

Citing Sources: Why Bother?

To plagiarize, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, is to “take (the work or idea of someone else) and pretend it is one’s own.”

- Using someone else’s work and claiming it as your own is not only dishonest, it can get you expelled from university.
- Claiming not to know the rules is no excuse, so it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the university’s policies early on.
- Make sure you understand why we cite sources in the first place.

In *The Brief Penguin Handbook*, we learn that citing sources is important for two reasons (Faigley, Graves & Graves, 2008, p. 262-3):

1. To build knowledge

As you write your paper:

- Imagine yourself having a conversation with the reader. You cannot expect your reader to understand why you feel the way you do about a matter without telling them who (or what) has influenced your thinking. Citing sources allows your readers to follow your train of thought in an essay and invites them to review your sources and respond.
 - Acknowledge the sources you have used in order to form your ideas, and explain how these sources have helped you draw your conclusions.
 - Use quotation marks to acknowledge all direct quotes taken from a source.
 - Summarize and paraphrase accurately to ensure the original meaning is conveyed to your readers (for more information, see Faigley, Graves and Graves 268-270).
 - Remember that a summary identifies the most important point(s) of the original text and maintains the author’s emphasis. It will be substantially shorter than the original text.
 - Paraphrasing maintains all the detail and emphasis of the original text, point by point. It will be as long (or longer) than the original text.
- Provide all of the necessary information your readers would need in order to locate the source you have used (Faigley, Graves, and Graves 262).

2. To be fair

Remember:

- **Using someone else's intellectual property without giving them credit is considered stealing.**
- Be clear when you are drawing on someone else's work. It helps your reader distinguish where your ideas begin and end. Using someone else's work to gain a deeper understanding of a topic or to see how their ideas compare to your own is fine; just make sure to cite the source appropriately.
- Failing to give credit where credit is due is unfair. Consider how you would feel if someone used your ideas but forgot to give you credit for them. Remember this the next time you are working on a paper and using a secondary source to form your argument.

How to Cite

For more information on specific documentation styles (e.g., MLA, APA, or Chicago/Turabian), please consult our corresponding Writing Skills handouts on these topics or refer to the official style manuals.

References

Faigley, L., Graves, R. & Graves, H. (2008). *The brief penguin handbook* (Canadian ed.). Toronto: Pearson Longman.

Soanes, C., (Ed.). (2001). *Oxford dictionary of current English* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.