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How to Effectively Plagiarise

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Effective Plagiarism

by Hillary Brown

(English 103)

The Assignment: Students wrote either an informative, objective report or an argumentative position paper on a research question of their choice to their major or program of study by drawing from no less than ten sources.

Introduction

Literally thousands of students all over the world are getting caught plagiarizing. But at the same time, millions of students are getting away with it. Teachers are handing out C's, B's, and even A's and do not even realize that they are giving credit to a crime. How do these students get away with it? What steps are these students taking to insure that they are not caught? Plenty of books and articles have been written to instruct teachers as to how they can detect plagiarism, but there are few to no books or articles that instruct students on how they can properly and effectively plagiarize. This paper will serve as a guide to college students as to how they can effectively plagiarize. We will start by discussing what plagiarism really is along with the consequences of getting caught and the rewards of getting away with it. We will then go on to talk about how teachers detect plagiarism. Finally, we will tell you the steps that must be taken in order to properly and effectively plagiarize.

What is plagiarism?

Before we begin explaining how to plagiarize, we must define what plagiarism is. According to The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus (1996), to plagiarize is to "take and use (the thoughts, writings, inventions, etc., of another person) as one's own (p. 1138). We, on the other hand, have decided to define plagiarism in a simpler manner. Plagiarism could be easily defined as taking someone else's work and calling it your own. But in the way we have chosen to look at it, there is so much more to plagiarism than just taking someone else's ideas. Plagiarism is a way out of the meaningless assignments that are given to students by uncreative teachers. It is a way of making one's life a little easier, and more specifically, making life more fun. Plagiarizing will give you more time to spend with friends and family. It will also give you a new way to beat the school system that so many students so blindly follow, and by beating the system you can feel as though you accomplished something in your college career. The only problem is that there are occasionally some consequences, especially if you get caught.

What are the consequences of plagiarism?

Now that plagiarism has been defined, we can explain what the consequences of plagiarizing are. According to Kay Nielsen (2003), a dean at the College of DuPage, when a student is caught plagiarizing, he/she may be given some very serious consequences. She also described how the student's relationship with the teacher has a lot to do with what the consequences will be. Kay explained that a teacher has the option of failing the student for the assignment, failing the student for the class, and is also given the option of reporting the incident to the dean of students, who will then have the option of having the student expelled. The last thing Kay explained was that when a student is caught plagiarizing, there is a high probability that the infraction will be documented on their permanent transcript. This means that throughout the remainder of your college career, you will have a black mark on your transcript that declares that you were caught plagiarizing. This is not a large issue, though, because you can always explain to people that you did not realize that it was such a serious infraction. Although these stakes are high, the rewards for plagiarizing are much greater.

What are the rewards of plagiarism?

Although the possible consequences of being caught plagiarizing are great, the rewards of the same are almost irresistible. According to a student who we will refer to as "Jane Doe" (2003) because she wished to remain anonymous due to her fear of being caught, there are many benefits to plagiarizing. When asked what the greatest advantage of plagiarizing was, "Doe" (2003) said that it was "being able to get the grade that she wanted without doing the work." She then went on to explain how much easier it was for her to plagiarize instead of doing the hours of work that go into writing your own paper. We believe that when a student is given the option to take five minutes to do a paper or 5 hours, the student is going to take the 5-minute route. But then again, who would not? There is no sense in spending time on something that is already done for you. Nancy Webb (2003), a professor at the College of DuPage, explained to us how she thinks students' minds work. She explained that she knows that students just don't have time any more to do their homework. They are too busy working part and full-time jobs. They are enveloped in their social lives. A great portion of their time is consumed with regular school hours. If their schedules are already too full with these things, then they are not going to want to cram another assignment in. They are especially not going to want to complete the work when it will not only take them more time than they are willing to spare, but also take time that they do not need to spare because they have the option of plagiarizing. When we weigh the pros and cons of plagiarizing, it is easy to see that the pros greatly outweigh the cons. Although a student risks being caught and being given some rather serious consequences, the risk is well worth it. There is a high possibility that they will not be caught, and if they are never caught, then what is the point of discontinuing a process that has such great rewards when properly done? The key idea is that when plagiarizing, a student must know what a teacher looks for so that he/she are able to make their paper appear as though it is their own work.

How do teachers detect plagiarism?

In order to effectively plagiarize, a student must know how a teacher detects plagiarism. One of the key ingredients in the receipt for plagiarism is knowing what kind of teacher you have. By this, we mean you must know if you have a strict teacher or one who will simply do as you are doing and work as little as possible to get through the quarter. Through talking to various teachers and students, we have gained a common knowledge that some teachers are much more lax about what they will allow their students to get away with. At the same time, others are very strict as to what they will allow a student to get away with. Some teachers are also very lazy and will not put in the time or effort that it takes to figure out if a student is indeed plagiarizing. So the first ingredient can easily be summarized into simply finding out what kind of teacher you have. The second ingredient is knowing what a teacher is going to look for if they do indeed decide to put forth the effort. According to Jan Geesaman (2003), the Associate Dean of Liberal Arts at the College of DuPage, one of the first things a teacher will look at is the writing style that is used in the paper. Dean Geesaman (2003) explained that a good teacher will have students do several in-class writing assignments so that they can familiarize themselves with the students' different writing styles. Fortunately for us, Dean Geesaman (2003) went on to tell how most teachers will simply have students complete all written assignments outside of class.

