Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism and its Consequences

Plagiarism is trying to pass off someone else’s ideas or words as your own. It is a form of stealing and is taken very seriously at the university and in the workplace. A wide range of possible consequences exist for plagiarism depending on the seriousness of the crime.

Potential consequences of plagiarism at a university:

- Failing the assignment
- Failing a course
- Failing of thesis defense and/or rejection of thesis
- Losing one’s graduate appointment
- Being reported to the Dean of Students and having a notation on one’s Student Record
- Appearing before the Student Honor Court
- Being expelled from the university

Potential consequences of plagiarism in the workplace:

- Demotion or loss of promotion
- Termination of job
- Litigation
- Criminal prosecution (for infringement of copyright)

For UF’s plagiarism policy, please see the Graduate Student Handbook’s section titled “Integrity,” which may be accessed online:

http://gradschool.rgp.ufl.edu/handbook/graduate_student_handbook/

While some cases of plagiarism are intentional, many students simply do not understand the rules and practices governing the use of other’s words and ideas. To help you recognize potentially dangerous situations, some common examples of plagiarism are listed below:

- A student prints a paper off the internet, attaches his name to it, and turns it in as his own.
- A student turns in a fellow student’s paper as his own work.
- A student “cuts and pastes” sentences, paragraphs, or segments of papers found on-line without using quotation marks. (Even if he cites the source.)
- A student copies from another text without using quotation marks, changing only a few words. (Even if he cites the source.)
- A student properly paraphrases the ideas or words of a published author but does not cite the source, thus passing the ideas/words off as his own.

►If you do not cite your sources, you are plagiarizing.◄
►If you copy other’s words without quotation marks, you are plagiarizing.◄
►If you plagiarize unintentionally, you will still face serious consequences.◄
How to Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is restating someone else’s ideas and acknowledging that they aren’t your own. To paraphrase, read the original text, digest the content, and put it in your own words, using your own writing style. A good paraphrase should read completely differently from the original text, while clearly expressing the original content. **You must still cite your source!**

Some students believe they are paraphrasing if they change a few words or rearrange the phrases of their source’s text. This is not paraphrasing. It is plagiarizing. Be careful as you reword the text. You **must not** misrepresent the original content by adding to, omitting, or altering the original ideas.

Paraphrase or Plagiarism?

Below is a passage from an engineering paper. Seven attempts have been made to paraphrase it. You should be able to identify one good paraphrase and explain the specific errors in the others.

The original text:

> “Sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems to power elements of active flow control systems. Acoustic energy reclamation has been demonstrated using an electromechanical Helmholtz resonator excited by an incident acoustic field, successfully self-powering an electret microphone. The self-powered microphone calibration shows good agreement with a conventionally powered case.”

The students’ paraphrased texts:

| A | Horowitz et al. demonstrate that reclaimed fluid/acoustic energy may be used as a power source equivalent to traditional energy sources. They were able to transform sound waves with an electromechanical Helmholtz resonator into enough energy to power an electret microphone [1]. |
| B | Reclaimed fluid/acoustic energy may be used as a power source equivalent to traditional energy sources. For example, sound waves can be transformed with an electromechanical Helmholtz resonator into enough energy to power an electret microphone. |
| C | Reclaimed fluid/acoustic energy may be used as a power source equivalent to traditional energy sources. For example, Horowitz et al. were able to transform sound waves with an electromechanical Helmholtz resonator into enough energy to power an electret microphone [1]. |
| D | Horowitz et al. demonstrate that sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems to power elements of active flow control systems [1]. |
| E | Horowitz et al. demonstrate that enough energy is accessible in fluid/acoustic systems to power elements of active flow control systems [1]. |
| F | According to Horowitz et al., one can successfully self-power an electret microphone by using an electromechanical Helmholtz resonator excited by an incident acoustic field, thus showing that sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems through acoustic energy reclamation to power elements of active flow control systems [1]. |
| G | Horowitz et al. were able to invent a conventional microphone that is self-powered. It transforms sound waves into energy. This could be very useful at loud parties or football games. |


Quoting a Text

You should quote a text when the language of the original text is too distinct or important for you to paraphrase. When you quote, be sure you copy each word exactly as it was written. Put quotation marks around the text you are quoting. Always acknowledge the source.

Direct Quotations

Direct quotations stand apart from your own text. In general, you directly state your source, quote the text (capitalizing the first word and setting the quotation off with a comma), and cite your source at the end of the sentence (before the final period).

Examples of direct quotations:

According to Horowitz et al., “Sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems to power elements of active flow control systems. Acoustic energy reclamation has been demonstrated using an electromechanical Helmholtz resonator excited by an incident acoustic field, successfully self-powering an electret microphone” [1].

Horowitz et al. claim, “Sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems to power elements of active flow control systems” [1].

“Sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems to power elements of active flow control systems. Acoustic energy reclamation has been demonstrated using an electromechanical Helmholtz resonator excited by an incident acoustic field, successfully self-powering an electret microphone,” state Horowitz et al. [1].

“Sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems to power elements of active flow control systems,” Horowitz et al. report [1].

Block Quotations

Block quotations are used when a direct quotation is longer than three or four lines. To make a block quotation, introduce the quotation with a complete sentence, followed by a colon. Skip a line. Type the quotation single-spaced. The left side of the whole quotation should be indented (conventionally, this should be about ten spaces or two tabs, although sometimes one tab is acceptable. See your professor or style manual). Cite your source at the end after the final period. You do not put quotation marks around a block quotation.

Example of a block quotation:

The area of energy reclamation has continued to grow in the last five years. Studies have primarily focused on optical and thermal sources. Recently however, there has been interest in the area of acoustic sources. Horowitz et al. summarize their findings on acoustic energy reclamation:

Sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems to power elements of active flow control systems. Acoustic energy reclamation has been demonstrated using an electromechanical Helmholtz resonator excited by an incident acoustic field, successfully self-powering an electret microphone. The self-powered microphone calibration shows good agreement with a conventionally powered case. The proof-of-concept demonstration in this paper employed a linear regulator circuit to convert the ac piezoelectric generator voltage into a constant dc voltage [1].
**Indirect Quotations**

Indirect quotations are used when you want to integrate a quotation smoothly into the flow of your writing. Indirect quotations are especially useful when you want to use only a small portion of a text. You will insert the text right into your sentence, being sure to surround it with quotation marks. Do not capitalize the first word, as it will be in the middle of your sentence. As always, state and cite your source.

Examples of indirect quotations:

*As Horowitz et al. have demonstrated, it is possible to convert acoustic energy into electrical energy “using an electromechanical Helmholtz resonator excited by an incident acoustic field” [1].*

*When Horowitz et al. concluded their experiment in powering an electret microphone with reclaimed acoustic energy, they found that the results were equivalent to “a conventionally powered case” [1].*

**Quotations within Quotations**

If you wish to quote a piece of text that already contains a quotation, you use the above rules. However, the quotation marks existing in the original text are converted to single quotation marks.

Example:

*For an example of a direct quotation, the plagiarism worksheet author wrote, “Horowitz et al. claim, ‘Sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems to power elements of active flow control systems’” [9].*

**Altering a Quotation**

Occasionally, you might need to alter a quotation slightly (in wording only, not content) for clarity or so an indirect quotation reads smoothly. If you must add or alter a word, put the new word in square brackets. If you must omit some text (even one word), use an ellipsis.

Example of using square brackets:

You are going to quote a sentence in a text that reads, “They invented the point contact transistor.”

To clarify, you would write, “[Shockley, Bardeen, and Brattain] invented the point contact transistor” [3].

Example of using an ellipsis:

You could shorten the Horowitz text by writing, “Sufficient energy is available in fluid/acoustic systems to power . . . an electret microphone” [1].

If you wish to begin a direct quotation partway through a sentence of the original text, you will use an ellipsis to indicate you have omitted words **and** square brackets to capitalize the first word of your quotation.

*“According to Horowitz et al., “… [A]n electromechanical Helmholtz resonator excited by an incident acoustic field, successfully self-power[ed] an electret microphone” [1].*
What about Common Knowledge?

You do not have to use quotations or cite sources if you are simply stating common knowledge. For example, if you mention gravity in a paper, you do not have to cite Newton. Typically, if a college undergraduate in a general engineering course knows the information, it counts as general knowledge. Ohm’s law is general knowledge; Maxwell’s equations need to be cited.

Be careful with scientific theories, laws, and formulae. If you are in doubt whether an idea should be cited, go ahead and cite it. When writing a formula, you do not put it in quotation marks, but you should introduce and cite the source.

Example of cited formula:

\[
S_r = \alpha \frac{V^2}{N} \frac{1}{f}
\]

Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism

Even as recently as 20 years ago, it was difficult to unintentionally plagiarize because a writer had to type each individual word of his own paper. In the age of word processing and the internet, however, the most common form of plagiarism amongst students is unintentional plagiarism due to “cutting and pasting.” To avoid accidentally mixing your own text with that of one you have cut and pasted, you may try one of the following simple techniques:

- As soon as you cut a piece of text from another document, even if you aren’t sure you are going to use it, note the source, put quotation marks around it, and add a citation to the end.
- As soon as you cut a piece of text from another document, use your word processor to hi-lite or colorize it. As you add pieces into your own text, remove the hi-liting or color only when you have properly quoted or paraphrased it and cited the source.
- Print out a hard copy of any texts you think you will be using in your own paper. Rather than cutting and pasting, type any passages you are going to quote by hand. This will avoid the unconscious mixing of a cut piece all together, as well as cut down on over-quoting.

From this Moment…

As a member of IMG, even if you plagiarize unintentionally, the consequences you will face can include being reported to the Dean of Students and losing your graduate appointment (your RA). Do not jeopardize your education and future with a simple mistake.