



Plagiarism handbook

Tips and advice for students

What is URKUND?

URKUND is a completely automated system against plagiarism and is being successfully used at universities and university colleges throughout the whole of Europe. URKUND's system checks all documents against three central source areas: The Internet, published material and previously submitted student material (e.g. Memoranda, case studies and examination works).

About this material

Note that URKUND never determines what is a plagiarism. The reports we provide to your teachers consist, in the event of us finding similarities, of a text comparison.

We note the parts of your document that are similar to other sources, in URKUND's archives, on the Internet and in published material, and give the teacher access to the original material where we have found the similarity. URKUND compares textual similarity and subject similarity.

It is thus possible that there will be hits in your document even if you have reworded a text and have used synonyms. The teacher is provided with percentage indications for each hit in the document, but it is only when a marking, its original and discovered sources have been carefully checked that the examiner can conclude whether or not a justified suspicion of an attempt at deception is present.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that you, as a student, make yourself aware of what is regarded as constituting a plagiarism, familiarise yourself with reference and quotation technique, but also listen to – and follow – the instructions you have received from your teachers.

The following information and examples shall, therefore, serve only as training material to enable you, as a student, to pick up tips about how you can work and for you to gain an understanding of what a plagiarism may be deemed to be. It should, however, be pointed out that there are several opinions about how the concept is to be defined and you should check with your teachers to see whether they accept the definition presented in this material.

What is a plagiarism?

Let's begin by defining the concept of plagiarism. According to Jude Carroll, Oxford Brookes University and Carl Mikael Zetterling, KTH Learning Lab, a plagiarism exists when someone describes another's thoughts or wording as though they were one's own. This means that a plagiarism does not necessarily have to be about textual similarity. It could just as well be a question of structural similarity or, for that matter, conceptual similarity.

"In your own text you are responsible for ensuring that both the thoughts and wording are your own. If you describe someone else's thoughts or wording as your own you have plagiarised." Jude Carroll & Carl Mikael Zetterling

What it means in effect is that if you have to read text A in order to be able to read text B, then text A shall be cited as a source. Not citing the source constitutes plagiarising.

Why is plagiarising bad?

If you plagiarise in higher education this does not only mean that you fail to assimilate all the knowledge and skills that a subsequent certificate will indicate that you possess. Plagiarism also means that the plagiarised original authors do not receive the acknowledgement to which they are entitled. It may seem to be a harmless effect but acknowledgement is an important part of a scientific career, irrespective of discipline. It also means, which is something not entirely without importance, that you may be subject to criticism for research and claims for which you are not able to answer.

Don't fall into the trap

It is easy to be tempted or, perhaps one should say, lured into the trap and end up in the situation where one plagiarises even if this had not been the intention when starting the essay. This can be due to several things. Carelessness and uncertainty about what is permissible and what is not is common, but bad time planning is, unfortunately, doubtless one of the primary reasons why students choose to go down the road of what is not allowed.

Find out what applies

Make sure that you always find out what is, and what is not, allowed. You are well aware that you should not plagiarise, but do you know what plagiarism is?

Do you have the same understanding of what constitutes plagiarism as your teachers? There are several definitions of plagiarism and many believe that a text that has been subjected to a degree of reworking, changes from having been someone else's text to belonging to the person who has reworked it and that the source does not then need to be cited. The fact is that, in certain cases, it actually continues to be plagiarism despite you having changed every single word in the text – if you do not quote the source.

This may sound strange, but the key to this is something that tends to be called "general knowledge". General knowledge is such knowledge that is deemed to be generally known, such as the world rotating on its own axis in ~24 hours, that the official language in Brazil is Portuguese or that Lake Victoria is the biggest lake in Africa. These pieces of information are known by most people without having to consult a reference book. It is not, however, at all certain.

The line between specialist knowledge and general knowledge is one that can be difficult to draw and you should also remember that the line between these forms of knowledge differ, according to the context and the level at which you are writing your essay.

Where general knowledge, is concerned there is normally no need to cite the source, but always ask your teacher if in doubt. One rule can be that, if you have yourself been forced to check your facts, then also cite the source that confirmed your knowledge.

Which of these situations constitute plagiarising?

Five of these examples are plagiarisms. Which?

- A. Writing or copying a short piece from a source verbatim without stating who the original author is.
- B. In collusion with your tutor/teacher, work further on a text that you have yourself written earlier.
- C. Translate another author's text into a different language and use the result without citing the source.
- D. Make use of an existing text without stating who the original author is, but make small adjustments that alter the word sequence and sentence structure, replace words with synonyms, remove or add individual words, and so on.
- E. Reading several texts and reworking the contents of these into a new text that isn't like any of the original sources other than a few words or a sentence being the same, without citing any of the sources.
- F. Transcribe a maximum 3-4 sentence-long text verbatim and state who the original author is in relation to the text.
- G. Translate a text you have originated yourself into another language and make use of the result.
- H. Build further on a text that has previously been graded without indicating which parts are old.

