Plagiarism and How to Avoid It

Definition:

Intentionally or unintentionally using any fragment of print or online materials without proper quotation and citation.

Examples:

1. Consulting a source to get ideas and then not mentioning the source in your essay or your works cited.

2. Paraphrasing an idea from a source in your own words but not including an in-text citation after the sentence.

3. Including a source on your works cited and failing to cite ideas you used from that source in your essay.

4. Using exact wording from a source without quotations (even if you do cite the page number, the exact wording makes it plagiarism).

5. Paraphrasing a source by changing some of the author’s words but keeping the author’s sentence structure (“syntax”).

Example:

Original source passage:

While many students face serious challenges in making the transition from high school to college, most institutions of higher learning provide support services that can dramatically mitigate the severity of those obstacles.

Unsuccessful—and plagiarized—paraphrase of original source passage:

Even though most people confront significant obstacles in the switch from high school to college, nearly all colleges offer assistance that can really lessen the acuteness of those barriers.

Notice how the student has kept the author’s original sentence structure and merely substituted words with similar meanings in order to avoid exact wording—and perhaps the extra work required to rework the thought into her or his own words. Ironically, it is often more work to plagiarize in this way]
Successful, responsible paraphrase from original source passage:

Students need to investigate the services colleges offer to help incoming freshman successfully make the adjustment from high school to college life.

[Notice how this student has completely reworked the source material, putting it into her or his own words AND syntax (word order). The end result is a stronger understanding of—and competence in expressing—the ideas]

Possible Consequences of Intentional and Unintentional Plagiarism:

- Receiving a zero points (“F”) on the assignment
- Failing the course
- Being referred to the Dean of Student Affairs for disciplinary action

Strategies for Avoiding Plagiarism:

- Don’t get any kind of help you wouldn’t want your instructor to know about
- Be clear in your notes or rough draft when you are using exact wording
- Be clear in your notes or rough draft when you are paraphrasing
- Include citations or attributions for all sources in your rough draft; you can fine tune your MLA format later, but include the basics so you have something that shows you are using source material.
- Do not include anything under “Works Cited” that you did not cite in the body of your essay or attribute to an online source (online sources do not have page numbers so if you mention the author in the set up of your quote or paraphrase you do not need to include a page number. If, however, you do not mention the source when using the information, you MUST include a parenthetical citation with the author, article, or web page title. Do not use URLs in citations).

MAKE SURE TO USE THIS DETAILED INFORMATION WHEN REVISING YOUR ESSAY.