What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is a kind of theft. Specifically, plagiarism refers to the theft—of another’s words or ideas. Plagiarism occurs when a person fails to give credit or gives improper credit for the work of another. Plagiarism can take many forms. Some of the more common manifestations of plagiarism are illustrated on page 2 of this handout, using the excerpted material presented on page 2 and repeated on page 3 for easy reference. Look these examples over closely, so that you can avoid making the same errors. Note that plagiarism is not just limited to cases of verbatim copying where the student fails to credit the true author. Note that plagiarism can involve paraphrased material that has not been cited. Finally, note that plagiarism can occur when cited, copied material is not enclosed in quotes or properly blocked.

Why should plagiarism be avoided?

Plagiarism should be avoided for many reasons. First and foremost, as a form of stealing, it is unethical. Second, it is a demonstration of disrespect. Plagiarism shows disrespect for the true author whose work is being plagiarized and it shows disrespect for the teacher to whom the plagiarized piece is submitted. One might also argue that it demonstrates the plagiarist's own lack of respect for him or herself. Third, plagiarism minimizes the student's learning. The act of copying another's work reflects only marginal involvement with the material in question; whatever learning occurs will arise from the plagiarist's reading of the stolen work. Learning which arises from reading alone tends to be far more fleeting than learning which arises from activities that more thoroughly engage the student's participation.

How can plagiarism be avoided?

Plagiarism can easily be avoided. Writers can make large strides in avoiding plagiarism by simply giving credit every time credit is due. Sometimes students say they have been instructed that "common facts" need not be cited. Well, that may be true, but most (if not all) college-level papers require students to learn about topics they do not already know about, or to address somewhat familiar topics in much greater detail. The point is, so-called "common facts" usually do not have any place in most college level writing save for a line or two in the paper's introduction.
EXAMPLES OF PLAGIARISM

When examining each of the following examples, refer to the excerpt reproduced below.


The Great Society programs represented the country’s most ambitious attempt to implement the principle of equality of life chances. However, the extent to which these programs helped the truly disadvantaged is difficult to assess when one considers the simultaneous impact of the economic downturn from 1968 to the early 1980s. In-deed. it has been argued that many people slipped into poverty because of the economic downturn and were lifted out by the broadening of welfare benefits. Moreover, the increase in unemployment that accompanied the economic downturn and the lack of growth of real wages to the 1970s, although they had risen steadily from 1950 to about 1970 had a pronounced effect on low-income groups (especially black males).

**Plagiarism, Example number 1:**

The Great Society programs represented the country’s most ambitious attempt to implement the principle of equality of life chances. However the extent to which these programs helped the truly disadvantaged is difficult to assess when one considers the simultaneous impact of the economic downturn from 1968 to the early 1980s.

**Plagiarism, Example number 2:**

The Great Society programs represented the country’s most ambitious attempt to implement the principle of equality of life chances. However the extent to which these programs helped the truly disadvantaged is difficult to assess when one considers the simultaneous impact of the economic downturn from 1968 to the early 1980s (Wilson, 1987:150).

**Plagiarism, Example number 3:**

According to Wilson (1987:150), "The Great Society programs represented the country’s most ambitious attempt to implement the principle of equality of life chances," however, the extent to which these programs helped the truly disadvantaged is difficult to assess.

**Plagiarism, Example number 4:**

The effectiveness of the Great Society programs is difficult to determine given the generally worsening economic conditions that developed between 1968 and 1980.
EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATELY CITED MATERIAL

Correct citation, Example number 1:


The Great Society programs represented the country’s most ambitious attempt to implement the principle of equality of life chances. However, the extent to which these programs helped the truly disadvantaged is difficult to assess when one considers the simultaneous impact of the economic downturn from 1968 to the early 1980s.

Correct citation, Example number 2:

According to Wilson (1987: 150) The Great Society programs were ambitious attempts to equalize life chances in the U.S., however the extent to which these programs helped those truly disadvantaged remains difficult to assess.

Correct citation, Example number 3:

The Great Society programs were ambitious attempts to create equality in life chances among those truly disadvantaged (Wilson, 1987: 150). However, because of increases in unemployment and lack of growth in real wages, the ability of the programs to help members of disadvantaged groups remains unclear (Wilson, 1987: 150).

Correct citation, Example number 4:

The economic downturn from 1968 to the early 1980s was associated with an increase in unemployment especially among black males (Wilson, 1987: 150.) Wilson further argues that these negative circumstances mean that it remains difficult to assess the extent to which The Great Society programs actually helped those truly in need.
Resources


Web Resources

http://www.plagiarism.org/

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/

http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html

http://people.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/study/plag.html

On-line Plagiarism Checkers

http://www.bing.com/search?q=Plagiarism+Checker&FORM=QSRE4

How to Discourage Plagiarism

http://www.sunywcc.edu/dep/english/plag/discourage.htm

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