

## Understanding Plagiarism, Paraphrasing and Citing Sources

### Introduction

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Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. San Diego State University regards plagiarism as academic dishonesty. Consequences of plagiarism include failing an assignment, receiving a lower course grade, and even failing a course. Read SDSU's Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism which starts in page 15 of this document: [http://senate.sdsu.edu/policy/policy\\_file.pdf](http://senate.sdsu.edu/policy/policy_file.pdf).

Did You Know? The word plagiarism comes from the Latin *plagiarius* meaning "kidnapper"



### What is Plagiarism?

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Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's words, sentences, or ideas and passing them off as your own without giving credit by citing the original source.

You might be plagiarizing if you:

- Submit someone else's work as your own.
- Buy a paper from a papermill, website or other source.
- Copy sentences, phrases, paragraphs, or ideas from someone else's work, published or unpublished, without giving the original author credit.
- Replace select words from a passage without giving the original author credit.
- Copy any type of multimedia (graphics, audio, video, internet streams), computer programs, music compositions, graphs, or charts from someone else's work without giving the original author credit.
- Piece together phrases, ideas, and sentences from a variety of sources to write an essay.
- Build on someone else's idea or phrase to write your paper without giving the original author credit.
- Submit your own paper in more than one course.

### Common Knowledge

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Common knowledge does not need to be cited. Common knowledge includes facts that are known by a lot of people and can be found in many sources. For example, you do not need to cite the following:

- In 1865, following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson was elected as the 17th President of the United States.
- William Shakespeare was born in 1564 and he died in 1616.
- A genome is all the DNA in an organism, including its genes.

## What is Paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is putting someone else's words or ideas into your own words. Some of the most common mistakes made when writing a research paper are paraphrasing incorrectly and failing to give the original author credit. Although you are using your own words, the ideas are taken from someone else and must be cited.

Paraphrasing is not simply rearranging or rewording an original passage. Paraphrasing consists of reading the original passage, understanding what the original author is saying, synthesizing the information, and then writing the ideas in your own words.



## Using Direct Quotes

You should use direct quotes and paraphrasing to support your own ideas. Give the original author credit when you quote or paraphrase by following a citation style. Use parenthesis, footnotes, or endnotes, to cite the original source, or write sentences that give the original author credit.

## Proper Paraphrasing

The following sections will give you examples of acceptable paraphrasing and unacceptable plagiarism.

### Example #1

#### Original Passage:

Liquid crystal displays (LCD) have become increasingly popular in workplaces with video display terminals (VDT). Modern LCDs offer many advantages over cathode ray tubes (CRT). LCDs enable employers to reduce many of the risk factors that cause visual complaints. For instance, reflections on LCDs can be considerably lower than on CRTs. Luminance of LCDs can be adjusted to high values without affecting the size of a pixel, positively affecting the inner contrast of characters. Furthermore, the LCD image is flicker-free.

Source: Menozzi, M., Lang, F., Napflin, U., Zeller, C., & Krueger, H. (2001). CRT versus LCD: effects of refresh rate, display technology and background luminance in visual performance. *Displays*, 22, 79-85.

#### Paraphrase:

LCD screens are popular in offices and offer many advantages over CRT screens. LCD screens give employers the opportunity to reduce visual complaints. Reflections are lower on LCD than on CRT screens, they have better luminance, and they are flicker-free.

#### Is this plagiarism?

This paraphrase is plagiarism. The writer of this paraphrase changed a few words and phrases, but did not synthesize the original paragraph and change it into his own words. The writer used the original paragraph with minor changes, and failed to cite the original source.

## Example #2

### Original Passage:

Liquid crystal displays (LCD) have become increasingly popular in workplaces with video display terminals (VDT). Modern LCDs offer many advantages over cathode ray tubes (CRT). LCDs enable employers to reduce many of the risk factors that cause visual complaints. For instance, reflections on LCDs can be considerably lower than on CRTs. Luminance of LCDs can be adjusted to high values without affecting the size of a pixel, positively affecting the inner contrast of characters. Furthermore, the LCD image is flicker-free.

Source: Menozzi, M., Lang, F., Napflin, U., Zeller, C., & Krueger, H. (2001). CRT versus LCD: effects of refresh rate, display technology and background luminance in visual performance. *Displays*, 22, 79-85.

