

## SELF-PLAGIARISM (PODCAST 26 TRANSCRIPT)

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Greetings everyone. This is Kurtis Clements with another effective writing podcast. In this episode, I am going to discuss self-plagiarism. First off, I want to give special thanks to Molly Starkweather for her help and inspiration for this podcast. Thanks, Molly!

Now, I know you all know what plagiarism is, right? And I am sure, you've all heard the familiar and wise warnings about avoiding plagiarism: Don't do it. It's not worth it. Make sure to give credit where credit is due. Include in-text citations. Remember, it's so easy to get caught with today's technology. While most folks do all they can to avoid plagiarizing—indeed, to even be in a position to be accused of plagiarizing—there are some who never give a second thought about reusing one's own work, something that is actually considered self-plagiarism. That's right—self-plagiarism. Am I serious? you ask. Yes, I am, and it is possible—and people do it all the time—to plagiarize oneself.

Simply put, self-plagiarism is when you take a paper or even just a paragraph that you have written for a previous class assignment and submit it for a different assignment or for a different class. You might be thinking, "What's wrong with reusing my own work? I took the time to write a good paper. I should be able to use it again, right?" Wrong.

The problem with using your own work from one assignment for a different assignment—even if it is only a paragraph or two—is twofold. First, doing so without letting anyone know (e.g., your instructor, an editor) is deceitful. The intention is to pass off work previously written as new work. Whether you like it or not, this practice is considered a form of plagiarism. It simply does not matter if you are the author of the content or not; the material was previously used someplace else, and it is being used again.

Second, when you self-plagiarize, you might save yourself a little time, but you do not demonstrate any new learning specific to the course you are taking. It's also going to shoot you in the foot. If you are taking an advanced course in nursing terminal patients, let's say, what good is it to copy and paste a paragraph from a paper you wrote back in Introduction to Nursing? Your writing should grow as you grow in your education, which means no recycling. And if you do try to recycle your work and get caught—and more and more plagiarists get caught via a simple Google search—you will get in trouble. Lots of it. Take, for example, best-selling writer Jonah Lehrer, who was caught plagiarizing himself, which ultimately cost him his job, his speaking engagements, his book contracts, and his credibility.

However, your effort to avoid self-plagiarism does not mean that you can't use ideas from your previous papers. If you came up with a good idea in a previous assignment, you should feel free to grow that idea in a new class and let it develop into an even better idea. In this way you are building upon previous efforts and advancing your learning. One final piece of advice: Self-plagiarism is taken



just as seriously as other forms of plagiarism. You can risk your grade on an assignment, a class, or even your entire degree if you do not write new, fresh material for each course.

Thanks everyone! Happy writing.

