



Plagiarism

What is it?



“Plagiarism is copying another person’s text or ideas and passing the copied material as your own work. ...You must both delineate (i.e., separate and identify) the copied text from your text and give credit to (i.e., cite the source) the source of the copied text to avoid accusations of plagiarism. Plagiarism is considered fraud and has potentially harsh consequences including loss of job, loss of reputation, and the assignment of reduced or failing grade in a course.”

This definition of plagiarism applies for copied text and ideas:

- (i) regardless of the source of the copied text or idea;
- (ii) regardless of whether the author(s) of the text or idea which you have copied actually copied that text or idea from another source;
- (iii) regardless of whether or not the authorship of the text or idea which you copy is known;
- (iv) regardless of the nature of your text (journal paper/article, webpage, book chapter, paper submitted for college course, etc) into which you copy the text or idea;
- (v) regardless of whether or not the author of the source of the copied material gives permission for the material to be copied; and
- (vi) regardless of whether you are or are not the author of the source of the copied text or idea (self plagiarism).

This definition also applies for figures and figure legends and for tables and table legends which you copy into your text.”

Quoted from “Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It”, Peter Cobbett, PhD, August 2016

At MSU, General Student Regulation 1.00 states in part that “no student shall claim or submit the academic work of another as one’s own.” (For the complete regulation, refer to Protection of Scholarship and Grades.)

Plagiarism may be accidental or blatant or self-plagiarism. However, students are held to the same standards whether or not they knew they were plagiarizing or whether or not they were plagiarizing themselves or someone else.

Accidental or Unintentional—You may not even know you are plagiarizing. It is your responsibility to make certain that you understand the difference between quoting and paraphrasing, as well as the proper way to cite and delineate quoted material.

Blatant—Here, students are well aware that they are plagiarizing. Purposefully using someone else's ideas or work without proper acknowledgment is plagiarism. This includes turning in borrowed or bought research papers as one's own.

Self—Turning in the same term paper (or substantially the same paper) for two courses without getting permission from one's instructor is plagiarism.

For more information:
Office of the University Ombudsperson
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East Lansing, MI 48824
(517) 353-8830
ombud.msu.edu

In outlining what he called “the perils of plagiarism” to his students, the late W. Cameron Meyers, a revered journalism professor at MSU, wrote:

Plagiarism not only is legally wrong but also morally corrosive. . . . Any paper based upon the writing of others should acknowledge every source used. In a reference paper, the acknowledgements are made in footnotes--numbered notes at the bottom of the page (corresponding to the numbers in text) that show exactly where the information was obtained. There are times, however, when such acknowledgements can be incorporated smoothly in the text without their becoming distracting or obtrusive.

Unless authorized by their instructors, students are expected to do their own, original work on each assignment in each class. A student who recycles his or her course work from one class to another may face an allegation of academic dishonesty. An instructor who believes a student has committed an act of plagiarism should take appropriate action, which includes the issuing of a “penalty grade” for academic dishonesty. Article 11 of the Student Rights and Responsibilities at Michigan State University, or the “SRR,” defines a penalty grade as “a grade assigned to a student by a faculty member based on a charge of academic misconduct.” A penalty grade can include, but is not limited to, a failing grade on the assignment or in the course.

MSU instructors cite easy access to the Internet as a primary reason for a perceived increase in plagiarism by their students. So-called term paper mills, available online, are plentiful. To counter, instructors have turned to various plagiarism detection sites to seek out and identify the original sources of their students’ work.

Instructors really do check for plagiarism. However, they also want to teach students to better understand what it is. As a result, in Fall 2012, Michigan State University partnered with Turnitin.com in an effort to assist students in learning how to avoid plagiarizing materials. Turnitin.com is a tool for instructors and students alike to see how students are citing resources and to have a better understanding of the resources that they are utilizing. In this vein of using Turnitin.com as a learning resource for MSU students, when an instructor chooses to use Turnitin.com, they are asked to adhere to their understanding of five basic principles of use.

1. I will use Turnitin as part of a balanced approach to encourage academic integrity and foster student success:
 - a. by providing clear instructions and guidance for assignments
 - b. by encouraging students to manage time and make progress prior to deadlines for submission of graded assignments
 - c. by making other resources known to students (e.g., writing center)
 - d. by using it as a deterrent, not as a "caught you" enforcement tool
2. I will openly disclose the use of Turnitin for this course on the syllabus and at the time assignments are announced, including clarifying the choices I've made about retention of student work (Global, Local, or No-Retention).
3. For any given assignment, I will:
 - a. use Turnitin for all papers;
 - b. not submit papers arbitrarily to Turnitin, for the purpose of reviewing originality reports for papers deemed "suspicious;"
 - c. or consider exceptions for specific students, who may object to the retention of their work by Turnitin, working with the University Ombudsperson to resolve any conflict.
4. I will make the final determination of originality and integrity. The originality reports, and the machine judgment that generates them, provide a set of useful resources for comparison. However, there is no substitute for human judgment and assessment prior to generating feedback for students or making a determination about honesty and integrity.
5. To ensure privacy, I will ask students to remove identification (e.g., names and student numbers) from submissions because:
 - a. Turnitin will automatically add student's names to assignments when instructors are viewing, downloading or printing.
 - b. removing the identifying information from the document allows it to be preserved in the repository without affecting the student's educational privacy.

Please note that papers submitted through Turnitin.com are retained in one of three ways:

1. Globally/Standard: For all future comparisons by users of Turnitin.com at any institution;
2. Local/Institutionally: For all future comparisons by users of Turnitin.com at Michigan State University;
3. No Retention: After a comparison is made of the student's paper to the databases, the paper is disposed of and not retained for any future comparisons.

For a more complete discussion of plagiarism, see "Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It" by Peter Cobbett, PhD, August 2016