### Paraphrase:

LCD screens are brighter than CRTs, without losing their pixel clarity and character contrast. Not only do LCDs offer less reflection interference, but they are flicker-free, and may reduce some of the visual health risks traditionally experienced with CRTs. It is because of these advantages that LCD screens are gaining popularity in the workplace (Menozzi, 2001, p.1).

### Is this plagiarism?

After consultation with his instructor and local librarian, the author wrote this non-plagiarized paraphrase. This time, the writer used his own words. The ideas presented in the original passage remain, but the words are now his. He has also given the original author credit.

## Example #3

### Original Passage:

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon in April (probably April 23), 1564. His father was a citizen of some prominence who became an alderman and bailiff, but who later suffered financial reverses. Shakespeare presumably attended the Stratford grammar school, where he could have acquired a respectable knowledge of Latin, but he did not proceed to Oxford or Cambridge. There are legends about Shakespeare's youth but no documented facts.

Source: Abrams, M.H., ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol. 1. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1962. 629.

### Paraphrase:

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon. His father was a prominent citizen who suffered financial losses after becoming an alderman and bailiff. Shakespeare may have attended the Stratford grammar school and learned Latin, but he did not go on to Oxford or Cambridge. There are no documented facts about Shakespeare's youth so scholars have to rely on legend.

### Is this plagiarism?

This paraphrase is plagiarism. The writer of this paraphrase changed a few words and phrases, but did not synthesize the original paragraph and change it into her own words. The writer used the original paragraph with minor changes, and failed to cite the original source.

#### Example #4

##### Original Passage:

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-on-Avon in April (probably April 23), 1564. His father was a citizen of some prominence who became an alderman and bailiff, but who later suffered financial reverses. Shakespeare presumably attended the Stratford grammar school, where he could have acquired a respectable knowledge of Latin, but he did not proceed to Oxford or Cambridge. There are legends about Shakespeare's youth but no documented facts.

Source: Abrams, M.H., ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Vol. 1. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1962. 629.

##### Paraphrase:

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon. His father was an affluent member of the community. At one time a well-known and respected alderman and bailiff, he later lost his financial security. Experts suspect that Shakespeare went to the Stratford grammar school where he probably obtained a command of the Latin language, however, since there are no documented facts about his childhood, scholars rely on rumors and stories believed to be historically accurate. They do know that he did not continue his education at Oxford or Cambridge (Abrams 629).

##### Is this plagiarism?

This time, the author has written the paraphrase in her own words, changing it significantly from the original passage. The ideas presented in the original passage remain, but the words are now hers. She has also given the original author credit.

#### Example #5

When you use a key phrase from the original passage, but paraphrase the rest, the key phrase, or original words, needs to be in quotations. For example:

##### Original Passage:

The horror genre has become increasingly concerned with the relative and fragile nature of existence.

Source: Wells, Paul. *The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch*. London: Wallflower, 2000.

##### Acceptable Paraphrase:

Horror films often examine the "relative and fragile nature" of humanity and what it means to exist (Wells 9).

#### How to avoid plagiarism

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- Get to know your citation style guide.
- Quote and cite phrases, sentences, and paragraphs taken directly from the original source.
- Quote and cite statistics, charts, graphs and drawings taken directly from the original source.
- When you paraphrase or summarize, give credit to the original author.



## Getting to Know Your Citation Guide

Different disciplines use different citation styles. Here are the 5 most commonly used styles:

- MLA: Modern Language Association. Frequently used in the humanities, literature, and arts. Consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.
- APA: American Psychological Association. Frequently used in the sciences and social sciences. Consult the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.
- Turabian. Multidisciplinary; frequently used in history. Consult *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate Turabian.
- Chicago Style. Multidisciplinary; frequently used in history. Consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
- AMA: American Medical Association. Frequently used in health, medicine and biology. Consult the *American Medical Association Manual of Style*.



