

How Not to Plagiarize: An Introductory Guide

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's work as your own. It is morally wrong, dishonourable, a form of cheating and an academic crime. At Langara, cases of plagiarism are treated as instances of serious academic misconduct and are investigated and penalized accordingly. Penalties for engaging in plagiarism can include a failing grade in an assignment or course, or even suspension or expulsion from the college.

However, plagiarism is also quite easy to do unintentionally, and so this short guide is intended to help you to avoid accidental plagiarism by providing some guidelines on how to correctly cite sources in your essays. As a short guide, this can only provide you with an introduction, and you are strongly encouraged to look at the resources in the "Further Reading" section at the end.

Two Things to Avoid

Before we discuss how to use your sources correctly, here are two things to avoid:

ChatGPT and other Artificial Intelligence (AI) Writing Tools:

You may be tempted to seek assistance when writing from AI tools like ChatGPT. *Do not do this.* If you use an AI tool to generate text and copy it into your own work, *that is still plagiarism*, as you are presenting the work of the machine as your own. In addition, because these tools sweep information from the world wide web as a whole, they pick up incorrect information as well as correct information. Thus a piece of work generated by an AI tool is likely to have mistakes in and will score poorly. They are best avoided altogether.

Essay-Writing Services:

You may be approached by unscrupulous individuals claiming to represent organisations that offer to create "plagiarism-free" pieces of work for a fee. Note that if you buy one of these and submit it as your own work, *that is still plagiarism* (in this case, what is known specifically as "contract cheating"), as you are still representing someone else's work as your own. You will also be leaving yourself open to the danger of blackmail in the future, as there have been cases of these organisations then threatening to inform instructors of who has been using their services, unless a further fee is paid. They also will reveal user information to colleges and universities that request it. And do not think that a fake name will help you; these sites track your IP address. They know who and where you are...

Using and Citing Sources

So how *do* you use source material correctly? In this guide we will look at how to include a paraphrase, an in-text quotation, and a block quotation in your essay. You should note that of these, paraphrases are the form of citation that you should expect to use most frequently; doing

this successfully not only helps you to avoid over-using quotations (see “Useful Hints,” below), but also shows your instructor that you have understood what you have read, which is likely to improve your grade! We will also be looking at the layout of footnotes and bibliography for the most common types of sources that you are likely to use, and consider some additional things to bear in mind when using your sources.

Paraphrase

A paraphrase is a restating of information in your own words. While quotations (below) can be useful, most of the time you should use paraphrases to indicate that you have drawn information from other sources without quoting them directly.

When paraphrasing, you should do the following:

1. Read the paragraph containing the piece of information that you want to include in your essay.
2. Set the book or article aside, and rewrite the information into your essay *in your own words*. Note that simply replacing some words with others is *not* sufficient to make your paraphrase a successful one, and that unsuccessful paraphrasing of this type is still plagiarism. You *must* rewrite the information completely in your own words.
3. Cite the source from which you drew the information in a footnote immediately after the last sentence of your paraphrase.
4. Explain how the information provided helps to prove your point.

Example:

Original text (from An Introduction to Islam, by Frederick Mathewson Denny):

Around 610 C.E. a prophet was born in Arabia when a voice descended upon a thoughtful, middle-aged man of sensitive feelings. This man, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah, had taken up the habit of retiring for personal meditation and spiritual cultivation to a cave in a mountainside outside Mecca. He would pack enough provisions for a few days’ retreat, after which he would return home for more, in order to pass additional days and nights at Mount Hira. He would often dream, and it was then that the first revelations came to him, “like the morning dawn.” A mysterious, personal presence came to Muhammad and announced: “O Muhammad, you are the Messenger of God.” Muhammad fell to his knees, trembling all over. He dragged himself to Khadija, his beloved and trusted wife, saying: “Wrap me up! Wrap me up!” Then he remained covered up until his terror passed. Another time the presence announced the same thing to Muhammad, causing him to become so distraught and frightened that he was about to throw himself off a high cliff. Then it appeared again, announcing that Muhammad was God’s apostle and that the speaker was the angel Gabriel.

