Plagiarism: A How-Not-To Guide

The University of Cincinnati College of Law Honor Code (“Honor Code”) requires that all enrolled students demonstrate “good moral character,” which is presumed to be a prerequisite for admission to the bar and the practice of law.\(^1\) The Honor Code prohibits a number of types of academic misconduct and dishonesty, including the improper preparation of a written assignment.\(^2\) One form of misconduct that violates the Honor Code is plagiarism. Below are some tips to help you recognize and avoid plagiarizing as you complete your work.

**WHAT is plagiarism?**

Plagiarize (vb.) to steal and pass off the ideas or words of another as one’s own; use another’s production without crediting the source.\(^3\) This includes:

- Paraphrasing or using another’s idea (even using your own words), graph, chart, or image without a citation;
- Using another’s words verbatim without properly identifying them by enclosing the words within quotation marks or an indentation as a block quote;
- Citing a source that does not exist (e.g., falsifying a publication) or one that cannot fairly be read to support the assertion; and
- Submitting someone else’s work as your own (e.g., buying a paper or having someone else write the assignment for you).

**HOW can I avoid plagiarism?**

- Communicate with your professor about what you and they expect from your assignment.
- Record the citation any time you take information from a source, even if you do not expect to quote it directly, and even if it is from Wikipedia or a dictionary.
- If you copy and paste material directly into your text, create a citation and keep the pasted material in a different font or highlight the material so that you can remember what must be paraphrased before its submission.
- Place quotation marks around any key words, phrases, or sentences which are not yours and cite them.

**REMEMBER:** If it wasn’t entirely formed in your brain, the information came from somewhere. Cite each source carefully and properly.

Negligently or carelessly forgetting to credit a source does not excuse an Honor Code violation. It is up to YOU to submit work that is properly attributed and entirely your own.

Do not worry about having too many footnotes. Academic writing is heavy in citations, and having many footnotes is a positive in a piece of writing.

---

\(^1\) Honor Code § 1.00.
\(^2\) See Honor Code § 2.02. This is a summary and does not purport to replace or amend the Honor Code.
\(^3\) *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* 946 (11th ed. 2004).

---

**WHEN IN DOUBT: TALK IT OUT**

with a professor or faculty member