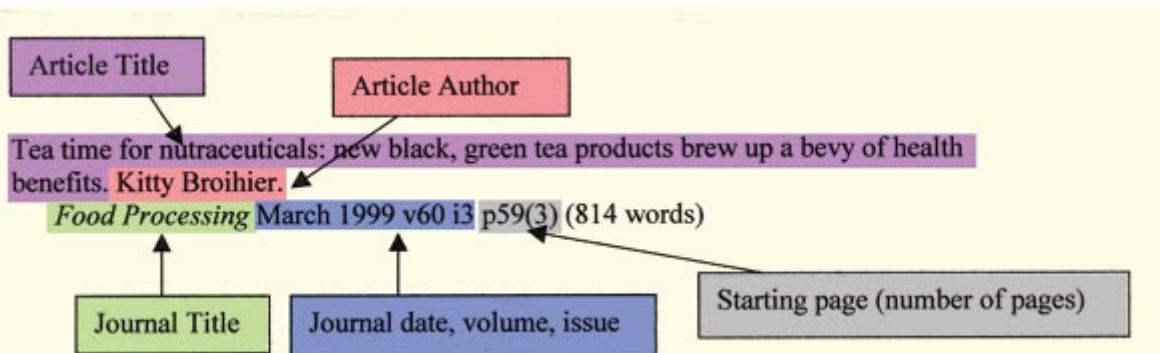
## Citing Your Sources

Understanding citations and how to cite your sources can help you avoid plagiarism. A citation includes, at least, the author, title, and source information.

These examples will familiarize you with reading the parts of a citation and translating the parts into either the MLA or APA citation style formats.

### Here is a Journal Article Citation:

Tea time for nutraceuticals: new black, green tea products brew up a bevy of health benefits. Kitty Broihier. *Food Processing* March 1999 v60 i3 p59(3) (814 words)



### MLA Format

Broihier, Kitty. "Tea Time for Nutraceuticals: New Black, Green Tea Products Brew Up a Bevy of Health Benefits." Food Processing 60.3 (1999): 59-61.

### APA Format

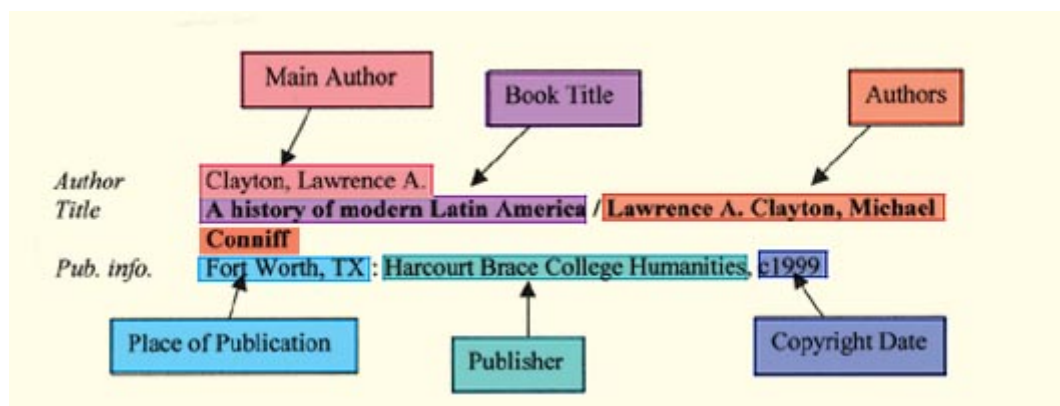
Broihier, K. (1999). Tea time for nutraceuticals: New black, green tea products brew up a bevy of health benefits. *Food Processing*, 60(3), 59-61.

## Here is a Book Citation from a Library Catalog

Author Clayton, Lawrence A.

Title A history of modern Latin America / Lawrence A. Clayton, Michael Conniff

Pub. info. Fort Worth, TX : Harcourt Brace College Humanities, c1999



### MLA Format

Clayton, Lawrence A. and Michael Conniff. A History of Modern Latin America. Fort Worth, TX : Harcourt Brace College Humanities, 1999.

### APA Format

Clayton, L. A., & Conniff, M. (1999). *A history of modern Latin America*. Fort Worth, TX : Harcourt Brace College Humanities.

## What is a plagiarism detection service?

Plagiarism detection services, such as Turnitin.com, use specialized technology to compare student papers with information found on the Internet as well as their own databases of previously submitted papers. Your professor may ask you to submit your papers electronically Turnitin.com. Turnitin.com will create an "originality report" that shows how much of your paper is original and how much, if any, is plagiarized

Content for this handout was written by Pamela Jackson. Portions of this content also appear in San Jose State University Library's *Plagiarism: The Crime of Intellectual Kidnapping* tutorial. This handout may be duplicated and distributed for educational, non-profit purposes as long as this statement appears.