Intellectual honesty is the foundation of an academic community. As a student at Weber State University, you are responsible for using the materials you collect and incorporate in your assignments and papers in an ethical manner. This means that you must:

- respect the rights of authors by crediting original sources for all information you use
- think critically about quality
- do your own research and writing

Incorporating the work of others is perfectly acceptable in academic writing, but you have a responsibility to let your audience know when you are using someone else’s ideas and credit those sources appropriately.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is using someone else’s work without giving credit. It can happen either on purpose or accidentally. Either way, it’s considered academic dishonesty. Examples of plagiarism include using others’ ideas, thoughts, or conversation in your own paper without citing them; paraphrasing or summarizing other people’s work without citing it; copying images or text from the Web without proper acknowledgement; or borrowing facts or statistics that are not common knowledge without proper acknowledgement.

If you get caught plagiarizing at a university, the penalties range from losing points on a question to expulsion. In most instances, a student gets a failing grade on the plagiarized assignment. However, an instructor can legitimately fail a student for the entire course for one instance of plagiarism.

You might be wondering, do I have to cite everything I write? The answer is no. Sometimes, you’ll use information from other sources to support your argument, and you need to cite those sources. But, as a general rule, if a fact or piece of information is generally known and accepted (for example, that Salt Lake City is the capital of Utah, or that Ronald Reagan was an actor before he became president of the United States) you do not need to cite the source. This is called common knowledge.

Deciding which facts or pieces of information require citation and which do not is not always easy. The concept of common knowledge can never be assumed; what is commonly known will vary widely for different audiences. Keep in mind that your professor is the primary audience for your work. If you are uncertain about whether to cite, ASK. If you do not have that opportunity, use the general rule of when in doubt, cite.
TYPES OF PLAGIARISM

There are several different types of plagiarism.

1. **Direct plagiarism** is the most obvious. This is copying something word for word without using quotation marks or citing the author. This is considered the most serious type.

2. **Accidental/unintentional plagiarism** is the most common type and happens when students don’t intend to plagiarize, but fail to cite sources correctly or copy too much of the source’s original wording while trying to paraphrase or summarize the passage. Even when you put something in your own words, you must still cite the original source! Here’s the ORIGINAL text from page 927 of an article called “Can students really multitask? An experimental study of instant messaging while reading” that was published in volume 54 of *Computers & Education*:

   Students often “multitask” with electronic media while doing schoolwork. We examined the effects of one form of media often used in such multitasking, instant messaging (IM). We predicted that students who engaged in IMing while reading a typical academic psychology passage online would take longer to read the passage and would perform more poorly on a test of comprehension of the passage. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (IM before reading, IM during reading, or no IM). We found that students took significantly longer to read the passage when they IMed during reading (not including time taken to IM) than in other conditions. However, test performance did not differ by condition. Students who are managing busy lives may think they are accomplishing more by multitasking, but our findings suggest they will actually need more time to achieve the same level of performance on an academic task.

Here is an example of an unacceptable paraphrase that is so close to the original source it could be considered direct plagiarism. In this case, the student has only changed around a few words and failed to cite the original source:

   College students will sometimes multitask with electronic media while doing schoolwork. Effects of one form of media often used in such multitasking, instant messaging (IM), were examined. It was predicted that students who IMed while reading a typical academic passage would take longer to read it and would perform more poorly on a test of the passage. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three groups: IM before reading, IM during reading, or no IM. Students took much longer to read the passage when they IMed during reading than in the other groups. Students think they can do more by multitasking, but they will need more time to achieve the same level of performance on an academic task.

The paragraph above is also problematic because some of the words the student did change do not convey the specific meaning of the original. For example, the original text did not specify college students and was also
focused on a specific type of passage (“a typical academic psychology passage online”). The author of the paragraph described the passage as a “typical academic passage,” which could refer to a print source. Here’s another unacceptable example. Once again, the student writing this passage uses too much of the original wording. In addition, he did not cite the original study.

Students will sometimes IM while doing schoolwork, and will take longer to read a typical academic passage and perform more poorly on tests on that passage. Students who are managing busy lives may think they are accomplishing more by multitasking, they will actually need more time to achieve the same level of performance on an academic task than they would without IMing.

In the unacceptable example above, the student used too much of the original wording. In addition, he did not cite the original study.

3. **Self-plagiarism** is reusing your own work or modifying something you have already written. Using the entire paper is cheating. Even if you just use portions of the paper, you must give credit to yourself. Submitting identical or similar work in more than one course is subject to the same penalties as plagiarism. You must get permission from each instructor to use previous work, and once you obtain permission, you must cite your own previous paper to avoid plagiarism.

**AVOIDING PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. However, if you cite your sources appropriately by quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing, you can avoid plagiarism.

Why is it so important to cite your sources?

- Citing your sources provides readers with information about where you found your sources, enabling them to locate and read these sources and pursue your topic further.
- It also places your work within the larger framework of study on your topic and adds credibility and authority to your own writing.
- Citing sources gathered during your research helps you build your argument.
- Documenting your sources will enable you to avoid plagiarism.

