Plagiarism FAQ: What You Need to Know

Do you know all about plagiarism? Consider the following common misconceptions:

• Reusing one of your own papers is not considered plagiarism.
• As long as you include a reference list at the end of your paper, you have not plagiarized.
• It is okay to use someone else’s work as long as you replace a few words and change the sentences around a bit.
• A source is plagiarized only if it is intentional.
• “I didn’t mean to” is an acceptable excuse for plagiarism.

All of the above count as plagiarism. Students usually have a good idea of what it means to plagiarize, but there are some things you probably do not know. This tutorial will tell you what you need to know about plagiarism and how to avoid it.

Frequently Asked Questions About Plagiarism

• What is plagiarism?
• What is Kaplan University’s official policy on plagiarism?
• How can I integrate outside sources into a paper?
• How do I give appropriate credit to sources I use in my paper?
• How do instructors check for plagiarism?
• What is the difference between accidental and intentional plagiarism?
• What are the consequences of plagiarism?
• What is APA?
• What are the main components of an APA-formatted paper?
• What is an in-text citation?
• What is a reference list or reference page?
• What about programs that automatically format papers according to APA standards?
• How can the Writing Center help me with APA formatting and avoiding plagiarism?
• How can I learn more about properly using APA formatting and avoiding plagiarism?

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is an act of academic dishonesty. Whether intentional or unintentional, plagiarism violates the Kaplan University Honor Code. It can be the result of attempting to recycle your own work from another course or semester, inaccurately citing the work of someone else, failing to give credit to someone else for his or her ideas or writing, failing to summarize or paraphrase a quote in your own words, or anything else that falsely represents any part of your work. In short, be honest with your reader and yourself. Know when and how to use APA or the required documentation style for your class or course of study, and be sure to accurately implement it.
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What is Kaplan University’s official policy on plagiarism?

Kaplan University defines plagiarism as “the theft” of someone else’s ideas and work: “Whether you copy verbatim or simply rephrase the ideas of another without properly acknowledging the source, it is still plagiarism” (2014a, para. 2). The Plagiarism Clarification section of the Academic Integrity Policy sets forth the following expectations:

All work done for the completion of a course must be your original work with appropriate citations or acknowledgements for any sources utilized in the completion of any coursework, project, or assignment. This includes, but is not limited to, discussion boards, computer programs, marketing plans, PowerPoint presentations, papers, and other assignments, including drafts and final versions.

Plagiarism offenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Using the words, ideas, or other work from another student or the Internet without giving appropriate credit to the source
- Buying a paper off the Internet, from a term paper company, or from another student and submitting it as original work
- Submitting an entire paper or project, or parts of a paper or project, that you did not produce as though it is your original work. (Kaplan University, 2014a, para. 3-4)

This means copying documentation from another student or from any other source without proper citation is a form of academic dishonesty, as is producing work substantially from the work of another. Students must assume that collaboration in the completion of written assignments is prohibited unless explicitly permitted by the instructor. Students must acknowledge any collaboration and its extent in all submitted coursework. Students are also subject to disciplinary action if they submit as their own work a paper purchased from a term paper company or downloaded from the Internet.

In the preparation of work submitted to meet course requirements, whether a draft or a final version of a paper or project, students must take great care to distinguish their own ideas and language from information derived from other sources. Sources include published primary and secondary materials, electronic media, and information and opinions gathered directly from other people.

How can I integrate outside sources into my paper?

There are three ways to use a source within an essay. Understanding each will help you accurately integrate the ideas of others without plagiarizing. Each way to use a source must be accompanied by proper citation and bibliographic information:

1. Directly quoting: Using a source without altering it in any way—the work is used word-for-word. It is critical that quotation marks enclose all directly quoted passages.
2. **Paraphrasing**: Using a source by breaking it down and placing it in your own words—the meaning is extracted or restated in new wording and phrasing with just as many as words or slightly more words than the original.

3. **Summarizing**: Using a source by synthesizing many points or simplifying a long text into a brief synopsis in your own words.

