The Catholic University of America
Writing Center Handout

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's words or ideas without giving proper credit or by making it seem as if the words or ideas are your own. **Plagiarism is a serious form of academic dishonesty. Students who are caught plagiarizing will receive a grade of "F" for the semester**!

Doing any of these things is plagiarism:

- Turning in material you did not write, including material copied from or bought on the Internet
- Turning in papers written for another class (either high school or college)
- Turning in papers drafted by you but revised or edited by others
- Failing to properly paraphrase, summarize, or quote sources—even if it's a mistake

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How to avoid plagiarism:

Step 1: When you research:

- Get **paper copies** of your source material by photocopying pages from books and printing out material from the Internet.
- Use a **notation system** in your notes to remind yourself which sentences are direct quotations, which are paraphrases, and which are your own thoughts. A good system is to put the letter Q next to quotations, S/P for summaries/paraphrases, and M for your (my) own thoughts.
- **Write down** the author, title, journal title/volume/issue number (if using a periodical), publisher, year, and page number(s) at the top of your notes for every source. Start a new page for every new source you read.
- Create a **working bibliography** by keeping a running list of your sources that includes title, journal title/volume/issue number (if using a periodical), publisher, year, and page number(s) for every source. Update the list when you find a new source. Under each entry, write down the key points from that source.

Step 2: When you write:

- **Don't cut and paste** directly from the internet into your paper draft.
- Always include quotation marks and the source of the quotation, paraphrase, or summary **while you are drafting** the paper—don't put it off to the end.

Material that needs citation

- Exact words or phrases taken from another source
- Summaries or paraphrases of ideas from another source
- Diagrams, charts, pictures, illustrations, or photographs taken from another source

Material that does NOT need citation

- Your own experiences, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, conclusions, observations or insights
- Generally accepted facts
- Observations, conclusions or notes from your own experiment