This short video will provide an overview of plagiarism and resources you can use to avoid it: [https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/Plagiarism](https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/Plagiarism)
**QUOTING:** Copy the passage word for word, place those words in quotation marks, and cite the source in which you found the quote:

Breivik (1991) states that “knowing how to locate and select the information they need is a means of personal empowerment for students” (p. 87).

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If you are quoting lengthy passages, such as whole paragraphs, use block indentation and a citation:

According to one researcher:

Knowing how to locate and select the information they need is a means of personal empowerment for students. It allows them to verify or refute expert opinion and to become independent seekers of truth. By letting students experience the excitement of their own quests for knowledge, this kind of literacy creates the motivation for pursuing learning throughout their lives. In our efforts to combat illiteracy, information literacy— not just teaching people how to read— should be our goal (Breivik, 1991, pp. 87-8)

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PARAPHRASING: To paraphrase, you simply restate the information from a source using your own words. A paraphrased passage will be about the same length as the original passage and does not need quotes. However, you MUST cite the source. One way to paraphrase a passage is to use an attributive tag, such as According to Brown,... or Brown believed that... Here are some examples:

APA style uses author's last name and date.

Breivik (1991) believed that the skills involved in being information literate, such as the ability to locate and choose relevant information, as well as the ability to synthesize that information, will allow students to make their own decisions about the validity of that information, as well as become independent life-long learners.

MLA style uses author's last name and page number.

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SUMMARIZING: Include only the main ideas of a source in your own words, leaving out specific details. Summaries are shorter than paraphrased passages. They are simply a brief distillation of the writer's ideas. You do NOT need to use quotes, but the summarized passage must still be cited. You cite summarized passages just like you cite paraphrased passages, as in these examples:

These examples follow APA style formatting for summaries. The author's last name and date are provided.

According to Breivik (1991), becoming information literate empowers students to become more independent, and fosters life-long learning tendencies.

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Becoming information literate empowers students to become more independent, and fosters life-long learning tendencies (Breivik, 87).
Avoiding academic dishonesty in all forms is crucial to your success and your future. Here are some good habits to follow to avoid plagiarism in your work:

1. Take complete and careful notes. Whatever note taking system you use, be sure to make the distinction between words and ideas taken from other sources and your own words and ideas. When copying passages verbatim, always use quotation marks and record the exact page numbers of the source. You’ll save yourself time and stress if you take complete and accurate notes the first time around. Students often get into trouble because their notes are incomplete or confused, and they run out of time to go back to check their sources.

2. Be meticulous in drafting your papers to make sure all verbatim words or passages borrowed from your sources are placed in quotation marks and that all information that requires a citation are followed by a parenthetical citation or footnote. This is especially important if you do your work on a computer. It is very easy to copy and paste text or move it around on the page. While computers make writing a paper quicker and easier, it is also easy to commit serious errors. Quotation marks and citations can get lost or confused in the drafting and revision process.

3. Keep track of the file names of the various drafts of your papers so that you don’t confuse them in the final rush to print and submit your work. Sloppy work habits and the pressure of deadlines are not valid defenses if you’re charged with plagiarism or another violation. It’s also a good idea to print out a hard copy of your work periodically and to back up your files in order to avoid a crisis if your computer fails. Develop a sensible plan to keep track of your work on the computer and stick to it.

4. Don’t rely on a single source when doing a research paper. Be sure to find multiple sources that provide different perspectives and conclusions on your research topic. Your paper will be better if you refer to a variety of sources, and you’ll avoid any possibility of depending so much on a single source that you could be charged with plagiarism.

5. Be sure you clearly understand the instructor’s expectations and guidelines for all assignments, particularly for group work. If the rules are unclear to you, ask the professor to clarify them.

6. If you don’t understand an assignment or need additional time to complete it, ask your instructor. It is easy to give in to the temptation to plagiarize out of desperation rather than requesting an extension.

7. Give yourself enough time to do your work well and carefully. Good work takes time. Avoid waiting until the last minute when the pressure of a deadline may tempt you to get sloppy or cut corners just to finish. After staying up all night to finish a paper, you may not be thinking clearly enough to make the right choices, and you are unlikely to be doing your best work during that time.

Finally, if you’re unsure about whether or not to cite a source, ask your instructor. If that’s not possible, follow the basic rule: when in doubt, cite.
These short videos will provide an overview of plagiarism, resources you can use to avoid it, and the ins and outs of various citation styles:

**Plagiarism**  
[https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/Plagiarism](https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/Plagiarism)

**How to Avoid Plagiarism**  
[https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/avoidplagiarism](https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/avoidplagiarism)

This video illustrates the process of creating a bibliography using the APA citation format:  
[https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/APACitation](https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/APACitation)

This video offers a brief overview for citing materials in text in APA format:  
[https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/APAINText](https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/APAINText)

This video will walk you through the process of citing materials in text in MLA format:  
[https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/MLAINText](https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/MLAINText)

This video offers a brief overview for creating a bibliography using the MLA citation format:  
[https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/MLACitation](https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/MLACitation)

This quick video walks you through the process of creating hanging indentation:  
[https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/HangingIndent](https://library.weber.edu/researchandteaching/lib1704/Videos/HangingIndent)