

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM IN BIO 2

At colleges and universities without Honor Codes, the percentage of students *admitting* to plagiarizing at least once is approximately 58% (McCabe *et al.* 2001).

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's ideas, wording, or paragraph structure as one's own. Plagiarism, like cheating on an exam, is a form of academic dishonesty. The teaching staff in the Department of Biology is fully committed to identifying all instances of plagiarism, even assignments that contain only a single plagiarized clause. These cases will be sent to the College Judiciary Committee, which can recommend failure in the course, expulsion from the College, or both.

There are many flavors of plagiarism beyond the outright fraud of copying somebody else's entire writing assignment and replacing the author's name with your own. One type, "patchwork plagiarism," involves the theft of ideas or wording from multiple sources, followed by minor modifications to weave the passages into a coherent paragraph. "Paraphrase plagiarism" is when an author has replaced most of the words from a source's sentence with cognates but has replicated both the style and original order of ideas of the original passage. Perhaps the most common is "lazy plagiarism," where the author (usually rushed for time) lifts wording (e.g., 2 or more words) without the use of quotations but *does* supply a citation at the end of one or more of the plagiarized sentences; this is plagiarism because quotations were not used to *identify* the wording as somebody else's.

Perhaps the easiest way to avoid plagiarism is to *never* "cut—and—paste" words or phrases from electronic reading materials (internet sites, journal article PDFs, *etc.*) directly into your writing assignment document. Instead, take notes on your sources, and always indicate to yourself what portions of your notes are direct quotes or too-close paraphrases. Also, do not ask other students for written work, statistical analyses, tables, drawings, or graphs that you know *you* are expected to generate on your own (you are, however, encouraged to *discuss* your results with others as much as you like!).

Scientific writing and formal citation style are different from that of other disciplines and most likely different from how you were taught to write in high school. If you would like more information on plagiarism, *please* feel free to ask any Biology Department personnel, or consult the very useful "What is plagiarism" discussion at www.turnitin.com, a company that sells software to automatically detect fraud (Swarthmore subscribes to this service).

The above should not discourage you *at all* from selective use of other people's ideas and results. *Generous* acknowledgement of ideas and facts highlight to the reader what information is yours and what is from other people. In scientific literature there are three places where this debt is highlighted. The first is in the form of "in-text" citations, where you attribute ideas and facts by placing the source in a parenthetical clause at the end of the sentence. These in-text citations are always coupled to entries in the *Literature cited* section that give details on each of the published works (journal articles, book chapters, *etc.*) to which you referred. Finally, in the *Acknowledgements* section you can graciously acknowledge any contribution from specific, named individuals that helped congeal your logic, focused your writing, or improved the sophistication of your statistical analyses and graphs.

Literature cited

McCabe, D.L, L.K. Tevino, and K.D. Butterfield. 2001. Cheating in academic institutions: a decade of research. *Ethics and Behavior* 11:219-232.