Just What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism, put simply, is taking credit for someone else’s work. In academics specifically, plagiarizing is when you write what someone else said/wrote but don’t give them credit for it. Giving credit where credit is due is one of the fundamentals of college writing and not doing so will result in a myriad of unpleasant consequences such as: an automatic “F” either on the assignment or in the class, having to appear before the academic integrity board, undergoing disciplinary actions as assigned by the academic integrity board, and potentially being expelled from the university all together. Professors are constantly keeping a look out for plagiarism in papers, especially in lower level courses like Core Humanities, and do not hesitate in handing over plagiarizers to the academic integrity board. So what’s the best way to avoid the unpleasant consequences of plagiarizing? Simple: don’t do it.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Many students plagiarize without even knowing that he or she is doing it. However, intentional or not, the consequences are still severe. Often times, this occurs because the writer does not know under what circumstances one needs to provide citation.

To help clear up some of that confusion, here are a few practical ways to avoid plagiarism in your papers:

1. If you use a word directly from the source then you must put it in quotations and cite it at the end of the sentence. Example:

   **Original Text:**
   The fantastic show “Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood” is a great learning tool for any individual, no matter his or her age. It is a very engaging show that is thoroughly enjoyable to watch.

   **Text in Essay (MLA format):**
   “Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood” is a “fantastic” show that is both educational and entertaining for viewers of all ages (Doc 223).

   **Note:** the word “fantastic” in this example was taken directly from the text and therefore is put in quotation marks. The author of the source and the page that the word is found on is then cited at the end of the sentence. Also note that Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood is in
quotations because it is the name of a show, not because it is in the source. Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood is a widely known show and is not specific just to this article.

2. The first principle applies the same when you insert an entire sentence or part of a sentence into your paper that comes directly from the source. Example:

**Original Text:**
In Walt Disney’s *The Little Mermaid* we watch as Ariel seeks out true love and tries to find her place in the world amidst two conflicting obligations: one to her family and one to her heart.

**Text in Essay** (MLA format):
Walt Disney’s adaption of *The Little Mermaid* chronicles a snapshot in the life of Ariel as she “seeks out true love and tries to find her place in the world” (Sneezy 13).

3. Lastly, if you paraphrase make sure you paraphrase completely. Doing so will avoid accidentally taking words directly from the source and forgetting to cite them. However, even if you paraphrase you must still cite your source at the end of the sentence and/or paragraph. Example:

**Original Text:**
In 1997 Disney began airing the cartoon “Recess.” The show focused on T.J. Detweiler, Ashley Spinelli, Gretchen Grundler, Mikey Blumberg, Vince LaSalle, and Gus Griswald. All six children are in their fourth year of grade school and remain so throughout the four year run of the program. Throughout the episodes, the children portray to their audience the significance of being an upstanding person. In their escapades they also show that sometimes going against the grain is the best thing to do and that few things are more cherished than a good friend.

**Text in Essay** (MLA format):
Disney’s cartoon series “Recess” follows T.J. Detweiler, Gretchen Grundler, Ashley Spinelli, Mikey Blumberg, Gus Griswald, and Vince LaSalle during their year of 4th grade. Each week in the show, these six friends manage to create mischief and mayhem while simultaneously teaching viewers about the importance of friendship, the value of good character, and that some social norms are made to be broken (Bashful 126).

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So when it comes to plagiarism, if you are on the lookout for it, always remember to cite (even when you’re paraphrasing) and you’ll be just fine. Happy citing!