(Answers on the last page)

Check Facts

If, for example, in an essay regarding Brazil's political development during the late 1900s, you need to mention that Brazil's official language is Portuguese, you don't normally need any source reference even though, as soon as you begin to be uncertain, you should check this with your teacher. If you are forced to check this fact yourself, it may still be just as well to cite the source.

If, on the other hand, you're to hand in a short memorandum with facts about Brazil and your essay relies heavily on a single source, you should always state the source.

Perhaps you have found all the facts you need for this assignment on the Internet, for example. Always ensure that you state the exact source. It should be simple to check details. Complete Internet addresses and reference to the book's page number is always a requirement. At all costs, do not forget to check your facts. It can be dangerous to rely far too much on a single source. Preferably verify these facts against several independent sources. In particular, if an Internet page has been your principal source.

Rewriting

If, for example, you have found a text dealing with the impact of electrical lighting on man's social life, this knowledge can never be said to be public property. This is specialist knowledge. If you take such a text without attributing source and incorporate it in your essay about, for example, "The development of working hours during the early 1900s industrial society", it would always be plagiarism, even if you replace every single word in the text. This is because the text probably doesn't contain anything that can be called public property and is, with the greatest probability, based on research into the subject. What you are then plagiarising is the author's thoughts and conclusions even if, for that matter, you're not plagiarising his or her words.

Lack of time

It has certainly happened more than once that a student has felt more or less forced to plagiarise a part of their essay in order for it to be at all ready in time. It can be a matter of a lack of time or lack of knowledge of the subject (perhaps this, too, is due to lack of time to read up on the subject). There are, however, a number of tips on how you can use your time more efficiently and use all experiences that will go towards a part of the essay.

Plan your time

Start the assignment early, preferably the first day you're given your subject. Draw up a schedule of the different sub-elements in the writing process and apportion the time you have available and match it with your calendar. Follow the schedule and note what you have done so that you can see where you are in terms of time.

When you follow the plan, you will discover that your essay more or less develops itself. Another advantage is also that you force yourself to start thinking about the assignment from day one. Your thoughts will move around the essay subject each day and the experiences you have and the discussions you end up in will also contribute to the development of your thoughts regarding the essay. If there's any time left over, then use it when the work is finished.

Always note the source

Buy a notebook and always make an exact note of the source before you write down the content. If it's your own thought or your own conclusion, then preferably make a note of this, too, as well as how you came to think of this. If you make this a rule, you can easily check the source afterwards.

It is time-consuming to discover subsequently that you have forgotten to note the source and are forced to look up the source again in order to make a note of the exact reference. The risk is that you, perhaps, put off the work and rewrite the text instead. If discovered, it can have unpleasant consequences.

Source references

Harvard and Oxford are the two principle methods for source referencing in an academic text. There are, however, several methods of referencing, e.g. MLA and ACS, but which one to choose is usually optional unless the subject itself requires certain methods. The main thing is to be consistent in your choice and not to mix methods in a text.

The Harvard method is often referred to as the author-year-system and involve literature references in direct relation to the text.

Author name and year of publication is the minimum but, if it is a case of a direct quote or a specific detail, then you should also write out the page number so that the reader avoids having to read the entire source in order to find what is being referred to. The reference is placed in parentheses (Lundqvist 2010, p. 34). If you have used pages 34 and 35 then you write pp.34-35. where the pp. stands for "pages" If it is about more pages than one, then you write p.34 et seq, where "et seq" stands for "more following". It is also possible to replace "p." with ": " (Lundqvist 2010:34).

The Oxford method means that you place a superscript number ⁴ in the body text in order to state a reference.

The numbers relate to notes that are either placed in the footer or gathered together at the very end of the text. The latter is less common, as a reference in relation to the text one is reading is preferable. The relevant source information is listed in the footnote. The following should be included in the reference: the author's surname and given name. title. edition. publisher location: publisher, publication year.

Lundqvist, Jonas. Gardening in the Dark, Enlightened Greenery. London: Penguin Books, 2010.

Note that the format varies depending on a number of factors such as type of source involved (book, scientific article, webpage etc.), which scientific discipline one belongs to as well as how many authors are involved and so on. It may be wise to check the format in a reference work.

