

RESEARCH WRITING

It is essential, that you understand *when* it is necessary to acknowledge the work of others and *how* to acknowledge it correctly.

There are two types of research papers. A research paper may be simply a report on other writers' thoughts and information about a particular subject, or it may be a combination of your ideas and those of other writers. It is the second type of research paper that is required for this course: We are interested primarily in your ideas about your subject, but you must refer, as well, to material about your subject provided by writers other than yourself. Please read what follows carefully: It is designed to help you acknowledge others' writings and ideas correctly, and thereby to help you avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the use, in your own writing, of words, phrases, sentences, whole essays or articles, ideas, or any other kind of material formulated by another person, without making it clear that these words, phrases, sentences, etc., are not your own. In short, plagiarism is presenting material not your own as your own.

Unintentional plagiarism occurs when you mean to give credit to others for their writings or ideas, but fail to do so correctly, either by (a) not enclosing quotations in quotation marks and/or not giving the source of the quotation in a footnote or in parentheses, or by (b) paraphrasing or summarizing without changing enough of the words and phrases used in the original.

The penalties for plagiarism are severe at most colleges and universities. According to the Tulsa Community College Policy & Procedures, Basic Standards for Student Conduct, plagiarism is "specifically prohibited," a violation of the policies of the college. Instructors in the Communication Division of TCC generally adhere to the following policy:

DELIBERATE PLAGIARISM is the claiming, indicating, or implying that the ideas, sentences, or words of another writer are one's own; it includes having another writer do work claimed to be one's own, copying the work of another as a guide to ideas and expression that are then presented as one's own. **A student guilty of DELIBERATE PLAGIARISM** will receive a zero for the assignment, and an "F" in the course.

ACCIDENTAL PLAGIARISM is the improper handling of quotations and paraphrases without a deliberate attempt to deceive; it includes failing to mark the beginnings of paraphrases, failing to get away from the language of the original text when paraphrasing, and failing to identify the source of the quotation or paraphrase properly. **A student guilty of ACCIDENTAL PLAGIARISM will have the offending paper rejected (returned without a grade) by the instructor; the student removes the plagiarism through rewriting and resubmits the paper, which is then graded by the instructor to include a lowering of the earned grade by one letter grade as a penalty for the original plagiarism.**

Scary? Yes and no. Yes, because in your research paper for English 1214 and in research papers for other college courses, you are required to refer to material written by others. No, if you

follow the guidelines below as to when you need to give credit to them for their word and ideas, and how to document references to others' works correctly.

1. WHEN ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS NECESSARY

A good rule to follow is this: acknowledge any idea, fact or interpretation that is not original with you, unless it is common knowledge, something well-known within a particular field or information. For instance, it is common knowledge that the earth travels around the sun. You don't need to track down this information in a book or article and document it (that is, give it a footnote/endnote and bibliography entry or parenthetical reference, as in the MLA form) when you mention it in your paper. But if you mention that John Milton was aware of this theory, but that in describing the world in his epic poem, Paradise Lost, he chose to use the older idea that the sun travels around the earth, you *do* need to give credit to the scholar (such as Merritt Y. Hughes, in "Milton's Cosmos") who first pointed this out to you (Hughes 187).

Another example: it is common knowledge that Shakespeare wrote sonnets as well as plays. You may also consider as common knowledge the fact that some of his sonnets are addressed to his mistress, a "dark lady," even though you may not have been aware of this until you looked up Shakespeare in an encyclopedia. This is standard information about Shakespeare. But if you mention that in the Shakespeare's mistress may have been Emilia Bassano, you need to acknowledge the historian, A. L. Rowse, who is responsible for this theory. And if you mention that in Shakespeare's sonnet "My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing like the Sun," the poet is making fun of the Italian tradition of sonnet-writing, you must give credit to the critic who pointed this out to you—for instance, Katharine M. Wilson, in Shakespeare's Sugared Sonnets (Wilson 83-85).

In general, the more specific the information, the less likely that it should be considered common knowledge, so the more likely that you must acknowledge the source of the information. It is common knowledge, within the field of literature, that William Faulkner is a major figure in American literature, a Southerner who wrote about the South. You don't need to acknowledge this information. But if, in writing about Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily," you mention that Colonel Sartoris, the man who waived Miss Emily's taxes, also appears in Faulkner's novel Sartoris or that Emily's decaying mansion is probably a symbol for Emily herself, you need to give credit to the writer who mentioned these things, even if, after reading both stories, you find a similarity between Emily and the mansion obvious. If you didn't know something before you read it somewhere and it isn't common knowledge, give credit to the author who pointed it out to you, even if it seems obvious to you after you've read it.

