



Photo Credit: Jane M. Sawyer

## Three Common Types of “Accidental” Plagiarism

“A substantial amount of plagiarism is committed unintentionally, simply because the writer did not know the rules or forms of citation. Yet the penalty for such behavior is often severe because plagiarism is considered one of the most serious forms of academic dishonesty.”

--Dr. Robert A. Harris  
*Using Sources Effectively*

### Word-for-Word Plagiarism

You commit word-for-word plagiarism if you take the exact words from a book, article, Internet site, or some other source without putting quote marks around the words you copied. Even if you take only a unique short phrase of as few as two words from another author, you could be guilty of word-for-word plagiarism.

### Plagiarism by Paraphrase

You commit plagiarism by paraphrase when you put another author’s writing into your own words without giving him/her proper credit. An easy way to avoid plagiarism by paraphrase is to write, “According to so and so...” as you begin your paraphrase and then include the proper citation.

### Mosaic Plagiarism

You commit mosaic plagiarism when you take a series of short passages or phrases from the works of another author or authors and string them together without citing the other author(s) and putting quote marks around the words that are exactly the same.

### Avoiding Plagiarism

It is possible to accidentally commit plagiarism if you do not take careful notes while you are doing your research. However, “it was a mistake” is not an acceptable defense if your instructor can demonstrate that you are guilty of plagiarism. And you could fail some courses even if the plagiarism is “accidental.” As researchers, we are responsible for the quality of our own work. We must take careful notes and cite our work properly.

## References and Resources

Harris, Robert A. Using Sources Effectively: Strengthening Your Writing and Avoiding Plagiarism. Los Angeles, Pyczak Publishing, 2002.

Harwood, John T. "On Plagiarism." *Home Page* 13 Apr. 1999. Pennsylvania State University Department of English. 22 July 2013.



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