

Plagiarism - and how to avoid it

Created by Inaburra Senior Library, 2015

“Plagiarism is using someone else’s language, ideas or other original (not common) materials without acknowledging its source.” (Council of Writing Programme Administrators 2003)

Plagiarism can include:

- Copying an entire source and presenting it as your own
- Copying sections without acknowledgement (using notes that are really quotes)
- Changing the occasional word or paraphrasing, but still using someone’s original ideas
- Buying an essay from an individual or website

Plagiarism is a form of theft!

Why do students plagiarise?

- Students have access to an infinite supply of information that is often very advanced and technical – if they can’t understand it they’re tempted to copy it.
- Students want to do well and please their parents and teachers, and the words of others can sound so much better than theirs.
- Often assignments assume students have prior knowledge. If they don’t, students have difficulty making sense of the information they read.
- Students are time poor... school, sport training, music lessons and practice, paid and unpaid work... not to mention gaming, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter...
- Cut and paste is so fast and easy.

How to avoid plagiarism

- Be clear about the meaning of the assignment from the start... so that you have no late surprises that put you under pressure.
- Set a timeline and plan for completing your assignment. There is an assignment organiser at the bottom of this page that you can use.
- As you gather information, collect details of sources. Credit your sources unless they contain only ‘common knowledge’ (even if you have summarised or paraphrased).
- Choose information aimed at your stage of learning and language ability. If you can understand the material you are less tempted to cut and paste. Use the page on evaluating a website to help you.
- If you don’t understand something don’t be tempted to copy. Ask your teacher to explain so you are learning.
- If you are directly copying, use quotation marks.