

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a word you will hear frequently in university so the first thing I will do is define it.

The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.

Origin: Early 17th century from Latin *plagiarius* 'kidnapper' (from *plagium* 'a kidnapping', from Greek *plagion*) + *-ism*.

Pronunciation: *plagiarism* /'plājə,rɪzəm/ /'pleɪdʒə,rɪzəm/

This definition, etymology and pronunciation is not my work, I read it in an Oxford Dictionary.

I told you that because I think plagiarism is a nasty, mean thing to do and university rules say the same. What plagiarists are doing is saying "look at this wonderful book. I am so clever to think of this dance. I will be rich and famous." when the person who really did the work gets no praise, money or fortune at all. The plagiarist is a cheat, a thief and a liar.

Now if you forget to tell someone you got the idea from someone else, **or** you didn't know someone else had already thought of the idea (it happens with music and sometimes gets in the news), it doesn't always make you a cheat, a thief and a liar. You can say sorry, give the owner some of the money you made, tell everyone you made a mistake. **But** if you do it too often, nobody will believe it was an accident!

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Another definition of the word plagiarism, **not from the dictionary, from me**, but I probably didn't think of it first.

The practice of writing words in the same sequence as someone else, which is discovered by running a computer check of your words (a picture string) against a database of millions of other word which have been written.

Since the introduction of computer checking for reproduced words or "matching picture strings" many people, including academics who should know better, have adopted the word "plagiarism" for this practice. The machinery is called a plagiarism checker. It produces "percentages" of plagiarism.

As can be seen, there is no indication of intent to cheat steal or defraud any body in the above definition. Plagiarism has clear intent. Picture string checking does not.

The most commonly used "plagiarism checker" is called TurnItIn®. All students work is put through TurnItIn **and** checked and marked by teachers. All decisions are made by teachers. None are made by TunItIn alone. Correct at March 2020. Once you have submitted your essay on TurnItIn, all other students' essays and **your later essays**, will be checked against your essay. You must not use sections of any of your previous work without referencing it. That is university rules.

Health Warning Do not be scared of **plagiarism** or **TurnItIn®**. If you are honest, try not to cheat and do what your teachers tell you about academic writing you will have no problem **There will be more on referencing and paraphrasing later.**

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What can cause a high score on TurnItIn?

- A. Using sections of your past essays without referencing them. **University rule – you can only submit work once**
- B. Copying and pasting from a source. Often because you run out of time – **Time management**
- C. Copying and pasting from a source. Often because you struggle with English – **Read, Listen to the radio and Time management**
- D. Your text has many words/phrases from the original – **Learn how to paraphrase.**
- E. A quotation didn't have “ ” round a section from the original you were quoting – **Learn how to reference**
- F. **Common** you wrote something in your own words and referenced the idea properly and yet TurnItIn says it matches another students essay. **If students at different universities write on the same subject in a foreign language – English – using a dictionary (e.g. OAL English/Chinese Dictionary) there is a good chance of duplication.** Your tutor will usually identify this.
- G. **Very Rare** you wrote something in your own words and referenced the idea properly and yet TurnItIn says it matches a text. **Your writing is good and matched something an academic had used and you didn't know about.**

This happened to me, in the days before TurnItIn. I was working 8000 miles from the Campus in a foreign country and submitted an essay by post. My tutor recognised something I had written as coming from another book. The book was not on the reading list for the course or well known. He asked me why and accepted my answer “I don't know” and told me to paraphrase my own words. I couldn't paraphrase the original because I didn't have it. He told me not to reference it.

Never Plagiarise. It isn't necessary. You can always get help with language. You can always re-read a book. **You will definitely get caught** eventually with or without TurnItIn because teachers know their subject and have read many books. You will know you have cheated. **I have never plagiarised.**