

# Plagiarism: Why and How to Avoid It

**Plagiarism** is when we use an author's words or ideas without giving them proper credit. What steps do we have to take to make sure we avoid plagiarism?

My first question to ask:

*What style guide does my instructor want me to use?*

When we're writing an essay that uses research and we want to do any of the following:

- discuss or summarize someone's text or ideas
- use someone's text or ideas for support of our own ideas
- use someone's text or ideas as an opposing point of view to our own ideas

...we can use **direct quotes**, or we can **paraphrase**.

## What is a *paraphrase*?

A paraphrase is using our own words to express what someone else wrote or said. If we are paraphrasing, keep in mind:

According to Raj Smith, \_\_\_\_\_  
Hernandez believes \_\_\_\_\_  
Kelli Jones points out \_\_\_\_\_

- Use different wording and structure than the author throughout your paraphrase.
- When introducing the topic, make it clear you are presenting someone else's ideas.

## How do I use *direct quotes*?

If we want to use the author's words to highlight our own ideas, we enclose their words in *quotation marks*. When using a quote to support your own writing, always tell us why this is connected to your essay.

The next required step is to use **citations**.

## What are citations?

Citations are how we give proper credit for using statements or ideas that aren't our own. They are usually in two places in the essay: after we paraphrase or directly quote an author, and at the end of the essay. By acknowledging our sources through citations, we avoid plagiarizing. We also are giving a way for others to find out more about the topic and retrace our steps.

There are 3 main style guides that you might use in class:

**Chicago Manual of Style**  
**Modern Language Association (MLA)**  
**American Psychological Association (APA)**

Citations look different for depending on the **style guide** your teacher wants you to follow. **Make sure you talk to your teacher to find out exactly what they're looking for!**