

## SELF-CITATION (PODCAST 30 TRANSCRIPT)

Click link for Podcast 30, Self-Citation:

<https://kuportal-a.akamaihd.net/ascmmedia/wc/podcasts/30selfcitation.mp3>

Greetings everyone. This is Kurtis Clements with another effective writing podcast. In this episode, I am going to shed some light on self-citation—that is, instances when one would want to cite him or herself in academic work in an effort to avoid plagiarism.

What’s this you ask? Students sometimes want to know if they can cite themselves in a paper or assignment they are working on—that is, they want to know if they can use content they’ve written for one class in another—and while this is a relatively uncommon practice—students aren’t, after all, experts in the fields in which they write papers—protocol exists.

Let’s say that you are working on a paper about cogs and wheels, a subject that you have written about in a couple of prior classes. In fact, you’ve discovered some terrific content about cogs and wheels and have even written several particularly strong paragraphs in a previous paper that you think will fit into your current assignment. You decide to copy and paste two full paragraphs from a previous paper into your new paper. Have you just committed plagiarism?

The answer: yes and no.

What? How can this be? Simply put, the topic of self-citation and plagiarism can be confusing, so let’s break it down. You plagiarize yourself when you reuse work that you have used elsewhere without making anyone aware of this reuse of old content. When you turn in a paper for a class, the expectation is that this work is original and created specifically for a given assignment. If it is not original, it is unethical, and in cases of copyright issues (that is, you are reusing old content not for a class but for publication), it’s illegal. You must not mislead your reader, editor, or professor.

Generally, you can use small portions of your previous work if you cite it properly. This is called self-citation. The citation is required because it must be clear that this work or writing exists somewhere else and that the words or ideas are not original to the current paper or production. If you quote or paraphrase your ideas from a previous paper, in APA, you would cite yourself as the primary author and the work as an unpublished paper. For this self-citation, you must include both an in-text and reference citation like you would for any other source in your paper.

Please take special note of what I said above: It’s ok to use *small portions of your previous work*. In most cases of university academic writing, “small portions” means a sentence or two. What?!

That’s right: If you do cite yourself—that is, if you use content that you wrote for a previous paper—do so rarely and reuse content sparingly. Why? You ask. Think of it this way: If you are choosing to cite your previous work, it should be because you want to build on an idea you came up with in a previous paper. You should not cite previous work in order to only write a new paper faster.

However, with that said, the real question to think about is should you be using your previous work



to begin with? To quote yourself does not lend credibility to your paper unless you are a known and published scholar in the field about which you are writing. Most students don't fall into this category. Therefore, it is better for the validity of the paper and for student learning to avoid citing yourself unless you truly have an important idea *of yours* to build upon from a previous paper. Make sense? I am not saying don't use your own content from a previous paper, but I am saying do so purposefully.

In order to cite yourself, if you decide it is appropriate for your paper, you can either refer to yourself in the third person, Clements (2013) stated, for example, or, if the assignment allows for a more casual personal reference, you could write, "As I discussed in a previous paper. . ." Again, you would include both an in-text and reference citation like you would for any other source in your paper.

One word of caution: You do not want to cite yourself citing someone else. If you want to reuse a quotation or a source from a previous paper, you need to cite that original source again. For example, let's say you found a scholarly, peer-reviewed resource from an expert in the field, a Dr. Pickle, and you quoted Dr. Pickle in a paper. If you want to reuse that quote, don't cite yourself, cite Dr. Pickle, who is the expert. This might mean that you have to go find that article again, but it is a best practice to cite—as best as one can—only original sources.

One final reminder: Keep in mind that if you choose self-citation, you should do so to build upon your ideas from a previous paper, not simply reuse the same content in another context. Got it? Good. Oh, I would be remiss if I didn't also say that when citing yourself, it is wise to consult the course syllabus and/or your professor beforehand just to make sure citing yourself will be ok.

In closing, I want to give special thanks to Melody Pickle, yes the Dr. Pickle from the example; she is real and an expert and her help on this script has been significant.

Happy writing, everyone!