Unsuccessful Paraphrase (how not to do it):

Around 610 C.E. a prophet was conceived in Arabia when a voice dropped upon an insightful, moderately aged man of delicate sentiments. This man, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah, had taken up the propensity for resigning for individual reflection and otherworldly development to a collapse a mountainside outside Mecca. He would pack enough arrangements for a couple of days’ retreat, after which he would get back for additional, so as to spend extra days and evenings at Mount Hira. He would regularly dream, and it was then that the primary disclosures came to him, “similar to the morning first light.” A secretive, individual nearness came to Muhammad and declared: “O Muhammad, you are the Messenger of God.” Muhammad tumbled to his knees, trembling everywhere. He hauled himself to Khadija, his cherished and confided in spouse, saying: “Wrap me up! Wrap me up!” Then he stayed concealed until his dread passed. Some other time the nearness declared something very similar to Muhammad, making him become so distressed and terrified that he was going to hurl himself off a high precipice. At that point it showed up once more, reporting that Muhammad was God’s witness and that the speaker was the holy messenger Gabriel.¹

This is not actually a paraphrase. It is simply a restating of the same text, but with some of the words replaced with others with approximately the same meaning. As such, it is effectively a disguised copy of someone else’s work, which is still plagiarism.

Successful Paraphrase:

It seems that becoming a prophet is not an easy process. Muhammad first started receiving revelations in 610 C.E., while he was in a cave on Mt Hira near Mecca, and they continued to come to him thereafter. His reactions to these seem to have been ones of shock and fear. On one occasion he responded by having his wife wrap him up, and he remained in such a state until he had recovered, while on another he was so terrified by his experience that he contemplated suicide.¹ Thus it appears that these experiences were quite traumatic for the new prophet, and were not initially welcomed by him.

Footnote:

¹ Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006), 48.

In-Text Quotation

If you want to use a short quotation (less than three full lines once you have copied it out into your essay) in the course of a sentence, you should:

1. Always introduce a quotation with at least a few of your own words; do not allow it simply to stand alone in a sentence of its own and speak *for* you. Integrate the quoted text into the sentence to fit the grammar. If you need to change words, place the changed

- words in [square brackets]. If you need to omit words, indicate that you have omitted words by using either three dots ... , or three dots in square brackets [...].
2. Enclose the quoted text in quotation marks.
 3. Cite the source from which you drew the quotation in a footnote immediately after the quotation, but outside any punctuation.
 4. Explain how the quotation helps to prove your point.

Example:

Original text (from Dracula by Bram Stoker):

He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength that made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed as cold as ice – more like the hand of a dead than a living man.

Sentence successfully integrating quotation:

In Jonathan Harker's first encounter with the count we see indications that his host is not what he seems to be. Harker remarks on the fact that the count's handshake is unusually cold, "a strength that [makes him] wince...cold as ice – more like the hand of a dead than a living man."² These unnatural features, especially the reference to a hand like that of a corpse, hint at Dracula's true, vampiric nature.

Footnote:

² Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 25-26.

Block Quotation

If you want to use a piece of text that is three full lines or longer, you should use a block quotation:

1. Introduce the text using a full sentence ending in a colon.
2. Start a new line, and indent the entire text of the quotation.
3. As above, if you need to change words, place the changed words in [square brackets]. If you need to omit words, indicate that you have omitted words by using either three dots ... , or three dots in square brackets [...].
4. Do *not* place the quoted text in quotation marks.
5. Cite the source from which you drew the quotation in a footnote immediately after the quotation, but outside any punctuation.

6. Then start a new line, but do not indent the first line of the sentence following the quotation.
7. Explain how the quotation helps to prove your point.

Example:

Original text (from Western Europe in the Middle Ages: 300-1475 by Brian Tierney):

At the height of its power, in the second century of the Christian era, the Roman Empire stretched from the moors of northern Britain to the fringes of the Sahara desert in Africa. Its northernmost permanent boundary was the great fortified wall built by the emperor Hadrian (117-138) to protect the people of Roman Britain against the Celtic tribesmen of Caledonia. From the North Sea to the Black Sea, the frontier followed roughly the lines of the rivers Rhine and Danube; then it swept in a great arc around the Mediterranean to include Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and the coastal provinces of North Africa. The empire was essentially a Mediterranean state, with its richest provinces grouped around the Mediterranean Sea. The lands that stretched away to the north were the last to be assimilated and were always relatively poor and thinly populated.