Sometimes it's not so easy as in the examples above to decide whether or not an idea or fact is common knowledge. If you can't decide, give credit. For instance, using Faulkner again: within the field of Faulkner criticism, it is common knowledge that a great many of Faulkner's Short stories and novels are set in a mythical county Faulkner devised and called Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. Assume that you didn't know this before you started reading Faulkner criticism, but after reading some books and articles on his work, you find that it is standard knowledge among Faulkner critics. Should you acknowledge a source or not? Actually, it's not essential to do so. But since this common knowledge isn't quite so widespread as, say, knowledge as Shakespeare's "dark lady," you may feel more comfortable crediting a source. And you will never be faulted for bending over backwards to be honest.

A few more examples of the differences between common knowledge and material that needs to be documented: it is common knowledge, within the field of James Joyce criticism, that “Araby” is one of fifteen stories published under the title of Dubliners. You don’t need to provide a citation for this information. But if you go on to discuss Joyce’s difficulty in getting the stories published, you must acknowledge the writer who informed you of this. Any interpretation of a story or of parts of a story other than your own original ideas must, of course, be documented. If you didn’t know before a critic pointed it out that the poem recited by the uncle in “Araby” symbolizes Ireland’s oppression by England, you must give credit to the critic (perhaps William T. Going, in “Joyce’s ‘Araby’”) who brought this to your attention (Going).

2. HOW TO ACKNOWLEDGE CORRECTLY

A NOTE ABOUT FORMAT

There are two main methods of documenting research for liberal arts courses. One is the traditional endnote/bibliography method. The other is the parenthetical method (the MLA format), in which there are no endnotes that give sources of secondary material. In the MLA format, you place in parentheses the last name of the author who wrote the passage you are citing, along with the page number(s) of the material. This information goes at the end of the passage you are quoting or paraphrasing. Then all you need to do is include ALL of the publication information on the “Works Cited” page at the end of your paper (see examples). The form of “Works Cited” page is almost the same as the traditional bibliography form. The “Works Cited” page attached herewith follows the MLA format, the new parenthetical method. An important point to keep in mind when putting together your paper is to be consistent. Use only one method; do not mix them. Another point is to ask your instructors which method they prefer. Most often they will specify a method, but when they don’t, ask.

There are four acceptable ways of using the ideas, interpretations, facts, phrases, or sentences of others in your own writing. These are (a) the direct quotation, (b) the paraphrase, (c) the summary, and (d) the paraphrase or summary containing a direct quotation.

- (a) The **direct quotation** is easy to handle. Most students have no difficulty remembering that when they quote directly from a source—when, that is, they incorporate **word-for-word** a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or longer selection from the work of another writer—they must either (a) enclose the quotation in quotation marks, if the quotation is not longer than four typed lines, or (b) if the quotation is longer than four typed lines, they must indent the quotation ten spaces from the left hand margin, omitting quotation marks and continuing to double space. The first line is indented three additional spaces if it is the beginning of a paragraph in the original source. In either case, a citation must follow the quotation, referring the reader to a source of the quote as given on the “Works Cited” (bibliography) page. Introducing the quotation with a lead-in phrase, such as “According to one critic” or “T. J. Stafford finds that,” is required by the MLA style sheet. The citation at the end of the quotation will lead the reader to the source of the quotation (given on the bibliography page).

A quotation *less than* four lines in length might be presented like this:

Sally Smith, a critic of Faulkner’s works, points out that “Miss Emily is the source of mystery and intrigue for the community” (Smith 100).

Notice that this reference is *not* indented; rather, because of its brevity, it is incorporated into the text of the essay. Also notice that the final punctuation is omitted and placed after the parentheses. Quotations which exceed four lines would be presented this way:

According to Sally Smith, Faulkner critic, Miss Emily is of some value to the little town:

Miss Emily is the source of mystery and intrigue for the community. Though she makes little or no effort during her adult life to become a part of the community, it is apparent that the people of Jefferson prefer that she remain a separated object, for upon her they can vent their felling of hostility and inferiority, and at her expense they can enjoy their feelings of self-righteousness and success. (100)

When quotation are indented like this, the parenthetical references is placed two spaces after the final period.

You don't need to identify the source of familiar sayings: "All that glitters is not gold" is a good example. Use quotation marks around it, but this proverb has become so much a part of our language that even though versions of it are found in both Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Thomas Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat," identifying the source is not necessary. "Thirty days hath September" and "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" are other examples of quotations that need not be acknowledged, and so is the customary use of the term "dark lady" in referring to Shakespeare's friend, or Yoknapatawpha County" in referring to Faulkner's fictional setting for his stories and novels.

