



What is plagiarism and how to avoid it?

Plagiarism is regarded as academic dishonesty and a violation of ethical standards. Plagiarism is not inherently a crime, although it may amount to copyright infringement. In academics, it constitutes a grave ethical transgression. Plagiarism is penalized by institutions rather than by legal statutes. Professional societies, educational institutions, and publishing companies may impose penalties, suspensions, and even expulsions on authors.¹

Plagiarism originates from the Latin term "plagiarius," signifying "kidnapper," one who abducts a child.² The term plagiarism was incorporated into the Oxford English Dictionary in 1621. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, plagiarism is described as "the act of taking the writings of another person and passing them off as one's own."³ It constitutes forgery, piracy, and fraud, and is seen as a grave offense inside academia.⁴ This also constitutes a breach of copyright legislation. Honesty in scientific practice and publication is essential. The World Association of Medical Editors (WAME)⁵ defines plagiarism as "... the use of others' published and unpublished ideas or words (or other intellectual property) without attribution or permission and presenting them as new and original rather than derived from an existing source."

Plagiarism can be either intentional or unintentional. Acquiring, borrowing, or employing another's work, whether in part or completely, without appropriately acknowledging the original author constitutes intentional plagiarism. Utilizing others' work with incorrect paraphrase or inadequate citation constitutes unintentional plagiarism.^{6,7}

Following are the most common forms of plagiarism seen in most of the research publications:

1. Plagiarism of ideas: When an author takes the ideas or concepts of others and presents them as their own without adequately crediting the original creators, it amounts to a form of intellectual theft.⁸
2. Plagiarism of text/direct plagiarism/word-for-word plagiarism: Roig defines this type of plagiarism as "the act of copying a segment of text from another source without attributing it to its author and without enclosing the borrowed text in quotation marks."⁸
3. Mosaic plagiarism (patchwork plagiarism): When an author doesn't use his own words and "copies the same words, phrases, or paragraphs from the original source" without giving credit, this is called mosaic plagiarism.⁹
4. Self-plagiarism: One commits self-plagiarism when they "steal or borrow some amount of work" from their own published works.¹⁰

How to avoid plagiarism?

Removing plagiarism isn't a rocket science. There are five steps to avoid it:

1. Use plagiarism checkers:

Here are several plagiarism detection tools that assist in identifying matching text within articles submitted by authors.^{11,12}

(i) Cross Check™ (ii) <http://www.ithenticate.com> (iii) <https://turnitin.com/static/index> (iv) Viper (<http://www.scanmyessay.com/plagiarism> - free software) (v) Software like eTBLAST (vi) SafeAssign™ (vii) WCopyFind™ (viii) <http://www.checkforplagiarism.net> (ix) <http://www.grammarly.com> (x) Sometimes simple Google Search also helps in detecting plagiarism.

2. Paraphrase:

'Paraphrase' refers to the modification of the words and phrases in a text while preserving its original meaning and intent.

3. Use quotes:

Incorporating quotations is an effective method to prevent plagiarism in scientific writing.

4. Add citations and references:

Similar to quotes, citations and references serve to reduce plagiarism. These are employed for assigning credit to the original source or author, so averting the duplicated segment in research from being classified as plagiarism. Various citation styles are available, including APA, MLA, Chicago, and Harvard.

5. Use hyperlinks:

Hyperlinking serves as a method to credit a specific fact or piece of information to its original source. Hyperlinks are exclusively applicable in online content, or more accurately, digital content. Typically, hyperlinks are incorporated into particular words within the text. The associated terms are typically highlighted in blue and feature an underline.¹³

How to deal with plagiarism?

Editors are required to respond appropriately when there are suspicions of misconduct involving authors, reviewers, editorial staff, or fellow editors, as outlined by the COPE guidelines. This requirement includes both manuscripts that have been published and those that remain unpublished. The accused individuals provide an initial response to the editors. The editors should ask the employers of the authors, reviewers, editors, or any other relevant institution to look into the matter and take appropriate action if they are displeased with the response.¹⁴ The editor should at the very least "reject" the manuscript if it is at a different stage of the editorial process and "retract" it if it has already been published if they find plagiarism.

Plagiarism has emerged as a critical concern in the composition of scientific papers. Many writers are unaware that plagiarism constitutes a significant issue. Plagiarism can vary from small dishonesty, such as trivial copying and pasting, to more severe issues, including significant discrepancies or manuscript duplication. Plagiarism typically occurs when authors copy and paste from the original source without providing proper attribution to the primary source. Utilizing an appropriate online plagiarism detector and an excellent paraphrase tool enables us to prevent plagiarism efficiently. We must enhance knowledge regarding plagiarism and ethical concerns among our researchers and authors. When conducting research, we must be truthful and refrain from breaking any copyright laws.

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