Anything that you borrow from an outside source must be cited in two places: in the body of the text and on a reference list at the end of the paper. Additionally, direct quotes must be enclosed in quotation marks. Failure to do any of these things constitutes plagiarism.

Instructors do not take pleasure in “catching” students plagiarizing. Every attempt is made to ensure the success of each student through educational resources like the Kaplan University Writing Center and this tutorial. One tool that instructors use to prevent plagiarism is a third-party service called Turnitin. This extensive database protects your work from being stolen by someone else and shows which sources have been used within your paper. As long as you cite any outside sources, the report generated by this service is a testimony to your accuracy and skill in implementing APA or other required citation and formatting standards. On the other hand, accidental and intentional plagiarism is identified and highlighted by Turnitin.

Accidental plagiarism is the result of improperly using or inaccurately citing a source, while intentional plagiarism is outright dishonesty. However, plagiarism in any form is still plagiarism, and the consequences are the same whether or not it was intended. “I didn’t know that was considered plagiarism” is not a defense.
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What are the consequences of plagiarizing?

Kaplan University (2014b) defines plagiarism as:

- a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy that may result in the following sanctions:
  - **First offense of the Academic Integrity Policy:** Failure of the assignment in which the action occurred
  - **Second offense of the Academic Integrity Policy:** Failure of the class in which the action occurred
  - **Third offense of the Academic Integrity Policy:** Expulsion or permanent dismissal from the University

The charges are recorded in Kaplan University’s database and remain there permanently. All offenses you accumulate while completing a program will be carried over to any subsequent program, if and when you reenroll.

Procedures for processing violations of the Academic Integrity Policy are as follows:
1. The instructor notifies you of any charge of academic dishonesty brought against you.
2. The charge is submitted in writing by the instructor to the Office of the Chief Academic Officer.
3. The Office of the Chief Academic Officer sends you a copy of the Academic Integrity Policy and notification of the charge.
4. The Office of the Chief Academic Officer maintains a database of academic dishonesty charges.
5. Please see the University’s [Academic Appeals Policy](#) for information on how to appeal a charge of violation of the Academic Integrity Policy. (para. 1-3)

What is APA?

APA stands for the American Psychological Association. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association establishes a national standard for the layout of an academic paper and gives a comprehensive method for referencing sources used in these types of papers.

Generally, APA style is the method used for social science papers. At Kaplan, we find that APA style best suits our overall curriculum for most courses. These standards are not suggestions; they are the expectation.
What are the main components of an APA-formatted paper?

There are three major elements in an APA-formatted paper. These include manuscript formatting, in-text citations (also called parenthetical references), and bibliographical references (i.e. a reference list or reference page).

What is an in-text citation?

In-text citations are abbreviated notations about a source being used in the body of the paper. These citations give readers a basic understanding of the origin of the source. In APA style, in-text citations provide the author’s last name and the publication year of the information being quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Readers can then factor in this information when they read, analyze, or evaluate your writing and research. Citations show that you have taken this information into consideration too.

Citations also locate the outside ideas inside your paper. Each well-integrated quote will typically be part of a single sentence within a paragraph, so the citation is also incorporated into that same sentence, making it obvious to readers that this sentence’s information came from that source. You can either work the source’s name and publication date into the sentence (Example 1) or put it in parentheses, a “parenthetical citation,” at the end of the sentence (Example 2).

- **Example 1:** Canby (1924) captured the process of writing perfectly when he wrote, "Good writing is always a breaking of the soil, clearing away prejudices, pulling up of sour weeds of crooked thinking, stripping the turf so as to get at what is fertile beneath" (p. 135).

- **Example 2:** Thinking and the writing process are connected in that "Good writing is always a breaking of the soil, clearing away prejudices, pulling up of sour weeds of crooked thinking, stripping the turf so as to get at what is fertile beneath" (Canby, 1924, p. 135).

