

## What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is using **the words or ideas** of someone else without correctly attributing or crediting these ideas to the source.

This may happen accidentally when you have an incomplete citation (unintentional plagiarism), or it could be more serious when you pass off the words or ideas of someone else as your own (deliberate plagiarism). Either way, it is a serious academic offense that often results in failing grades and being reported to college administrators.

## Examples of plagiarism

Here's a passage taken from page 359 from Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*:

“Three different acts are considered plagiarism: (1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words.”

Here are examples of the three different ways to plagiarize that Hacker mentions:

### Failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas:

Students all know plagiarism is wrong, but exactly what is it? Plagiarism can occur in **three ways: not citing quotes and borrowed ideas; not using quotation marks; and not writing paraphrases and summaries in your own words.**

### Failing to place borrowed language or exact words in quotation marks:

Diana Hacker explains in *A Writer's Reference* that plagiarism can occur in several ways, including not citing the words or ideas of others, “failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks,” or making the mistake of **failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words** (359).

### Failing to use your words for paraphrases and summaries:

Diana Hacker explains in *A Writer's Reference* how plagiarism can occur in three ways. She lists these: **(1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words** (359).

## How can I avoid plagiarism?

The easiest way to avoid plagiarism is to introduce sources clearly and attribute information from them using **signal phrases** and **in-text citations**. Do not mix in your opinion into the facts from your sources; instead, clearly introduce and attribute what the source says. After the in-text citation, explain how this source supports or ties in with your argument.

### Introducing a source using a signal phrase helps prevent plagiarism:

A signal phrase, according to Hacker, introduces the source and explains briefly what it is about before any idea or quotation is used:

Diana Hacker, author of *A Writer's Reference*, a grammar guide, describes using a signal phrase as a way of “marking boundaries” between words of a source and those of the writer (407-8). This simple approach will help many students avoid plagiarism.

The in-text cite (407-8) marks the boundary where the source ends and the writer's opinion begins.

## What about sources that have no pages?

Many online sources have no pages, and without an in-text citation, your reader may not know where the source's information ends. In English 2, you should include an in-text citation for sources without pages.

For example, let's say you are reading a story by Judy Lin about marriage trends in *The Huffington Post*, an online news website and blog. While the site has no pages, you can introduce the article with a signal phrase and use an in-text citation to show where Lin's article ends and your opinion begins:

Judy Lin's article, "Fewer Couples Choose Marriage," describes how many young couples are choosing to live together rather than legally wed. "While marriage is important to many, younger couples are choosing to raise children without it" (Lin). As long as a child has two parents who provide a stable home, it truly does not matter if the parents are married. A wedding license signed by a minister or judge is no guarantee that the happy couple also will function well as parents.

## What about indirect sources?

An indirect source occurs when you are citing an author who is quoting another source, which often occurs in scholarly articles. Note that the "qtd. in" goes before the source you actually consulted:

Arthur Miller says, "When somebody is destroyed everybody finally contributes to it, but in Willy's case, the end product would be virtually the same" (qtd. in Martin and Meyer 375).

Signal phrases also can help clarify indirect sources:

In their book, *Arthur Miller on Plays and Playwriting*, Martin and Meyer interview the playwright about his life and work, including *Death of a Salesman*, and the play's central character, Willy Loman. Miller says, "When somebody is destroyed everybody finally contributes to it, but in Willy's case, the end product would be virtually the same" (375).