

Appropriately Acknowledging Sources of Information

What must you cite?

- Other people's writing or research
- Any chart, table, graph, image, audio or video work
- Interviews
- Statements from e-mails, letters, and social media

What do you not need to cite?

- Common knowledge of the audience of your work.
<http://integrity.mit.edu/citing-your-sources/what-common-knowledge>
- Your own experiences.

The AMA Manual of Style, 10th edition, states there are four ways to plagiarize:

1. **Direct plagiarism:** Word-for-word lifting of passages without enclosing the borrowed material in quotation marks and crediting them to the original author(s).
2. **Mosaic:** Borrowing the ideas and opinions from an original source and a few verbatim words or phrases without crediting.
3. **Paraphrase:** Restating a phrase or passage, without attribution to the original author(s).
4. **Insufficient acknowledgment:** Noting the source for only a portion of what is borrowed or citing sources so that it is not clear what is borrowed and what is one's own work.

Consulted source: Peak levels for aspirin usually occur 2 hours after ingestion.

Should this be cited? Would the information be common knowledge to the audience of your work?

Consulted source: Ginkgo Biloba may increase the anticoagulant effect of salicylates.

Should this be cited? Would the information be common knowledge to the audience of your work?

Examples for Types of Plagiarism

Example 1

Consulted source: The application of the process to the performance of surgical operations, is, it will be conceded, new. If it can be shown to have been occasionally resorted to before, it was only an ignorance of its universal application and immense practical utility that prevented such isolated facts from being generalized.

Student's assignment: The application of ether as an anesthesia revolutionized surgical operations. Dr. Bigelow noted it might have been used before for surgical procedures, but if occasionally resorted to, then in ignorance of its universal application.¹

Was the passage plagiarized? Yes. This is mosaic plagiarism. Word-for word passages from sources either need to be restated in one's own words or enclosed in quotation marks.

Is citation necessary? Yes.

Example 2

Consulted source: Patients report a complete relief from the subjective symptoms of the disease. The sugar excretion shows marked decrease or, if dosage be adequate, disappears.

Student's statement: Patients relayed substantial relief from their symptoms of diabetes mellitus. Excretion of sugar showed a noticeable decrease and, with a sufficient dosage, was found to disappear.²

Was the passage plagiarized? Yes, this is an example of paraphrasing a source.

Is citation necessary? Yes, however, citing the source is not sufficient on its own. The student's wording too closely matches the words and syntax of the consulted source.

Example 3

Consulted source: ...the resulting rates reveal a significant and steadily rising mortality from deaths due to cancer of the lung as the amount of tobacco smoked increases. There is also a rise in the mortality from deaths attributed to coronary thrombosis as the amount smoked increases, but the gradient is much less steep than that revealed by cancer of the lung.

Student's statement: They found "a significant and steadily rising morality from deaths due to cancer of the lung as the amount of tobacco smoked increases."³ Coronary thrombosis has also been correlated to smoking, but at a lower rate than lung cancer.

Was the passage plagiarized? Yes. The placement of the citation number indicates the first statement only is information from the cited source.

Is citation necessary? Yes, however, the citation insufficiently acknowledges information from the consulted source.

Example 4

Consulted source: ...so soon as necessary arrangements can be made for publicity of the process, great facilities will be offered to those who are disposed to avail themselves of what now promises to be one of the important discoveries of the age.

Student's assignment: The usefulness of ether for anesthesia was noted immediately by the article's author as "one of the important discoveries of the age."¹

Was the passage plagiarized? No. The word-for-word quote was enclosed in quotation marks.

Is citation necessary? Yes. You must identify your consulted sources and acknowledge prior scholarship.

When in doubt, cite.

References

1. Bigelow HJ. Insensibility During Surgical Operations Produced By Inhalation. *Boston Med Surg J.* 1846;35(16):309-317. doi: 10.1056/NEJM184611180351601
2. Banting FG, Best CH, Collip JB, Campbell WR, Fletcher AA. Pancreatic Extracts in the Treatment of Diabetes Mellitus. *CMAJ.* 1922;12(3):141–146.
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1524425/> Accessed November 7, 2013.
3. Doll R, Hill AB. The Mortality of Doctors in Relation to Their Smoking Habits: A Preliminary Report. *BMJ.* 1954;328:1529-1533. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.328.7455.1529>