Readers can tell the above are directly quoted because they are enclosed in quotation marks, tell us who said it and when it was said, and include the page number on which these quotes appear. Sometimes, paragraph numbers are substituted for page numbers when using Internet sources when page numbers are unavailable.

A sentence that incorporates a **paraphrase or summary** must also include the author and year of publication, but they should not be enclosed in quotation marks. Including the page number is optional. Below is an original text followed by two examples of cited paraphrases.

- **Original Text:** “For the retiring ‘Silent Generation,’ now in their ’60s and ’70s, 9/11 is worrisome. Polls confirm that these World War II-era children have aged into the most war- and casualty-averse Americans, the most ardent supporters of the UN, and the biggest advocates of committee-scripted process” (Howe & Strauss, 2002, p. 31).
Example 1: As expected, people who are now in their middle 60s and 70s, who remember World War II from their childhoods, are passionately against war, and they believe in the power of the United Nations and other bureaucracies to solve world conflict (Howe & Strauss, 2002).

Example 2: According to Howe and Strauss (2002), people who are now in their middle 60s and 70s, who remember World War II from their childhoods, are passionately against war, and they believe in the power of the United Nations and other bureaucracies to solve world conflict.

In addition to an in-text citation, a complete listing of a source’s publication information must be included at the end of the paper in the reference list. Finally, extensive examples of in-text citations can be found in the Citation Guidelines and Plagiarism Information page of the Kaplan University Writing Center.

A reference list (sometimes called “reference page”) provides the full bibliographic information for each source cited in the paper. In addition to the author and year found in an in-text citation, a reference list citation includes the title and publisher. The reference list is further evidence of the quality of your research and each source’s creditability. Additionally, many readers are looking for more information on a given topic, so the reference list provides the bibliographic details needed to locate or access each of the sources and do further reading.

It is critical to note that a reference list is not sufficient by itself. Quotation marks must enclose any direct quotes in the paper, and in-text citations must also accompany all quotes, paraphrases, or summaries. Reference list citations also have specific formatting, so it is important to use the citation and formatting guides available to you from the Writing Center to be sure that you accurately and adequately document your sources. Following is a sample section of a reference list that adheres to APA formatting conventions:
What about programs that automatically format papers in APA style?

Automatic formatting programs may be helpful with manuscript formatting, but many struggle with accurate citation integration. APA formatting is complex and often updated, and automatic formatting programs and citation generators often lack the latest APA style changes. There is no substitute for your own effort and critical thinking skills. Therefore, these types of tools should be used sparingly and cautiously.

How can the Writing Center help me with APA and avoiding plagiarism?

You can access the Writing Center from the KU Campus or Kaplan homepage by clicking “My Studies” then “Academic Support Center.” The Writing Center offers multiple modes of assistance for all Kaplan University students:

1. **Writing Tutor:** You may speak with a live tutor Sunday through Thursday during specified hours.
2. **Q and A:** You may submit a writing question 24 hours using the submission form. You will receive a response within 24 hours on weekdays or 48 hours on weekends.
3. **Paper Review Service:** You can submit an entire essay for feedback. While this is not a plagiarism detection service or a guarantee of higher grades, tutors can help you understand areas of your work that need attention. Submit papers using the submission form. Replies normally take 48 to 72 hours.
4. **Writing Reference Library:** You will find writing guides in the form of webpages, documents, videos, interactive tutorials, and podcasts that offer specific help with writing.
5. **Webinars:** You can attend live writing workshops during specified times, or you can browse and watch recorded workshops, or download workshop resources.

How can I learn more about using APA format and avoiding plagiarism?

In addition to this FAQ, the Kaplan University Writing Center (KUWC) is the best place to begin. Specifically, on the Citation Guidelines and Plagiarism Information page of the Kaplan University Writing Center useful writing guides are available for your review such as Basic Citation Guidelines and Common Citations in APA Format. After reviewing these documents, you are welcome to ask further questions using the Q and A or Live Tutoring services. Finally, your instructor is always available for assistance by email or during his or her office hours.
References
