

Best Practices to Avoid Plagiarism

Plagiarism carries serious consequences, but it can be avoided through careful attention to citation and writing habits. Citing your sources not only builds your credibility as a writer but also strengthens your understanding of the subject matter. The following best practices can help reduce unintentional plagiarism and improve your research and writing skills.

Reading & Notetaking

- Use citation techniques while taking notes, including signal phrases, in-text citations, and bibliographic details.
- Annotate PDFs directly to keep your notes tied to the original source.
- Use citation management tools like Zotero to keep your notes organized and linked to the right sources.

Interviewing & Conversing

- Take detailed notes and clearly separate your own thoughts from the interviewee's responses.
- If you're recording the conversation (with consent and IRB clearance), ensure optimal recording quality.
- Save all email communications, and organize them in folders for easy retrieval.
- Write any clarifying notes immediately after the interview ends.

Writing Paraphrases & Summaries

- Use signal phrases to indicate source material (e.g., 'According to Jonathan Kozol...').
- Try summarizing without looking at the original to focus on what stands out.
- Place quotation marks around any unique language that must be preserved.
- Example: "savage inequalities" exist throughout our educational system (Kozol).

Writing Direct Quotations

- Include the author's name in the same sentence as the quote.
- Use quotation marks or block formatting for the quote, as required by your style guide.
- Only quote as much as necessary to make your point.
- Use brackets to insert your own clarifications without changing the author's meaning.
- Use ellipses (...) to shorten long quotes, while preserving grammatical and contextual accuracy.

Example: "None of the national reports I saw made even passing references in inequality or segregation...Booker T. Washington was cited with increasing frequency, Du Bois never, and Martin Luther King only with cautious selectivity" (Kozol, p. 3).

Writing About Someone Else's Ideas

- Always identify the originator of an idea when discussing it in your writing.
- Use citations to allow readers to locate the original source.
- Example: Kozol shows that a connection between race and the quality of education are connected.

Work Cited:

Kozol, Jonathan. *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. Crown, 1992.

Revising, Proofreading, and Finalizing Your Paper

- Review your paper for proper attribution of all sourced content:
 - In-text citations
 - Footnotes or endnotes
 - Bibliography or works cited list
 - Quotation formatting
- Double-check indirect quotes and be sure they're cited appropriately.
- When in doubt, ask your instructor or writing tutor well before the deadline.