

MEMO

To: EPD 397 Faculty
From: EPD 497 “Plagiarism Group”
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Subject: EPD 497 Plagiarism Project

As you are aware, this semester’s EPD 497 class found plagiarism in the EPD 397 reports that are being reviewed for class. In response to these discoveries, we were asked to develop a document that we feel will be most effective in dealing with this “plagiarism epidemic.”

First, we would like to make clear that our project focuses only on the issue of plagiarism. Other related topics such as the placement of documentation, the introduction of quotations, or the proper format for citations are not included. Our goal is to educate the EPD 397 students as to what does, and what does not, constitute plagiarism. Put simply, we want to eliminate ignorance as an excuse for copying someone else’s work.

To accomplish this goal, we have put together a three-part document that we feel will best reach the students of EPD 397. First, we have developed a one page “quick reference sheet” to give students brief information on how to avoid plagiarism. Second, we suggest distributing the UW-Madison Writing Center handout “*Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Acknowledging Sources*” as a supplement to the one page “quick reference sheet.” Finally, we are including examples of plagiarism that we have found in actual EPD 397 reports. These examples include the plagiarized portion of the report, the source being plagiarized, and our suggestions for rewriting the section without plagiarizing the material.

It is our opinion that the best way to reach EPD 397 students is to be concise and direct. Although the Writing Center document is well written and informative, its length may be the reason some students are missing the information. Therefore, the “quick reference page” is designed to give students the basics of plagiarism. The Writing Center handout will give more information to students who need additional help with a certain item. The EPD 397 plagiarism examples have the added benefit of not only providing students with “real life” examples, but showing them that citations are checked and plagiarism is taken seriously.

Avoid Plagiarism!

Plagiarism occurs when a writer borrows someone else's ideas, information, or language without properly crediting that person. It can range from outright verbatim copying to careless paraphrasing that follows the original source too closely. To avoid plagiarism you must document your source whenever summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting another writer. It is not necessary to document your source when stating common knowledge.

In addition to avoiding plagiarism, there are other very important reasons to document your sources:

1. To show that you have support for your assertions, which helps you construct and preserve your own credibility
2. To allow others to find additional information on your topic
3. To allow others to check your sources for credibility

Summaries

Summaries condense and put into your words the writing of someone else. Unless what that person has to say is common knowledge to experts in the field, you must document your source. If you do not, you are guilty of plagiarism.

Paraphrases

A paraphrase does not condense what another has said; it puts a passage into your own words. When paraphrasing, do not follow your source too closely in either word choice or sentence structure. To do either is to plagiarize. Document all paraphrases carefully.

Quotes

Use quotes when the language your source uses is exceptional in some way, when it uses key terms or statistics, when the person you are quoting is an authority in the field, or when the wording has to be precise, as in a law or statute. Avoid quoting too frequently, and especially avoid lengthy quotations. Document all quotes.

Common Knowledge

The UW Writing Center's *Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Acknowledging Sources* handout defines common knowledge in this way:

It is not necessary to document certain factual information considered to be in the public domain: e.g., birth and death dates of well-known figures, or generally accepted dates of military, political, literary and other historical events. In general, factual information contained in multiple standard reference works can usually be considered to be in the public domain. [1999]

If, however, you use more than two or three of the exact words of the reference source in the exact order used in that original document, you must give credit **by using quotation marks and documenting the source**. You must also give credit if you use a word or phrase that seems unique to the source: a new term or creative phrase invented by the author, for example. If in doubt, be cautious, use quotation marks, and cite the source.

Note: For examples of successful summaries and paraphrases and instructions for introducing, punctuating, and formatting quotations, see the UW Writing Center's *Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Acknowledging Sources* handout.

EPD 397 Plagiarism Examples

The following examples of plagiarism are taken from papers submitted to EPD 397. Underlined portions of text represent exact copying of the source.

Example 1

Passage from the Source:

“Uniform corrosion is an attack of the metal when an electrochemical reaction, or solution reaction, proceeds uniformly over the entire surface of a metal. It is the most common type of corrosion and is the least insidious form of corrosion because it is completely predictable. Unprotected steel exposed to moisture and air undergoes uniform corrosion rapidly to form rust” [Carter, 1991].

Plagiarized Passage from the Paper:

“Uniform corrosion is an attack of the metal when an electrochemical reaction proceeds uniformly over the entire surface of a metal. Unprotected steel exposed to moisture and air undergoes uniform corrosion to form iron oxide, or rust.”

Suggested Rewrite:

The even progression of an electrochemical reaction over a metal exterior causes uniform corrosion. Non-coated steel develops rust, a specific type of uniform corrosion, when air and moisture are present [Carter, 1991].

Example 2

The passage used for this example plagiarizes from two sources. Original portions from both sources are given below.

Passage from the Source:

“Galvanic corrosion occurs when two different metals or alloys are in electrical contact in the presence of a corrosive environment..Galvanic corrosion may be much more rapid than uniform corrosion of a metal in a given environment. For instance, if an iron pipe is attached to a copper pipe, the iron will corrode much more quickly in a given environment” [Carter, 1991].