Paragraph including successful block quotation:

Brian Tierney gives us some sense of how far north the Roman Empire extended. However, he also draws attention to the fact that this northern region was also the least prosperous part of the empire:

Its northernmost permanent boundary was the great fortified wall built by the emperor Hadrian (117-138) to protect the people of Roman Britain against the Celtic tribesmen of Caledonia. From the North Sea to the Black Sea, the frontier followed roughly the lines of the rivers Rhine and Danube [... yet the Roman] empire was essentially a Mediterranean state, with its richest provinces grouped around the Mediterranean Sea. The lands that stretched away to the north were the last to be assimilated and were always relatively poor and thinly populated.³

Thus we see Tierney noting that despite the fact that the Roman Empire stretched all the way to the borders of modern-day Scotland, it was still a state that focused its attention first and foremost on the regions around the Mediterranean sea, where most of the wealth was concentrated.

Footnote:

³ Brian Tierney, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages: 300-1475*, 6th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 1999), 17.

Format for Footnotes and Bibliography

Footnotes provide an indication to the reader of what sources you have drawn information directly from in the course of writing your essay. Bibliographies tell your reader what sources you have used in preparing your essay, including those that you have not drawn on directly, but have been helpful in a general sense (e.g. for background). For a history paper, you will be required to provide both footnotes and a bibliography with your essay.

The most common sources that you will use in academic essays will be books and academic articles. Academic articles can appear in both academic journals and edited volumes. In history, you are also likely to use translations of primary sources as well as scholarly works. You may also want to use resources from the internet, though if you do this, you should bear in mind that *anyone* can post *anything* on the internet, so you cannot automatically consider the resources that you find there to be academically reliable. To assist yourself in dealing with this issue, you should only use internet resources that you link to through the Langara Library Catalogue, and do your utmost to ensure that you have assessed them for their reliability; see the link to a resource on this topic in “Further Reading,” below.

You should format all of your sources as follows. Pay particular attention to text formatting, punctuation and the order in which the components of the notes appear, and note the differences between format for footnotes and format for bibliography:

Format for Footnotes:

Journal Article:

³ Author First Name(s) and any Initials Author Last Name, “Title of the Article in Quotation Marks,” *Journal Title in Italics* volume number (year of publication): page number(s).

For example:

³ Anthony Bale, “God’s Cell: Christ as Prisoner and Pilgrimage to the Prison of Christ,” *Speculum* 91 (2016): 6-10.

Book:

¹ Author First Name(s) and any Initials Author Last Name, *Title of the Book in Italics* (Place of Publication: Publisher, year of publication), page number(s).

For example:

¹ Paul M. Cobb, *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 12.

Translated Work:

² Author First Name(s) and any Initials Author Last Name, *Title of the Book in Italics*, trans. Name of Translator (Place of Publication: Publisher, year of publication), page number(s).

For example:

² Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Murder Trials*, trans. Michael Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1975), 43-44.

Article in an Edited Volume or Chapter in a Book:

⁴ Author First Name(s) and any Initials Author Last Name, "Title of the Article in Quotation Marks," in *Title of Edited Volume in Italics*, ed. Name(s) of Editor(s) (Place of Publication: Publisher, year of publication), page number(s).

For example:

⁴ Yvonne Friedman, "Captivity and Ransom: The Experience of Women," in *Gendering the Crusades*, ed. Susan B. Edgington and Sarah Lambert (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 121-23.

Internet Site:

⁵ Author First Name(s) and any Initials Author Last Name if available, "Title of the Article in Quotation Marks," *Title of Web Site in Italics*, last modified date if available, accessed date, URL.

For example:

⁵ Silvia Marchetti, "Machiavelli's Secret Tunnel to Fame," *BBC Travel*, March 24, 2017, accessed August 20, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20170317-machiavellis-secret-tunnel-to-fame>.

Format for Bibliography

Note that your list of sources in your bibliography should be ordered alphabetically by the authors' *last* names.

Journal Article:

Author Last Name, Author First Name(s) and any Initials. "Title of the Article in Quotation Marks." *Journal Title in Italics* volume number (year of publication): page numbers of full article.

For example:

Bale, Anthony. "God's Cell: Christ as Prisoner and Pilgrimage to the Prison of Christ." *Speculum* 91 (2016): 1-35.

Book:

Author Last Name, Author First Name(s) and any Initials. *Title of the Book in Italics*. Place of Publication: Publisher, year of publication.

