Technical Communication  
Engineering 100.250

Plagiarism  Citation
Progress Reports  Abstracts

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Why cite?

- So others can find your sources
- Because it is a matter of honesty not to take credit for the work of another
- It can lend authority to your work
  - If you cite true authorities.

Citation and Plagiarism

Why and When to Cite

Plagiarism: a definition

“The use of another writer’s words or ideas without acknowledging the source. Akin to theft, plagiarism has serious consequences and should be avoided at all costs.”


This should recall the heart of the Engineering College Honor Code

*Don’t take credit for work that is not your own.*
Plagiarism is bad for any number of reasons
You are taking credit for the work of others and thus harming them.
People may trust you to know things you don’t in fact know, and you may cause harm.
You may be caught and pay a heavy price.

What’s the heavy price?
People will not trust you, particularly in your field.
You may lose your degree.
You may lose your job, particularly if you work in academia.
Superiors may not trust you.
You may run afoul of the law (you may violate copyright).

Copyright protects many forms of communication and
Breach of it may subject you to severe penalties.
While not the same as plagiarism, the same action may constitute both plagiarism and copyright infringement.

Plagiarism in your academic career
Can result in failure in your classes.
Revocation of your degree even if discovered later.

Pal Schmitt, former president of Hungary

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pál_Schmitt_scientific_misconduct_controversy

http://plagiarismwatch.org
And an article from the New York Times


A further look at plagiarism

Most egregious

Repeating someone else’s sentences word for word or practically word for word.

Less egregious sort

“...repeating someone else’s apt phrase without appropriate acknowledgement, paraphrasing another person’s argument as your own, and presenting another’s line of thinking as though it were your own.” MLA Handbook, (1988). New York: MLA, pp. 22-23.

So, two questions

When do you cite?

How do you cite?

When do you cite?

When you use another’s words.

When you use another’s ideas or argument, unless either is common knowledge and generally accepted in the field.
### How do you cite?

With quotation marks for verbatim extracts.

With brackets and source and page citations for ideas and lines of argument.

### Example: use of verbatim text

**Bad:** In *Cosmopolis*, Toulmin states that Leibniz’ rationalism was subject to the same limitations as that of Descartes. [undocumented copying]

**Good:** In *Cosmopolis*, Toulmin states that “Leibniz’s rationalism was subject to the same limitations as that of Descartes.” [1992, p. 106] (Quotation marks show borrowed words, and page number shows location of text in original source)

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### Rules for quotations are simple

Enclose the quoted material in quotation marks if less than a sentence or two.

### Rules for quotations are simple

If several sentences, or one long and complex one, put quoted material into a block set off with an additional line above and below. Don’t use quotation marks.

Source: Elizabeth Hildinger, PhD

### Example: use of another’s idea

**Bad:** In his 1848 volume *Eureka: A Prose Poem*, the poet and author Edgar Allan Poe divided stars into two categories: those whose light has reached us, and those whose light has yet to reach us.

[An undocumented idea from other writers.]

Source: Elizabeth Hildinger, PhD
Example: use of another’s idea

**Good:** In his 1848 volume *Eureka: A Prose Poem*, Edgar Allan Poe divided stars into two categories: those whose light has reached us, and those whose light has yet to reach us. [Halpern and Wesson, 2006, p. 12]

Another acceptable form

**Good:** According to Halpern and Wesson, Edgar Allan Poe, in his 1848 volume *Eureka: A Prose Poem*, divided stars into two categories: those whose light has reached us, and those whose light has yet to reach us. [2006, p. 12]

In your references list you would then find


This is APA format

Some helps to correct bibliographic citation

Son of Citation Machine
http://citationmachine.net/index2.php

Refworks
http://www.refworks.com
Progress Reports

What to do and why

What two questions a writer always asks

- Who is my audience?
- What is my purpose?
  - Informative?
  - Persuasive?
  - Both?

Which? Why?

So...

- Mixed audience
- Persuasive document with strong informational aspect

And this means something. What?

It means

- You must have enough background
- You must support your claims that you are on time (or at least will finish on time)

Any other sorts of claims you might make?

