



## Model And Articulate Expectations Around Plagiarism

Before we list rules, we should explain why we disapprove of plagiarism and also recognize the places in which it does happen, not just extreme cases like politicians or academics who face censure but in form letters, legalistic writing, and even in our teaching.

### Modeling: Cite Your Sources Every Single Time

We can model our expectations by citing sources every single time we use them, including materials we quote or borrow for handouts, slide presentations, and assignment sheets. If we take ideas from colleagues or from textbooks, including syllabus language or writing prompts, we should cite them just as we expect students to do when they use others' ideas. That modeling demonstrates that we are serious about the value of citation and are not imposing a rule on students that we ourselves do not observe.

### Expectations: Explain Your Specific Expectations For Source Use

Beyond modeling, we need to be clear about our expectations. A blanket honor code, or a line in a writing prompt like "Make sure to cite all your sources" or "Plagiarism will be taken seriously and lead to punishment" does not teach students what to do; it simply repeats something they already know but may not fully understand.

In the same way that students can often state "Apostrophes demonstrate possession" but have no idea how to apply that knowledge or even what it really means, students of any age and level can say "plagiarism is really bad" but cannot articulate or define plagiarism, at least in its nuances.

Students have almost certainly learned different things from different teachers about what constitutes plagiarism, and they know from practical experience that every instance of copying isn't treated identically. They see, for instance, that every prescription medicine insert includes almost identical language without citation and that certain information ("The United States has 50 states" or "Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president") came from a source but is generally not cited.

### Clarifying Expectations Helps Students Meet Them

Take a few minutes, either in class or on your writing prompt, to explain your expectations for source use. This information can be part of your syllabus and then



repeated or reviewed periodically, or it can be assignment-specific. The more clearly you articulate your expectations, the more helpful you are to your students. Undoubtedly, some students will try to break the rules, but your articulation can help to avoid claims of misunderstanding later in the process and, importantly, help the majority of students who genuinely want to do the right thing but may feel unsure about what that is.

## Specific Things To Consider When Discussing Plagiarism In Class

Some of the areas you can address when you discuss plagiarism or compose assignment prompts are:

- *What citation style is used in your field?*
- *What constitutes common knowledge in your field and therefore does not require citation?*
- *How much diction change allows an idea to be considered paraphrased and not require quotation marks?*
- *Does only specific language require citation or should ideas be cited as well?*
- *How much and specifically what kinds of outside help from friends, relatives, or tutors is permitted?*
- *What kinds of sources need to be cited: your class textbook? Lecture notes? Class discussions? Websites? Dictionaries?*
- *Can students use their own writing from previous pieces, including pieces they have already written for your course?*

Clarifying these expectations will help students to meet them. Even if academic integrity seems obvious to you, it's practically a guarantee that you and your colleagues do not perfectly align on every one of these points, so letting students know what's appropriate in your field and your class is information that only you can provide.