For example:

Cobb, Paul M. *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Translated Work:

Author Last Name, Author First Name(s) and any Initials. *Title of the Book in Italics*. Translated by Name of Translator. Place of Publication: Publisher, year of publication.

For example:

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Murder Trials*. Translated by Michael Grant. London: Penguin Books, 1975.

Article in an Edited Volume or Chapter in a Book:

Author Last Name, Author First Name(s) and any Initials. "Title of the Article in Quotation Marks." In *Title of Edited Volume in Italics*, edited by Name(s) of Editor(s), page numbers of full article. Place of Publication: Publisher, year of publication.

For example:

Friedman, Yvonne. "Captivity and Ransom: The Experience of Women." In *Gendering the Crusades*, ed. Susan B. Edgington and Sarah Lambert, 121-39. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001.

Internet Site:

Author Last Name, Author First Name(s) and any Initials if available. "Title of the Article in Quotation Marks." *Title of Web Site in Italics*. Date last modified if available. Accessed date. URL.

For example:

Marchetti, Silvia. "Machiavelli's Secret Tunnel to Fame." *BBC Travel*. March 24, 2017. Accessed August 20, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20170317-machiavellis-secret-tunnel-to-fame>.

Useful Hints

Footnote Number Placement:

Note where footnote numbers are placed in the main text of the examples cited. They appear immediately *after* the material being used, *following* punctuation.

Over-Quoting:

Be careful not to over-use quotations in your essays. As a rule, you should only include a quotation if you intend to explain how it proves a point that you are making. Do not use quotations to state points or to tell the story.

Note that an essay that is composed mainly of quotations or paraphrasing will score poorly, even if all the citations are correct. We want to hear what *you* think about the essay topics, not how well you can reproduce the work of others. Use quotations and paraphrasing only to provide evidence to back up *your* points.

Repeat Citations:

If you are citing the same source more than once in the footnotes of your essay, use a short form (usually the author's last name and the page number) in every citation after the first to save words.

Example:

First Footnote:

¹ Gunnar Andersson, *Vikings: Lives Beyond the Legends* (Victoria, BC: Royal BC Museum, 2013), 38-43.

Second Footnote:

² Andersson, 15-20.

Multiple Sources in One Footnote:

For footnotes, if you draw information from more than one source at the same time, list all the sources in the same footnote, separated by semicolons, rather than putting multiple footnotes one after the other.

Example:

³ Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World since 1260* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 153-55; Thomas A. Carlson, "Safavids before Empire: Two 15th-Century Armenian Perspectives," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (2017): 278-83.

Using a Source within a Source:

Very occasionally you may need to quote a quotation, for example if you want to use a quotation from a book that is included in an article. In your footnote, instead of citing the original source of the quotation, as if you had gone directly to it, you should acknowledge in your citation the actual source from which you obtained the information, using “cited in.” See the following example as a guide.

Example:

⁴ Peter H. Russell, “Constitution and Precedent are on Coalition’s Side,” *Toronto Star*, 3 December 2008, cited in *Canadian Politics and Government: Supplementary Readings*, ed. Stephen Phillips, 11th Edition (Langara College, Fall 2016).

In this case, you would then cite Stephen Phillips’ work in your bibliography.

Note that, wherever possible, you should try to avoid this, instead finding the original sources, though you would still list the works that led you to the original ones in your bibliography.

Further Reading

The Department of History, Latin and Political Science has produced a booklet of Guidelines for Academic Essays, which covers essay structure and format, as well as further guidelines on how to avoid plagiarising. You will find it at: <https://langara.ca/departments/history-latin-political-science/pdf/academic-essay-guidelines.pdf>

The Langara Library has a web page devoted to plagiarism and its avoidance, which includes documents and videos on the topic: <https://langara.libguides.com/c.php?g=709153&p=5052323>

The Langara Writing Centre offers workshops on writing and citing sources. In addition, the centre’s web page has helpful guidelines for writing essays, including more information on plagiarism. See:

https://langara.libguides.com/writing-centre?b=g&d=a&group_id=15056

A useful web page detailing footnote and bibliography format for Chicago style is available at: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

On judging the reliability of internet sources, see:

<https://www.library.georgetown.edu/tutorials/research-guides/evaluating-internet-content>

Faculty members are of course happy to answer any questions that you might have!