Read more about different reference systems:

More information about Harvard in English from Staffordshire University (UK):

http://www.staffs.ac.uk/support_depts/infoservices/learning_support/refzone/harvard/index.jsp

More information about Oxford in English from Deakin University (AU):

<http://www.deakin.edu.au/current-students/study-support/study-skills/handouts/oxford-docnote.php>

More information about MLA in English from Concordia University (CA):

<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/mla.php?guid=intro>

For more information about ACS in English from American Chemical Society (US):

<http://pubs.acs.org/userimages/ContentEditor/1246030496632/chapter14.pdf>

Check for yourself before URKUND does it

Bear in mind that your essay will probably be checked for plagiarism when it's handed in, either automatically or manually by your teacher. It can therefore be worth going through your essay one more time before handing it in and considering whether there is any text you have forgotten to reference.

The idea is that you shall produce new knowledge or new ideas around a subject that's either new or old. The main thing is that your thoughts and wording are distinguished from others' thoughts and wording through citation markings, if it is a verbatim quotation from another text but yet another source reference if you have altered the words but have still retained the basic thinking in the text. Always be clear about where you have obtained text, thinking or, for that matter, pictures, then you will never get into difficulties.



Example of what a "rewriting" can look like after it has gone through URKUND

Have you interpreted the information correctly?

To give you an extreme example: Say that you were to take an entire text straight out of, e.g., Rolf Eidem's book, *Planekonomi eller ramhushållning. Economic reforms in Easter Europe*.

If you then clearly indicate that the text is not your own but is taken from Rolf Eidem's book in its entirety, make a correct source reference and state the page number, then you won't be accused of cheating but you will still, in all probability, have to amend the task with the explanation that you have misunderstood it. The idea, of course, is not that you shall lift a text right out but that you have been honest and have stated the source correctly.

Should you do the same thing but not state the source, there's a high risk that you will, instead, have to defend yourself before a disciplinary board. It is, to quote a famous quotation by Martin van Buren (President of USA 1837 to 1841), always easier to carry out a task than to explain why you haven't done so.

Some examples

The following pages give a number of examples that you can look at in order to acquaint yourself with what tends to be regarded as plagiarism. We would, I think, however, point out once more that you should contact your teacher/tutor in those cases where you are uncertain. The basic rule is still always to state sources if you have been inspired by thoughts or wording from a specific source.

Original text 1

"The first metals must have been discovered as lumps of pure metal. These have probably been pieces of copper or gold since these metals belong to the few which have occasionally been found in free form in nature. The copper's reddish colour or the golden glint of gold must have caught the eye to a higher degree than the lifeless indeterminable coloration of most of the stones. The metals certainly first came to be used as decoration in the state in which they were found, in the same way as one used pebbles and shining mother-of-pearl seashells."

(Asimov, Isaac, Kemins historia, Stockholm : Prisma : 1966, p. 11)

Example 1

The first metals to be discovered were probably lumps of pure metal. These metals belong, that is, among the few that can be found as lumps in nature. One probably first started to use the metals as decoration after which one subsequently saw a more practical use for them.

The writer has not taken the entire text, reworked it and, for the most part, has made use of his own words.

Answer: This is a rewriting (or paraphrase) and, in spite of everything, can be seen as plagiarism since the writer has not made any reference to the author. The text is, in spite of everything, rather like its original source. The actual conclusion is also still Isaac Asimov's, even though it isn't perhaps so difficult to arrive at oneself.

Example 2

How did Mankind first discover that he could extract metal from ore? The first metals must have been discovered as lumps of pure metal. These have probably been pieces of copper or gold since these metals belong to the few which have occasionally been found in free form in nature. When this discovery was well made, one began to look for a way of extracting even smaller volumes of metals from ore. (Asimov, Isaac, Kemins Historia, Stockholm 1966)

Here, the writer has referred to the source.

Answer: This can, in spite of everything, be regarded as plagiarism. The writer has copied a couple of sentences straight out of Asimov's book without inserting quotation marks. These sentences are surrounded by the writer's own text which also makes it difficult to see what is the writer's own text and what is Asimov's. In addition, there's no page reference in the source reference.

Example 3

One can be fascinated by the technique of extracting different metals from ore. What was it that, from the start, drove Mankind to start experimenting in order to extract these metals? According to Isaac Asimov, it could have been so that the first metals discovered were gold and copper, which occur lying freely around in nature in the form of lumps. When one had found these, the conclusion could be drawn that there was more to be obtained from different types of ore. The experimentation in attempting to extract metals was then under way (Asimov, Isaac, Kemins Historia, Stockholm 1966, p. 11).

The writer has no quotation marks but refers to the source.

Answer: This is not plagiarism. This is a reference. The writer has reproduced Asimov's thoughts with his own words and has made a correct source reference. Moreover, there are reference markers ("according to Isaac Asimov...") in connection with the reference so that one can easily differentiate between the writer's and Asimov's thoughts.