Another idea that we think is very important to keep in mind is choosing a topic or argument that seems logical for you to use. If you are a sports fanatic, why would you write a paper on classical music? Or, if your major were political science, why would you do a research paper on how to properly plagiarize? These kinds of mistakes are easily avoided by simply looking for things to plagiarize that you would really want to research or write about. Another key ingredient to making the plagiarized material look believable is adjusting the grammar to make it sound like it is yours. The college student that we interviewed, Doe (2003) said that one of the first things she does to a document that she is plagiarizing is change the grammar so that there are a few mistakes. She does this because she usually makes grammar mistakes when she is writing. If she were to turn in a rough or even final draft without any grammar mistakes, her teacher would know right away that it was not her work. Another thing to check is the

spelling. If you are a good speller and there are multiple spelling errors in the work that you're turning in, your teacher may become suspicious. And the opposite is true as well. If you often have five or more spelling errors in a paper, and this one has none your teacher will question just how your paper came out looking so neat and polished.

Using the Internet against us.

Another area that should be discussed is use of the Internet. We can easily find papers online, like at "Fastpapers.com" (2003) where "pre-written papers are only \$9.85 per page. And all bibliography pages are absolutely free!" (p.1). Fastpapers.com (2003) and other sites like it are a great resource and offer a fast and easy way out of writing your own paper. They have every kind of paper you can imagine and can get that paper to you within a day. The only problem with these kinds of sites is that if you can find the paper online, your teacher will also most likely be able to locate it. According to Geesaman (2003), search engines such as "Google" offer teachers almost as much help as they do students. Geesaman (2003) explained that when a teacher suspects a student of plagiarizing, they can simply type in the first part of the text that they believe is being plagiarized and hit the search key; half the time they will get an immediate result. There are also "Internet based tools" such as a site called "turnitin.com" that are allowing teachers to run a student's paper through the site's system and will return the paper with any suspected plagiarism highlighted in red (Online, 2003, p. 1). According to Diaz-Duque, a professor at the University of Iowa, the system is quite simple to use (Online, 2003, p. 1). Diaz was quoted in an edition of "Community College Week" telling teachers and students alike that "Within an hour or so, I can access a report that uses a color code in rating each paper," he said. "If it's red, there's a problem, and the paper will come back to me with the suspect content printed in red, along with the Web site address for where that same content was found elsewhere. "This most certainly is enough to turn off any student from plagiarizing anything that can be found online, but there most certainly is a solution to this dilemma. We will come back to this later and explain how to make it virtually impossible for a teacher to know that the paper you are turning in is not your own work. This bit of information will be revealed in the next section where we will get into how one can actually plagiarize effectively.

Making it your own!

Now that we have given some warnings as to how teachers may detect plagiarism, we will go on and tell you the steps that need to be taken to insure that your plagiarism is never even suspected. One of the first steps is always choosing a topic that seems logical for you to be writing on. As mentioned earlier, it is very important to choose a topic that is logical for you to be writing on. Once you have chosen a suitable topic, the Internet is a great place to begin searching for information. According to a professor at Rutgers University by the name of Donald L. McCabe, when "using a search engine, students can find scores of information sources about virtually any topic in just seconds" (Dishonor, 2002, p. 3). So, when you begin your initial search, you will most likely have little to no problems as long as you are not Internet inept. Once you have found an article or some information that you think will be useful to you, copy and paste the exact text into a word processing document or copy it word for word to hard paper. The next step is making the material your own. This is where so many students fail. In fact, according to a survey taken by 30 college students, this is what they too believe is the greatest cause of teachers finding out that a student has plagiarized (Brown, 2003). The Dean of Oakton Community College, Linda Korbel, explained that one student who was asked to write about a local topic chose to plagiarize someone else's work. This student, however, was writing about Chicago and used a paper written about California. While the student changed the city location names to Chicago, she did not change anything else (Dishonor, 2002, p. 1). This is a careless mistake, and there really is no excuse for doing this. It will only take you about 10-20 minutes to go through an entire paper and make little changes to it so that it sounds like you wrote it. Change such things as names of locations or people's names; you can even manipulate the paper to make it sound more like something you would write. For

example, if you are a very sensitive person, and you have decided to write a paper on child abuse, find a paper that is going to bring out the sensitive view. If you can not find a paper like this, find one that just has the facts of child abuse. Next, add in details like sensitive comments such as "just reading about the bruised child was enough to make me cry," or "it was all I could do to keep myself composed as the lady described her childhood with an abusive father." These little extras will not only make your paper sound more like you work, but will also make your plagiarism harder to detect with an online source. Changing dates is another key factor. If you are using someone else's paper, you need to make sure that you have changed the dates so it looks like the information that you are using is recent. If there are articles, change the dates on them too. Chances are teachers are not going to look up the article to make sure it is accurate, especially if you include a copy of the article with the date changed. This concept is devious, yet brilliant! Going back to the use of online sites to get prewritten papers. We would like to tell you one of the best ways that you can assure that you will not be caught plagiarizing.

