

Plagiarism

Any assignment, essay, or research paper is a collaboration between you and your sources. To be fair and ethical, you must acknowledge your debt to the writers of these sources. If you don't, you are guilty of plagiarism, a serious academic offence.

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.

Citing Quotations and Borrowed Ideas:

You must, of course, cite all direct quotations. You must also document any ideas borrowed from a source: paraphrases of sentences, summaries of paragraphs or chapters, statistics and little-known facts, and tables, graphs, or diagrams.

The only exception is common knowledge – information that your readers could find in any number of general sources because it is commonly known. For example, the capital of Canada is Ottawa and the capital of Ontario is Toronto; this is common knowledge to Canadians.

As a rule, when you have seen certain information repeatedly in your reading, you don't need to document it. However, when information has appeared in only one or two sources or when it is controversial, you should document it. If a topic is new to you and you are not sure what is considered common knowledge or what is a matter of controversy, ask someone with expertise. When in doubt, cite the source.

Enclosing Borrowed Language in Quotation Marks:

To indicate that you are using a source's exact phrases or sentences, you must enclose them in quotation marks unless they have been set off from the text by indenting. To omit the quotation marks is to claim – falsely – that the language is your own. Such an omission is plagiarism even if you have cited the source.

Original Source

No animal has done more to renew interest in animal intelligence than a beguiling, bilingual bonobo named Kanzi, who has the grammatical abilities of a 2 ½-year-old child and a taste for movies about cavemen.

- Eugene Linden, "Animals", p. 57

Plagiarism

According to Eugene Linden, no animal has done more to renew interest in animal intelligence than a beguiling, bilingual bonobo named Kanzi, who has the grammatical abilities of a 2 ½-year-old child and a taste for movies about cavemen (57).

Borrowed Language in Quotation Marks

According to Eugene Linden, “No animal has done more to renew interest in animal intelligence than a beguiling, bilingual bonobo named Kanzi, who has the grammatical abilities of a 2 ½-year-old child and a taste for movies about cavemen” (57).

Putting Summaries and Paraphrases in Your Own Words:

When you summarize or paraphrase, it is not enough to name the source; you must restate the source’s meaning using your own language. You are guilty of plagiarism if you half-copy the author’s sentences – either by mixing the author’s well-chosen phrases without using quotation marks or by plugging your own synonyms into the author’s sentence structure. The following paraphrases are plagiarized – even though the source is cited – because their language is too close to that of the original source.

Original Version

If the existence of a signing ape was unsettling for linguists, it was also startling news for animal behaviorists.

- Davis, *Eloquent Animals*, p. 26

Unacceptable Borrowing of Phrases

The existence of a signing ape unsettled linguists and startled animal behaviourists (Davis 26).

Unacceptable Borrowing of Structure

If the presence of a sign-language-using chimp was disturbing for scientists studying language, it was also surprising to scientists studying animal behaviour (Davis 26).

To avoid plagiarizing an author’s language, resist the temptation to look at the source while you are summarizing or paraphrasing. Close the book or minimize the webpage, write from memory, and then open the book or webpage to check for accuracy. This technique prevents you from being captivated by the words on the page.

Acceptable Paraphrases

When they learned of an ape’s ability to use sign language, both linguists and animal behaviourists were taken by surprise (Davis 26).

According to Flora Davis, linguists and animal behaviourists were unprepared for the news that a chimp could communicate with its trainers through sign language (26).