(b) **Paraphrases and summaries** are more difficult to manage than direct quotations. Particularly in paraphrasing, take care to avoid falling into unintentional plagiarism. A **paraphrase** is a restatement, IN YOUR OWN WORDS, of someone else's writing, in about the same number of words as the original. When you paraphrase, be very sure (1) to change the words and sentence structure of the original enough so that you are not guilty of plagiarism; (2) to provide a lead-in phrase making it clear where the paraphrase begins. Here is a passage by T. J. Stafford on Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily":

In a work of art, one cannot always isolate the part he wishes to understand, for other parts may offer a necessary perspective. In this case, Faulkner's purpose becomes more clear when he shows Miss Emily in contrast to her Negro servant. While Emily occupies the foreground and provides the primary movement (a movement toward decay), the servant hovers in the background and offers a countermovement of purposeful activity. Although only ten separate references are made to the Negro, each is strategically placed and richly suggestive of his contrast with Miss Emily (Strafford 452).

Here is a plagiarized paraphrase of Stafford's paragraph:

T. J. Stafford points out that in a work of art, it is sometimes impossible to set apart the aspect one wishes to understand, because other aspects of the story may provide a different perspective (451). In the case of William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily." Stafford notes, Faulkner's aim is made more obvious when Miss Emily is seen as contrasted with her Negro manservant, Tobe. Although Emily is the main character, and her deterioration is the main movement of meaningful activity. According to Stafford, even though only ten references are made to Tobe, each reference is significantly placed and very indicative of Tobe's contrast with Miss Emily.

Study the preceding paraphrase, a dishonest attempt to pass off the writing of another as one's own, even though credit is given for the ideas, and a proper citation is provided. It is a dishonest and plagiarized paraphrase because too much of Stafford's sentence structure and phrasing is retained.

Another plagiarized paraphrase of Stafford's paragraph:

It is sometimes difficult to consider only one aspect of a story in isolation from the others. In "A Rose for Emily." It is difficult to see the real meaning of the story without considering the contrast Faulkner sets up between Emily and her Negro manservant, Tobe. Emily, the main character, is set on a destructive course, while Tobe's activities are constructive. The contrast between the two is obvious, even though Tobe is mentioned only ten times in the course of the story (Stafford).

This paraphrase, too, is dishonest and plagiarized, even though a citation is provided. The absence of a lead-in phrase makes it impossible for the reader to tell whether the ideas presented are those of the writer of the paper or Stafford.

A legitimate paraphrase:

T. J. Stafford, in an article on William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," points out that it is sometimes difficult to consider only one aspect of a story apart from the others (452). Stafford notes that in "A Rose for Emily" it is difficult to see the real meaning of the story without considering the contrast Faulkner sets up between Emily and her Negro manservant, Tobe. Emily, the main character, is set on a destructive course, while Tobe's activities are constructive. The contrast between the two is obvious, Strafford finds, even though Tobe is mentioned only ten times in the course of the story (452).

- (c) A **summary** is a restatement, in your own words, of the main points in another piece of writing, but in many fewer words than the original. In writing a summary, you cut the length of the original by at least half, and usually, by much more than half.

Here is a legitimate summary of T. J. Stafford's paragraph:

T. J. Stafford points out that it is difficult to understand the meaning of William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" without considering the contrast Faulkner sets up between Emily and her manservant, Tobe (452).

And here is a legitimate summary of Sally Smith's paragraph on Miss Emily:

Sally Smith maintains that Miss Emily is in some ways beneficial to the town: she is, at least, someone to whom the townspeople can feel superior (100).

Note here that in the examples above, the authors' names have been omitted from the parenthetical citations. It is not necessary to include the author's name in parentheses if it is used in the passage; the page number, though, must be included.

- (d) The fourth way of using the writing of someone else in your own paper is through combining the **paraphrase** or **summary** with **direct quotations**. For instance, Stafford's paragraph might be paraphrased in this way, incorporating within the paraphrase some direct quotations:

T. J. Stafford, in an article on William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," points out that it is sometimes difficult to consider only one aspect of a story apart from the others (452). Stafford notes that in "A Rose for Emily," it is difficult to see the real meaning of the story without considering the contrast Faulkner sets up between Emily and her Negro manservant, Tobe. Emily's "movement toward decay," Stafford states, is contrasted with Tobe's "countermovement of purposeful activity" (100). The contrast between the two is obvious, Stafford finds, even though Tobe is mentioned only ten times in the course of the story.

Here is a summary of Stafford's paragraph, incorporating within the summary some direct quotations:

T. J. Stafford points out that it is difficult to understand the meaning of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" without considering the contrast between Emily's "movement toward decay" and Tobe's "countermovement of purposeful activity" (100).

Follow these guidelines, use your own good sense, play fair with the authors of your source material, and you will succeed in writing a well-documented research paper.