Fool proof Plagiarism!

Many of the online sites, like "Fastpaper.com" (2003), also offer to write a custom paper just for you. This means that you can be given any kind of written assignment and have an internet site type up a paper for you for a small fee, then receive it as early as one day later. Nancy Webb (2003) explained that she has students do other small written assignments before she has them turn in major papers. Webb (2003) went on to say that she does this so that she becomes familiar with the student's writing style. She is able to tell later on if the student is plagiarizing by looking at their grammar, punctuation, and their overall style of writing. This creates a dilemma first, but when you think about it, there is a rather simple solution. Do not ever give your teacher a document that is really your work. Always order from the same online site so that your paper writing styles and techniques will always match, and there will be no suspicion. Another element that will help you succeed with using online sources to write papers is preordering some papers so that you get a sense of what the writing style that particular site uses. By familiarizing yourself with the site's style, you will be able to mimic this style in class if you are given an in-class writing assignment. For example, if your site likes to use lots of big words in their papers, then you should do the same. Or, if your site has lots of long sentences, you should make lots of long sentences as well. Based on the aforementioned "Plagiarism Survey," students know that the number one thing that makes teachers suspicious of students plagiarizing is that they notice a difference in the writing style (Brown 2003). A movie called "Plagiarism: It's a Crime" (2003), also agrees with that data. They tell the viewer that one of the best ways to detect plagiarism is to look at the change in writing styles of the student's different papers. Another way that you can insure that you are not caught is by knowing what information is in your paper.

I put that in my paper?

Based on the "Plagiarism Survey" (Brown, 2003), 80% of the students had plagiarized, yet at the same time 40% said that they would not consider plagiarizing because they are afraid of being caught. An astounding 90% said that they would not report someone for plagiarizing and they do not consider plagiarizing a crime. This means that the majority of student plagiarize, and according to Nancy Webb (2003), teachers know it. At the same time, these students are afraid of getting caught, as they should be. However, no one seems to be "tattle-tailing" on their neighbor for academic dishonesty. So, as long as you know what is in your paper, you should have all the steps that are necessary to plagiarize effectively. Knowing what is in your paper is extremely important. "Jane Doe" (2003) told the story of a time when she was almost caught by her professor because she was not familiar with the text that was in the paper that she had copied from her sister. She said that after the close encounter with an almost fatal casualty, she now makes sure that she knows exactly what is in her papers. If your teacher comes up to you and asks what your paper is about, and you can tell them exactly what "you wrote" on, they will be less suspicious of you. Also, if you are familiar with your work, you can, again, alter it so that it sounds like

your own work. The last step to effectively plagiarizing, is knowing what to do if you get caught.

Oh ow!

As will all illegal things, there is a chance that you will be caught and have to confess that you were in the wrong. But do you really have to? We would like to provide you with a few examples of things that you can do to insure that you sound much more innocent than we both know you are. If you are caught, you could say that you just made a mistake and did not understand how to properly document the material you used. Teachers believe that "...in half the cases, it's an issue of students not properly citing a source" (online, 2003, p. 2). If teachers believe this, than you can most certainly claim that you made an "honest mistake." Another thing that you can do besides claiming ignorance is tell them that you just incorrectly paraphrased and thought that you did cite it properly. Again, it is the same concept of not knowing what you were doing, but teachers buy into it. They blame themselves, and are therefore much more willing to give you another chance. Another thing that you can do if you are merely taking someone else's idea and not their exact words is claim that you thought it was common knowledge. Then explain that you had the same thoughts as the person they claim you plagiarized, and that you had read it somewhere else as well as that site and therefore figured that everyone in your field of research knew that information. Your last and final effort can be put towards guiltning them into following what the Holy Bible says: you can tell your professor that in the book of Ecclesiastes the first chapter in the 9th verse, it says that "there is nothing new under the sun" (Bible, 1993, p. 877). Then explain that since there is nothing under the sun, or on earth, that is new, there is no possible way that you could have not plagiarized because you could never come up with an original idea. If all else fails, cry.

To summarize.

We have given you a dictionary definition as well as our own definition of what plagiarism is. We told you what the pros and cons are, and how exactly to do it. We have even told you how to get away with it even if you are caught. But we want you to know that we do not recommend plagiarizing. Plagiarizing as well as any other form of cheating is morally wrong. Also, any kind of cheating will only hurt you. Although you will get the grade that you desire, you will not have learning anything. It truly does take away from the educational experience. Unless that is, you do not have time, or just do not feel like completing the task, and you do not mind the potential of being given some very serious consequences, then we would highly recommend this as a perfect remedy to a sickening amount of work.

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