

LAS Plagiarism Statement

What is plagiarism?

La Trobe University defines plagiarism as “the reproducing of someone else’s words, ideas or findings and presenting them as one’s own without proper acknowledgment” (La Trobe University, 2004). It is regarded as a form of academic cheating.

You can plagiarise in the following ways by :

- (a) “directly copying sentences, paragraphs or other extracts (including diagrams, graphs and pictures) from someone else’s published work (including on the Internet and in software) without acknowledging the source;
- (b) paraphrasing someone else’s words without acknowledging the source;
- (c) using facts and information derived from a source without acknowledging it;
- (d) using ideas directly derived from an identifiable author without acknowledging the source;
- (e) producing assignments which should be the student’s own, independent work in collaboration with and/or using the work of other people (e.g. a student or tutor).” (La Trobe University, 2004)

Taken from La Trobe University (2004) *Academic policies, Academic misconduct*. Accessed on 9 January 2006 from <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/policies/academicmisconduct.pdf>

The Faculty of Science Technology and Engineering takes plagiarism very seriously.

How can I avoid plagiarism?

To avoid plagiarism you must acknowledge (or reference) your source of information whenever you use

- another person’s idea, opinion or theory;
- any pieces of information e.g. facts, statistics, graphs or drawings;
- quotations of another person’s actual written or spoken words;
- paraphrase of another person’s written or spoken words.

When you ‘reference’ in your university assignments, you are indicating to your reader that you have used an idea or fact that you have obtained from somewhere and you are showing who and where you got that information from. This is also referred to as citing your sources or using citations. You need to do this to avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism can also occur when the writer acknowledges the source of information but **USES THE SAME WORDS** (or many of the words) as the original. So even if you have put in all your sources and have referenced correctly but have used the words of the original text, you have still plagiarised. You must put the information in your own words.

How many words from the original can I use?

The answer is “not many at all”. You can’t just change a few words from the original using a thesaurus. Technical terms do not have to be changed but for the rest of the time you can use the **ideas** of the original text (as long as you reference them).

Remember that the words must be your own. This is called paraphrasing.

The Plagiarism Training Module for students on WebCT (located at ...) suggests that when you paraphrase, the following steps are necessary:

- “Make sure you understand the original
- Rewrite it in your own words (don’t just rearrange a few words or sentences)
- Put it into your writing where it makes sense and is linked to ideas around it
- Say where the original ideas come from (Reference it)”

If you need to use the exact words of the original, then you can use a direct quote. To show that it’s a direct quote, use quotation marks to enclose the quoted text and include the page number. However, quotations should be used very sparingly in scientific writing. Your lecturers are more interested in your understanding rather than in your ability to locate the perfect quotation so it is much better to put the information into your own words and then reference it.

Here is some typical source material which a student might read in a text.

The second important distinguishing characteristic of the bryophytes is the nature of their alternation of generations. In bryophytes, the gametophytes are always nutritionally independent, whereas the sporophytes are permanently attached to the gametophytes and vary in their dependence upon them.

Below is an acceptable, non-plagiarised version of the above material. **It is in the writer's own words AND it is correctly referenced.**

Secondly, bryophytes differ in the way that their generations alternate: the gametophyte generation is able to feed itself whereas the sporophyte generation feeds off the gametophyte (Raven et al., 1985).

Taken from LAS Handout “The Problem of Plagiarism”

What is the point of referencing?

When you are writing in an academic context, it is essential to reference to

- Avoid plagiarism
- Give your assignment weight and authority and back up your evidence or argument
- Enable readers to check your ideas or follow your sources up for themselves

How do I reference?

Referencing is acknowledging your sources. There are two places in an assignment where you need to do this:

1) In text referencing

We need to know exactly where you have located your information so you need to provide evidence of this in the text. Depending on your department, this is either done using the author/date method or a numbering system (which is generally used in subjects like Chemistry). Note that when parts of a sentence do not come from the same source, you must indicate this.

- Example of author/date method

Pain has been shown to respond well to placebo therapy (Collins, 1998; Wilson & Knight, 1994). Placebos are effective for the relief of physiological and psychological pain (Beecher, 1995). Moore (2001) demonstrated that at least 30-35% of post-operative patients received pain relief from the administration of placebos. Time effect curves for aspirin (Houghton 1992) and placebos (Graeme, 1993) have been plotted.

