

Policy on Plagiarism

Adopted by the Department of Forest, Rangeland, and Fire Sciences
August 27, 2012

The Department of Forest, Rangeland, and Fire Sciences will not tolerate plagiarism. When you plagiarize, you are stealing someone else's words or ideas. As a student, it is your responsibility to understand what plagiarism is and to how to avoid it.

Plagiarism violates the code of academic conduct at the University of Idaho and can be strictly punished. Under UI policy, regulation O-2, "Consequences for academic dishonesty may be imposed by the course instructor. Such consequences may include but cannot exceed a grade of "F" in the course" (<http://www.uidaho.edu/catalog>). When any student in one of the classes taught in our department is accused of plagiarism, the student must meet with both the course instructor and the chair of the department to discuss the evidence, circumstances, and consequences. You should be aware that web-based searches for plagiarized text have become quite sophisticated. Even a sentence or two plagiarized in a long document is inexcusable. It is very tempting and easy to copy text directly, but it works against the educational process and is a form of theft.

What is plagiarism?

You plagiarize when you use someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit. All sources of ideas or information must be cited. Anything that is not cited is either so widely known that a citation is unnecessary, or it is your own original thought. Identify the sources you cite in the text (in parentheses or footnotes depending on the style) and in a list of literature cited at the end. In scientific writing, we typically summarize (write only the important ideas and cite the source) or paraphrase (write all the ideas in our own words and cite the source). Both summarizing and paraphrasing allow us to synthesize ideas from multiple sources. Scientists use direct quotes sparingly (typically only once or not at all in a paper). If you quote three or more words from someone, include those words in quotes and cite your source(s). We provide examples of these below.

Why you should care about plagiarism:

- 1) Giving credit to the source of your ideas lends support and credibility to your writing. It is the way well-educated people write when they're trying to provide a scientific basis for their ideas.
- 2) Citing sources allows others to retrace the steps that led to your conclusion, and gives your reader some ideas about where to go for additional information.
- 3) Correctly citing the sources of your ideas serves to differentiate your original thinking from the work on which it builds.
- 4) When you use someone else's words, you don't learn as much. You miss the opportunity to communicate your understanding by expressing it in your own words.

How can you avoid plagiarism?

Some examples below will help you to understand the differences between plagiarizing (unacceptable) and summarizing (acceptable) or paraphrasing (acceptable). If you need additional information on writing, or how to avoid plagiarism, consult the resources available through the University of Idaho Library

(<http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/copyright/teaching/plagiarism.html>) Other potentially useful web sites, in addition to those cited above, include the UI English Department policy on plagiarism (<http://www.uidaho.edu/class/english/plagiarismpolicies>). Sites for detecting plagiarism include http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_solutions.html and <http://www.canexus.com/eve/index.shtml>.

If you are uncertain about how to cite sources, or have other questions about potential cases of plagiarism, visit with your course instructor prior to handing in an assignment.

Examples of summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, and plagiarizing:

- I. From: Force, J.E. and G.E. Machlis. 1997. The human ecosystem. Part II: Social indicators in ecosystem management. *Society & Natural Resources* 10: 369-382.

Original text: "Social indicators are statistics collected for policy analysis and decision making....Social indicators, like the other social science methodologies, have several limitations...The selection of indicators is far from value-free."

Summarized (Acceptable): Social indicators are useful despite their limitations (Force and Machlis 1997).

Paraphrased (Acceptable): Despite their limitations, social indicators are useful to decision makers (Force and Machlis 1997).

Plagiarized (NOT Acceptable): Social indicators are statistics collected for policy analysis and decision making. Social indicators, like the other social science methodologies, have several limitations. The selection of indicators is far from value-free. (This is not acceptable because it is copied word for word from the original, the words are not in quotes, and the source is not cited).

Plagiarized (NOT Acceptable): Social indicators are used in policy analysis and decision making (Force and Machlis 1997). Indicators have limitations. For instance, they are not value free. (This is not acceptable because many of the phrases are exactly the same as the original, and the sentence structure is very similar with only a few word substitutions).

- II. From: Franklin, J. 1993. Preserving biodiversity: species, ecosystems, or landscapes. *Ecological Applications* 3(2): 202-205.

Original text: "...we must increase our emphasis on ecosystem- and landscape-level approaches over species-based approaches if we truly intend to maintain the majority of

existing biological diversity...We must see the larger task—stewardship of all of the species on all of the landscape with every activity we undertake as human beings—a task without spatial and temporal boundaries.”

Summarized (Acceptable): Franklin (1993) argued that biodiversity conservation must emphasize ecosystems over species.

Paraphrased (Acceptable): Landscape-scale approaches are critical to successful land management because species-level approaches cannot ensure conservation of biological diversity (Franklin 1993).

Plagiarized (NOT Acceptable): Franklin (1993) feels that to conserve most of our current biological diversity, we must emphasize ecosystem- and landscape-level approaches over species-based approaches.

- III. Heyerdahl, E.K., L.B. Brubaker, and J.K. Agee. 2001. Spatial controls of historical fire regimes: a multiscale example from the Interior West, USA. *Ecology* 82(3): 660-678.

Original: “As a consequence of excluding fire, spatial variation in climate, topography, and vegetation no longer influences fire regimes as it did before ~1900, either regionally or locally...This dramatic change in fire frequency has profoundly affected forest composition and structure in the Blue Mountains...These changes in forest composition and structure have shifted the fire regime of dry forests from frequent low-severity fires to infrequent, high-severity fires that kill large areas of ponderosa pine....”

Summarized (Acceptable): As a result of fire suppression, fires are less frequent and more severe now than they were before 1900 in the Blue Mountains (Heyerdahl et al. 2001).

Paraphrased (Acceptable): Heyerdahl et al. (2001) documented a change in fire regimes since 1900 in the dry forests of the Blue Mountains of Oregon. They attribute the occurrence of less frequent but more severe fires to fire exclusion, and identify the ways in which the influence of climate and topography have changed.

Misinterpreted (NOT Acceptable): According to Heyerdahl et al. (2001), fire exclusion has resulted in less frequent and more severe fires, as well as dramatic changes in forest composition and structure. They expect fires to kill large areas of ponderosa pine. (Note that this is an incorrect interpretation of the source, since the authors limited their statement to ponderosa pine forests in the Blue Mountains (not all forests everywhere), and that Heyerdahl et al. (2001) don’t mention expectations).

Plagiarized (NOT Acceptable): Forests have changed greatly in the Blue Mountains. Where frequent low-severity fires once burned, infrequent, high-severity fires now kill large areas of ponderosa pine (No source is cited).