Your purposes, more specifically

- To show how far you have come with a project (informative)
- To show that you will finish on time (persuasive)
- To justify any changes you have made in the project (persuasive)
- To give any interim findings or to explain any developments (informative)
Information in a progress report must be

- Organized
- Organized so that the reader can grasp it easily

Progress report organization

- Generally it is best to arrange the information by topic
- Generally it is best not to arrange it chronologically— that is, like a story

Everybody likes stories…

Chronological organization is difficult to follow where many tasks are involved

"First we researched semiconductors, then we began a preliminary project design, and then we stopped that in order to research some points that we hadn’t thought about before. After the second round of research, we went back and tested a second aspect of the project design and, while this was going on, we took up the preliminary design again, but we didn’t finish it. Instead we conducted some experiments with a multimeter, and this got us thinking that perhaps we should revise the preliminary design…"

So, what is this approach, really?

So, it’s better to arrange things *topically* instead of *chronologically*

- But what topics do you include?
- You need to think about the audience
Broadly, the reader wants to know three things
1. What you have accomplished so far
2. What remains to be done
3. Whether you will finish on time

But to grasp these things…

The reader needs sufficient background. This means…
You generally need to remind the reader of what he or she may already know
You need an adequate description of your product and of your project, at least in the first of a series of progress reports

All of this implies a certain basic structure
- Introduction
- Main Sections
- Conclusion

All of this implies a certain basic structure
- Introduction
  - Project description
- Main Section
  - Tasks completed
  - Tasks remaining
  - Preliminary findings and conclusions (if appropriate)
- Conclusion
  - Assessment of progress
  - Changes of scope
  - Forecast about completion
  - Contact information

Introduction
- Project description
- Motivation
- Project description
- List and description of tasks
  - Tasks listed and described clearly
  - Start and completion dates

Main section
- Tasks completed
- Tasks remaining (thus those you are currently working on too) with projected completion dates
- Preliminary findings, conclusions or assessments of tasks (if appropriate)
Conclusion

- General assessment of progress
- Explanation and justification of any changes in scope
- Forecast about completion
- Contact information

And finally…

- Memo header
- Overview (for this assignment, a descriptive abstract)
- Contact information at very end
- Any necessary attachments
Abstracts

Informational  Descriptive

Informational Abstract: brief summary of the report
States all the essential points
Gives the reader all essential information
Is generally longer than a descriptive abstract

Informational abstracts

“. . . Gives the gist, or essence, of a piece of writing; it includes the most significant material in the writing. It is the report in miniature.”


Abstract

We propose to create a device that distorts the human voice when users speak on the telephone. The device would allow users to call others and sound like Mickey Mouse, Kim Kardashian, Darth Vader, Leonardo diCaprio or Sandra Bullock, all of whose vocal characteristics will be programmed into the device. We believe the device would be a popular novelty device, and our team could produce a prototype in six weeks at a cost of $5,200.

(Informational )

Descriptive abstracts

Describe what the report is about

Are often like a table of contents in paragraph form

Descriptive abstracts

- Tell what the topic of the report is
- Don’t tell much about what the report says
Abstract
This memorandum describes our progress in designing and building an educational electronic toy to teach children multiplication. The memorandum contains a description of the toy, the tasks involved in its design and building, a description of our progress to date, and a list of the tasks remaining. A conclusion follows which gives an assessment of our progress, a forecast about completion of the project, and contact information.

(Descriptive)

Abstract
This report is a proposal for a vocal distortion device to be used on the telephone as a toy. It gives background explaining what it is and how it would work, there is a schedule of work for its development, an explanation of how the prototype may be judged a success, an explanation of the expertise of the team proposing to develop the device, and a detailed budget for its development.

(Descriptive)

You will notice that these abstracts do not state
Any problem
Any task (except vaguely and by implication)
Any purpose for the report (except by implication)

You will need a Gantt chart.
Make it more detailed than before.

Summary: Citations
Do not take credit for others’ work
Cite proper authority to enhance your work
Cite to help others find your sources

Summary
Progress Reports
Describe your project and device adequately
Arrange material topically

Abstracts
Function as overviews and may be descriptive or informational