Example 4

Mankind's fascination with gold and shining metals stretches right back to the dawn of history. We do not know today how Mankind arrived at the amazing idea of trying to extract metal from different types of ore. There are a large number of theories about this. A reasonable explanation is that the first metals found were the kind of metals that can be found as free lying lumps out on the ground. One example of such a metal that can be found without processing ore is gold. After having thus become acquainted with metal, Mankind has started to look for it and has found small volumes in gold ore. From this point, Mankind has started to experiment with extracting even small quantities of metal and, in the process, has discovered other practicable metals and ways of extracting them in the best manner.

There is no source reference and the text actually looks as though it is based on the original text.

Answer: Now we've entered a grey zone. There is no exact textual similarity but if the writer has actually made use of Asimov's book when the text was produced, a source reference should have been made. The conclusions are, however, not so difficult to make and, if the writer has arrived at this himself and has not known about Asimov's conclusions, then he probably cannot be accused of plagiarism.

Example 5

A reasonable explanation of how Mankind has arrived at the amazing idea of trying to extract metal from different types of ore is that the first metals found were such metals as are to be found as free-lying lumps out on the ground. One example of such a metal that can be found without processing ore is gold. Isaac Asimov has worded this explanation in the following way:

The first metals must have been discovered as lumps of pure metal. It was probably pieces of copper or gold, since these metals belong to the few which can occasionally be found in free-form in nature. The copper's reddish colour or the golden glint of gold must have caught the eye to a higher degree than the lifeless indeterminable coloration of most of the stones. Certainly, the metals first came to be used as decoration in the state in which they were found, in the same way as one used pebbles and shining mother-of-pearl/seashells.

(Asimov, Isaac, Kemins historia, Stockholm : Prisma : 1966, p. 11)

After having thus become acquainted with metal, Mankind has started to look for it and has found small volumes in gold ore. From this point, Mankind has started to experiment with extracting even small quantities of metal and, in the process, has discovered other practicable metals and ways of extracting them in the best manner.

There are no quotation marks around the piece taken from Asimov's book and the writer's thoughts in the rest of the text are clearly influenced by Asimov.

Answer: This is a correct way of dealing with a quotation of this length. This is called a block quotation and requires no quotation marks, since the text is still well separated from the writer's own words. This can be a better way of presenting a quotation of this length. Quotation marks should, however, be used when the text you want to refer to restricts itself to about one sentence. Since the writer quotes the part of Asimov's book where the writer's thoughts have been influenced is to be found, no further reference is needed. It states.

Original text 2

"The Earth rotates around the Sun with one revolution per year. That is precisely what is understood by "year". At our latitude, we are constantly reminded of this since the angle of incline of the Earth's axis in relation to the orbit round the Sun, means that we have significant seasonal changes. Around the Equator, it is summer all year, but both there and here one can follow the annual circuit by looking at the night sky. It shifts a little each night, so that, after one year, one sees exactly the same stars again."

Berner, Christer, <info@rymdforum.nu>: Rymdforskning, 2007-03-15,
<www.rymdforum.nu/?id=1473> (2008-01-25)

Example 1

As you all know, the Earth rotates round the Sun with one revolution per year. That is precisely what is understood by "year". At our latitude, we are constantly reminded of this since the angle of incline of the Earth's axis in relation to the orbit round the Sun, means that we have significant seasonal changes. In other countries lying closer to the Equator, there can be smaller difference between the seasons. The reason why the seasons are more noticeable here is due to the angle of incline of the Earth's axis. At the Equator, the Earth's angle of incline plays a smaller role since the Sun's rays still come in at almost the same angle.

This, of course, is "general knowledge" but the writer has copied parts of Berner's text.

Answer: It certainly is general knowledge but it may still be seen as plagiarism. It is thus that most people don't require references in order to be able to write. It is thus, still, plagiarism, since the writer has made use of Berner's text as a model. In this case, it is not Berner's conclusions that are plagiarised. These are conclusions that most people can draw. Berner's wording is, however, plagiarised and here both quotation marks and source reference should be present.

Internet resources

If you want to learn more about what can be regarded as plagiarism, there's a whole lot of resources on the Internet. Here are a couple.

A quiz from Indiana University to get their view of what constitutes plagiarism:

<http://education.indiana.edu/~frick/plagiarism/>

A tutorial on plagiarism created by several Danish Universities, in English:

<http://www.en.stopplagiat.nu/>

The Interactive Anti-Plagiarism Guide - Jönköping University, in English:

<http://pingpong.hj.se/public/courseId/10565/publicPage.do>