Adapted from LAS Handout "The Problem of Plagiarism"

- Example of numbering system

In recent years, a series of bioconjugatable, arylsulfonated cyanine fluorophores, e.g. Cy 5 and Cy5.5 [4-6], have been developed for research and diagnostic applications. These dyes have found many uses in immunodiagnosics [7], fluorescence microscopy [8], microarray analysis [9-11] and whole body imaging [12]. Given the usefulness of the of the cyanine dyes, attempts have been made to improve and extend their properties [13-15].

Taken from Klonis, K., Quazi, N. H., Deady, L.W., Hughes, A.B., & Tilley, L. (2003). Characterisation of a series of far-red-absorbing barbituric acid oxonol derivatives as fluorescent probes for biological applications. *Analytical Biochemistry* 317: 47-58.

2) Reference list at the end of your work

You also need to supply a reference list at the end of your report, essay or project where you include a list of all your sources arranged alphabetically by author. If you are using the numbering system, then your order of references at the end should follow the same numerical order that you use in your text.

Your department should be able to supply you with a style guide that clearly sets out the details of the referencing system you should use for that subject. Remember that referencing may differ in different departments or in different Faculties, if you are doing a double degree, so be prepared to master more than one referencing system. You also need to be prepared to pay attention to the details of the format of referencing e.g. the punctuation (placing of commas, full stops, colons etc.), and what parts are italicised etc. This may seem tedious but in some departments you can lose marks for not referencing properly and that's an annoying way to lose marks!

Can I use the Internet?

Yes, you can, as long as it is with the approval of your lecturer (some departments prefer you not to rely on the internet), and if it is from a reputable source, such as an academic journal, government department or well known community organisation, such as the Cancer Society or a mental health organisation such as Beyondblue. Any information from these sources should be reliable. Care is needed when accessing the internet as there is a lot of information that lacks authority and/or is not refereed by experts in the field, which means its accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

When you reference information from the internet, you use the same procedure as you would for a printed source. You need to find the person or organisation who published the information and the date it was first published for your reference list and in text referencing. It is not sufficient just to put the web address into the text of your essay/report. You also need to supply the web address and the date you accessed the site in your reference list. Your lecturer needs to be able to check the accuracy of the information so providing these details is very important.

Check the style guide from your department. Some possible examples follow.

- An article from a journal on a web site

Henley, M. & Gibson, P. (1998). Promoting evidence- based alternative medicine. *Medical Journal of Australia* 169,573-574. Accessed on 17 January 2005 from <http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues.html>

- An article with an organisational author

National Institute of Mental Health. (2000). *Depression*. Accessed on 21 January 2006 from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm#intro>

If time is short, you may be tempted to copy and paste chunks of information (or even a whole assignment) from the Internet. Remember, if it is easy for students to do, it is just as easy for staff to detect. The university also has access to software detection programs which check if work has been copied from other sources. You should never copy assignments as the penalties are severe and you could fail your course.

To sum up, if the information is relevant, read and understand the ideas, paraphrase them (put them in your own words) and reference them appropriately.

If you have any questions, you can either:

- check with the appropriate person in your department (course co-ordinator, lecturer, tutor, or supervisor)
- consult with the lecturers in the Language and Academic Skills Unit in PS1 213 (tel. no. 9479 2432)
- access the Plagiarism Training Module for Students on WebCT. This can be found at

Reference list

Klonis, K., Quazi, N. H., Deady, L.W., Hughes, A.B., & Tilley, L. (2003). Characterisation of a series of far-red-absorbing barbituric acid oxonol derivatives as fluorescent probes for biological applications. *Analytical Biochemistry* 317: 47-58.

La Trobe University. (2004) *Academic policies, Academic misconduct*. Accessed on 9 January 2006 from <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/policies/academicmisconduct.pdf>

Language and Academic Skills Unit, Faculty of Science Technology and Engineering, La Trobe University. (2001). *The problem of plagiarism*. (Handout).

Language and Academic Skills Units, La Trobe University. (2005). *Plagiarism Training module: Using other people's words and ideas-quoting*. (WebCT).

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