, they conjure images of overflowing buffets and fun-seeking vacationers. However, the savvy event planner understands that cruise ships also make excellent venues for meetings and special events. As George G. Fenich points out, cruise ships are “floating hybrids of retreat centers, conference centers, and full-service resorts” (2005, p. 120).
- 3 When most people think of cruises, they imagine overflowing buffets and fun-seeking vacationers. But, having been on several cruises myself, I can attest to the fact that cruise ships are really just floating hotels with restaurant facilities, meeting venues, and other amenities. Therefore, with proper planning, an event planner can turn a cruise ship into an interesting and exciting venue for meetings and special events.
- 4 When most people think of cruises, they conjure images of overflowing buffets and fun-seeking vacationers. However, cruise ships are really just seaworthy hotels with restaurant facilities, meeting rooms, and other amenities. The savvy event planner understands that cruise ships can make excellent venues for meetings and special events (Fenich, 2005, p. 120).
- 5 When most people think of cruises, they imagine overflowing buffets and fun-seeking vacationers. Instead, event planners should view them as “floating hybrids of retreat centers, conference centers, and full-service resorts.” The savvy event planner understands that cruise ships “can provide a satisfying meeting experience” if guests’ needs are carefully considered.

Hint: two of the above passages are acceptable, two of them are clear cases of plagiarism, and one might depend (as real life examples often do) on the larger context, on the student’s typical writing style, or on the student’s background. If you are unsure which passages are acceptable, ask a librarian for help!

Sources used in creating this guide include:

- Plagiarism.org (<http://www.plagiarism.org/>)
- Cheryl Ruggiero’s “Plagiarism and Honor” (<http://www.english.vt.edu/~IDLE/plagiarism/plagiarism1.html>)
- UCF Office of Student Conduct (<http://www.osc.sdes.ucf.edu/>)
- University of Alberta Libraries’ “Guide to Plagiarism and Cyber-Plagiarism” (<http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/plagiarism/index.cfm>)