

What is Plagiarism

Plagiarism is stealing someone else's work. It is a serious academic offense. Sometimes plagiarism is deliberate as when someone . . .

- Turns in all or part of another student's work as their own
- "Downloads" a paper from the Internet and presents it as their own original work
- Takes someone else's work and pretends it is their own original work
- Uses someone else's work without giving them credit for it's creation
- Copies or paraphrases source material into their paper without citing it

Many times, plagiarism is inadvertent or accidental. The student did not set out to cheat but may have taken sloppy notes and so ended up with inadequate documentation. Unfortunately, the penalties are the same whether the student meant to cheat or not. Therefore, it pays to understand plagiarism and to take careful notes to avoid a problem.

Examples

The exercises that follow will help you recognize plagiarism. Study the example below. The original is followed by two sample notes made by the student. Note that the citation style used here is MLA.

MLA Example

The excerpt below is from Walter Isaacson's article, "Benjamin Franklin Joins the Revolution." *Smithsonian*. Aug. 2003. 81-89.

"For the colonies to cross the threshold of rebellion, they needed to begin conceiving of themselves as a new nation. The draft of the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union that Franklin presented to the Congress on July 21 contained the seeds of the great conceptual breakthrough that would eventually define America's federal system: a division of power between a central government and the states" (84).

Student's paper:

The American colonies could not revolt until they saw themselves as a separate nation. This "conceptual breakthrough" came in the draft of the Articles of Confederation (Isaacson 84).

This is correctly written. Information is paraphrased, exact words are indicated with quotation marks, and a citation is given.

Student's paper:

The American colonies did not cross the threshold of rebellion until they began seeing themselves as a new nation after the Articles of Confederation were drafted (Isaacson 84).

This is plagiarized. Although the citation is given, exact words are used without indication by quotation marks.

APA Example

The excerpt below is from the article: Isaacson, W. (2003). Benjamin Franklin joins the revolution. *Smithsonian Magazine*. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/benjamin-franklin-joins-the-revolution-87199988/>

"Franklin was selected as a member of the Congress the day after his arrival. Nearing 70, he was by far the oldest. Most of the 62 others who convened in the Pennsylvania statehouse— such as Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry from Virginia and John Adams and John Hancock from Massachusetts—had not even been born when Franklin first went to work there more than 40 years earlier." (Isaacson, 2003).

Student's paper:

The Pennsylvania congress members were almost all 40 years younger than Benjamin Franklin (Isaacson, 2003).

This is correctly written. Information is paraphrased and a citation is given.

Student's paper:

Franklin was nearing 70 when he first joined Thomas Jefferson and Patric Henry in congress and they had not even been born when Franklin first went to work there more than 40 years earlier (Isaacson, 2003).

This is plagiarized. Although the citation is given, exact words are used without indication by quotation marks.

Your Turn

For each of the following five notes determine if the student entry is correct or plagiarized. Note that some of these examples are MLA and others are APA.

Original (from Walter Isaacson's article, "Benjamin Franklin Joins the Revolution.")

"The document contained a bill of particulars against the British, and it recounted, as Franklin had often done, America's attempts to be conciliatory despite England's repeated intransigence. Jefferson's writing style, however, was different from Franklin's. It was graced with rolling cadences and mellifluous phrases, soaring in their poetry and powerful despite their polish. In addition, Jefferson drew on a depth of philosophy not found in Franklin. He echoed both the language and grand theories of English and Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, most notably the concept of natural rights propounded by John Locke, whose *Second Treatise on Government* he had read at least three times. And he built his case, in a manner more sophisticated than Franklin would have on a contract between government and the governed that was based on the consent of the people" (86).

Student 1

Isaacson notes that Jefferson's style was more flowing and poetic than Franklin's and that Jefferson based his work on 18th century philosophy in a way more sophisticated than Franklin would have (86).

_____ Correct _____ Plagiarized.

Student 2

Jefferson was familiar with 18th century English and Scottish political thinkers such as John Locke and based his arguments on those theories (Isaacson, 2003).

_____ Correct _____ Plagiarized.

Student 3

The Declaration of Independence contained the particular objections that America had against Britain and recounted "America's attempts to be conciliatory" as Franklin often had done.

_____ Correct _____ Plagiarized.

Student 4

The author notes that Jefferson's writing style was different from Franklin's because it "was graced with rolling cadences and mellifluous phrases." The argument was also different from Franklin's because of its emphasis on sophisticated political philosophical thinking (Isaacson 86).

_____ Correct _____ Plagiarized.

Student 5

Jefferson copied the language and grand theories of English and Scottish political philosophers. This gave his argument more complexity than Franklin's original ideas. (Isaacson 86).

_____ Correct _____ Plagiarized.

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Answer Key:

Student 1: Plagiarized. The exact words are used without quotation marks.

Student 2: Correct. The student has paraphrased without using exact words and has cited the source of the ideas.

Student 3: Plagiarized: There is no citation.

Student 4: Correct: Although the student includes the idea of sophisticated political thinking they are not using exact phrases from the original.

Student 5: Plagiarized: Exact words are used without quotation marks.