“Galvanic Corrosion. Accelerated corrosion of a metal because of electrical contact with a more noble metal or a nonmetallic conductor such as graphite in a conductive environment is called galvanic corrosion. The most common examples of galvanic corrosion of aluminum alloys in service occur when they are joined to steel or copper and exposed to a wet saline environment. The aluminum alloy corrodes more rapidly than it does in the absence of the contacting dissimilar metal....”

“...The rate of attack depends on (1) the difference in corrosion potentials between the two metals, (2) the electrical resistance between the two metals, (3) the conductivity of the electrolyte, (4) the cathode-anode area ratio, and (5) the polarization characteristics of the two metals” [Hatch, 1984].

Plagiarized Passage from the Paper:

Galvanic corrosion occurs when two different metals or alloys are in electrical contact in the presence of a corrosive environment. The coupling causes one of the metals to corrode more rapidly than it would under normal conditions. The rate of galvanic attack depends on (1) the difference in corrosion potentials between the two metals, (2) the electrical resistance between the two metals, (3) the conductivity of the electrolyte, (4) the cathode-anode area ratio, and (5) the polarization characteristics of the two metals [Hatch, 1984]. The differences in potential between dissimilar metals or alloys cause electron flow between them when they are electrically coupled in a conductive solution.

Suggested Rewrite:

Galvanic corrosion occurs when an electrolyte in a surrounding medium results in two different metals or alloys behaving as a cathode-anode pair. This electrical coupling causes the metal acting as an anode to corrode at a faster rate than it would under normal conditions [Carter, 1991]. According to Hatch [1984], several characteristics of the metals and the electrolyte influence the speed at which this corrosion occurs: intrinsic properties of the two metals, including their polarization, resistance, and corrosion potentials; the surface area of each metal that is involved in electron flow; and the conductivity of the electrolyte.

Example 3

Passage from the Source:

“Since its discovery two years ago, ALH84001, a martian meteorite scooped from the Antarctic ice cap, has become the most intensively studied 2 kilograms of rock in history. With \$2.3 million in funds from NASA and the National Science Foundation, scientists have sectioned it, imaged it, identified its minerals, measured its isotopes, and analyzed its organic matter. All this effort was aimed at testing and, if possible, extending each of the original four lines of evidence for life: mineral shapes that look like fossilized bacteria, traces of organic matter, rosettes of minerals perhaps formed through bacterial action, and grains of a magnetic mineral resembling those produced by bacteria. But at a NASA workshop here early this month, scientists concluded that all the effort has not strengthened the claims. Indeed, key parts of the original case have been scaled back. Most researchers agree that the case for life is shakier than ever” [Kerr, 1998].

Plagiarized Passage from the Paper:

Since the publication of McKay’s team’s report in 1996, ALH84001 has become the most intensively studied rock in history. Scientists have identified its minerals, measured its isotopes, and analyzed its organic matter in an effort to prove or disprove the claim that the meteorite harbors signs of ancient life on Mars. This has turned out to be an extremely difficult task. In spite of (or perhaps because of) the barrage of data that has been produced, all parts of the hypothesis remain controversial [Kerr, 1998].

Suggested Rewrite:

Does ALH84001 really provide evidence of past life on Mars? Finding a definitive answer to this question has turned out to be an extremely difficult task. Despite a wealth of tests performed on the meteorite, including isotope dating, compositional analysis, and examination of bacteria-like compounds, all parts of the hypothesis remain controversial [Kerr, 1998].

Example 4

Note that the reference listed in the plagiarized paper is incorrect.

Passage from the Source:

“The goal of the demonstration project is two-fold: to remove PCB-laden sediment from the site using proven technologies that protect human health and the environment, and to help restore part of the river as a result of sediment removal. During the project, important information will be gathered regarding:

- Public input on cleanup activities
- Costs of sediment removal, transport, and disposal
- Recovery of the river following cleanup

This information will help guide restoration of other areas of the Fox River that contain PCBs” [“Fox,” 1998].

Plagiarized Passage from the Paper:

The goal of the demonstration project is two-fold: to remove PCB-laden sediment from the site using proven technologies that protect human health and the environment, and to help restore part of the river as a result of sediment removal [“Lower Fox River,” 1999]. During the project, important information will be gathered regarding:

- Public input on cleanup activities
- Costs of sediment removal, transport, and disposal
- Recovery of the river following cleanup

Collecting the information will help guide restoration of other areas of the Fox River that contain PCBs.

Suggested Rewrite:

The Deposit N Removal Project uses environmentally safe methods to remove sediment contaminated with PCBs from the Fox River. The primary goals of this project are to preserve the environment and to revitalize the river. In doing this revitalization, however, the DNR also hopes to generate community feedback on the project, gather information on removal and handling costs of the sediment, and get a sense of natural river conditions as the river recovers from the PCB removal. Officials from the Department of Natural Resources will use this information to help with sediment removal efforts in other parts of the Fox River [“Fox,” 1998].

References

Carter, Giles F., and Paul, Donald E., *Materials Science and Engineering* (ASM International, 1991), p. 328.

“Fox River Deposit N Removal Project,”

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/wm/lowerfox/sediment/depositn.html>

(Madison: Department of Natural Resources, June 1998).

Hatch, John, *Aluminum: Properties and Physical Metallurgy* (Ohio: American Society for Metals, 1984), p. 257.

Kerr, Richard A., “Requiem for Life on Mars? Support for Microbes Fades,” *Science* (November 1998).