

2 Techniques for Avoiding Plagiarism

In academic writing you must show that you have read and understood the recommended books and any other relevant reading. BUT not by copying what they say. The ideas are owned by the writer. Copying in a way that makes the ideas appear to be your own is *plagiarism*.

There are two things you can do to avoid being accused of plagiarism, they are paraphrasing and following the rules.

2.1 Paraphrasing (re-writing in your own words)

Books and articles should be used as a source of information from which you write, in your own words, what you believe are the important points. You must acknowledge your sources of information (see below). In the parts of your writing that rely on source texts for information, paraphrasing should be used the most.

As well as stating the important points you should also explain the points, compare and contrast the views of different authors you have read, and add your own comments on the topic under discussion. By doing these things you go beyond merely repeating the information which you have found. This is what makes a good assignment. Repeating information shows only that the information has been read and possibly memorised. The addition of explanations, comparisons, contrasts and comments is better because it shows that the information has been read, analysed and understood. A teacher who is marking an assignment is sure to give higher marks for such a display of knowledge and understanding.

2.2 Follow the rules when copying directly from a text

There are times when you can quote directly from your source material . However, you must follow certain rules.

- Direct copying of part of a passage (e.g. a whole paragraph) must occur rarely in your writing and once copied should not represent a large proportion of your own text. It should be clearly distinguished from the rest of your text in a way which makes it clear that it is a quotation.
- Very short parts of a source text (e.g. part of a sentence) can be copied when needed. However, the words that you have copied must be immediately obvious to your reader. You must also take care not to change any of the words.
- The exact source of your quotation must be acknowledged. This must be done in a way which shows clearly how much is copied (see below).

Examples of when you might want to copy directly are:

- when the exact words are relevant to your argument/discussion
- when something is expressed in a way which is unique
- when re-writing would cause a loss of impact

2.2.1 Showing what is copied

To avoid accusations of plagiarism you must show exactly which parts of your text have been copied from other texts. You must, therefore, mark the beginning and ending of the quotation and give the number of the page from which it is taken.

Here are some examples:

Example 1: If you are copying more than 2 lines of text they should be indented to show clearly the extent of the quotation.

When discussing the availability of video materials specifically for use by self-access learners, Gardner makes a distinction between teaching material and learning material.

There is a lot of good quality video teaching material but there is very little that can be described, as it stands, as good quality learning material. This is no surprise when we consider the goals of most of this video material, it was designed to be used by teachers in classrooms. What has typically turned quality teaching material into quality learning material is the teachers' input. If that material is made available for self-access learning without providing, in some way, the teachers' input to go with it, it will be of limited benefit to learners.

(Gardner 1994, p108)

This is not a distinction that should necessarily be restricted to the discussion of video materials but should be extended more widely to the discussion of the provision of self-access materials in general.

Example 2: Include short quotations in your text but mark clearly where they begin and end. The boxes below show two ways of doing it.

When discussing the availability of video materials specifically for use by self-access learners, Gardner suggests that what 'has typically turned quality teaching material into quality learning material is the teachers' input' (1994, p108). This is a distinction that should be extended more widely to the discussion of the provision of self-access materials in general.

When discussing the availability of video materials specifically for use by self-access learners, It has been suggested that what 'has typically turned quality teaching material into quality learning material is the teachers' input' (Gardner 1994, p108). This is a distinction that should be extended more widely to the discussion of the provision of self-access materials in general.

2.2.2 Showing where you copied from (Acknowledging your sources)

There are different methods for acknowledging sources. Ask your tutor which method is preferred. If this is not possible, use the method which you see most often in the materials that you are reading for your study. Once you have chosen a method it is important to remain consistent. The two most common methods are:

- **Footnotes or endnotes**

Place a small number (usually slightly higher than the word it follows) in the text and list your sources by number either at the foot of the page or the end of the text. The numbers must run consecutively through the text.

What you do in your writing:

Gardner says that what turns good teaching material into good learning material is what teachers do with it¹.

What you do at the bottom of the page or end of your writing:

Notes:

Gardner, D. 1994. 'creating simple interactive video for self-access'. in D.Gardner and L.Miller (Eds.) Directions in Self-Access Language Learning. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

- **Brief references in the text**

In the text you acknowledge a source by giving the author's family name and the date of publication. Readers can then check this in a references list at the end of your writing which contains the full publication information.

What you do in your writing:

Gardner (1994) says that what turns good teaching material into good learning material is what teachers do with it.

One item in the references list at the end of the text:

Gardner, D. 1994. 'creating simple interactive video for self-access'. in D.Gardner and L.Miller (Eds.) Directions in Self-Access Language Learning. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.