

Academic Writing

Student writing should have an academic tone and style. This means, that throughout your paper you should be adding to a scholarly discussion of your topic. To be taken seriously, (and to get a good grade), you must be serious about your writing. Here are a few things to remember:

1. Sentences should be clear and complete.
2. Avoid slang.
3. Avoid the use of personal pronouns.
4. Avoid sexist and biased language.
5. Avoid usage of the passive voice by writing in an active, assertive tone.
6. Think about the structure of your paragraphs. Does each paragraph contain a topic sentence and does the paragraph stick to that topic?
7. Focus your argument and refine your thesis by using key words.
8. Use source material to support your thesis.
9. Write with unity and coherence.
10. Ensure that the entire document has been spell-checked and is grammatically correct.

Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else's ideas, phrasing, terminology, or words without providing an acknowledgment in the form of a footnote, endnote, parenthetical reference, or direct comment in text.

What sources must be referenced or acknowledged?

Students must reference all secondary sources of information that are taken directly or rephrased from someone's or something's intellectual property. Shifts in style and language in a student's paper are strong indicators of plagiarism, especially when such shifts in the language and presentation of information have no references or acknowledgments. Students should also be aware that many educational institutions are acquiring software programs designed to flag or identify plagiarism.

Always reference the following:

- Secondary sources of information
- Unique or distinctive words or sets of words
- Electronic sources of all types
- Student researcher's manuscripts

What sources do not have to be referenced or acknowledged?

There is no information or communication that does not have to be acknowledged in some way. Yet, the burden of reference is lighter for personal experiences, common knowledge, and conclusionary statements. The decision to reference or not to reference in these instances must be made on a case by case basis.

Sources which may not need to be referenced:

- Personal experiences
- Original research
- Common knowledge
- Personal conclusions

How can plagiarism be avoided?

Students can minimize and/or prevent problems with plagiarizing by being organized in their research process, informed about the use of intellectual property and improving upon their writing and citation skills.

Helpful tips to avoid plagiarism during the research process include:

- Set up a binder of source references during the research process.
- Keep and maintain organized notes that contain references on each page.
- Annotate quotes.
- Annotate paraphrases.
- Annotate summaries.

Helpful tips to avoid plagiarism during the writing process include:

- Acknowledge exact or modified quotes.
- Acknowledge modified or similar wording by attributing the information to the author using phrases (according to, suggested, argued, found, etc.).
- Acknowledge summarized information by referencing the author at the end of the sentence or set of sentences.