

## Plagiarism, patchwriting, and paraphrasing

### *What is plagiarism?*

Plagiarism occurs when someone uses another person's work or ideas without giving proper credit or misrepresents the work as their own, whether it's the whole work or just part of it. However, a lot of people don't know this, but you can also plagiarize yourself! You can self-plagiarize if you reuse part or all of a previous assignment for a different class without being given express permission from both of the instructors and without citing yourself.

Plagiarism isn't just when someone intentionally copies and pastes another person's work to pass off as their own—plagiarism can often be unintentional due to inexperience with academic writing and misunderstandings of how to put other's words into your own writing.

In addition to citing all your sources in-text and in the reference list, an important part of avoiding plagiarism is learning how to responsibly integrate the words of others into your own writing, whether through quoting (using the exact same words as the source and putting the words in "quotation marks"), paraphrasing (putting a source's idea completely into your own words while preserving the original meaning and not using quotation marks), or summarizing (using your own words to condense larger ideas/texts into its main points and not using quotation marks).

Good news is that there is a [free self-guided course for you to learn how to create responsible academic writing](#) while avoiding plagiarism (takes about 1 hour and can be done at your own pace).

### *What is patchwriting?*

Patchwriting is a common, and often accidental, form of plagiarism. It often results from inexperience with integrating sources or lack of confidence in one's own writing skills. That being said, it is just as serious as any other type of plagiarism.

Patchwriting happens when a writer attempts to paraphrase a source by changing few things, but the result is still too similar to the original and "patches" of the original writing remains the same. One could reword every part of another person's work, but if the ideas and sentences are still in the same order, it is still patchwriting. Even if the writer carefully cites the original, the patchwriting still constitutes plagiarism as it hasn't been presented to the reader in an accurate way. See, we use "quotation marks" and a citation to tell our readers that the words we are using are the *exact* same as the original author's words. When we don't use quotation marks but provide a citation, we are telling our readers that we are using the original author's ideas but not their exact words, which is called paraphrasing (meaning we've put the *idea* into completely our own words). If we haven't actually used all our own words (meaning we have patchwritten), we are misleading the reader into thinking the words are our own by not putting them in quotation marks.

Paraphrasing properly requires that we not only change words, but we also substantially change the sentence structure and the order of ideas. We can also change the word forms, such as changing a noun to an adjective (ex. *Innovation* to *Innovative*) or a verb to a noun (ex. *To rebel* to *Rebellion*).



Paraphrasing vs. Patchwriting examples

Check out the table below for examples of the differences in integrating words and ideas.

<p><b>Original text:</b> When did the baby boom happen? A likely explanation is that during those 20 years, Canadians knew they could afford large families. The postwar economy was robust, the future seemed full of promise, and young couples wanted to share that bright future with a big family. A second reason was the high immigration levels that prevailed during the 1950s.</p> <p><b>Source:</b> Foot, D. K., &amp; Stoffman, D. (1996). <i>Boom, bust &amp; echo: How to profit from the coming demographic shift</i>. Macfarlane Walter &amp; Ross.</p>
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Quotation marks, exact words, author's idea, and a citation	Foot and Stoffman (1996) state that "A likely explanation is that during those 20 years, Canadians knew they could afford large families" (p. 20). The authors also propose that "A second reason was the high immigration levels that prevailed during the 1950s" (p. 20).	Proper quoting—no plagiarism!
No quotation marks, your own words, author's idea, and a citation	Foot and Stoffman (1996) theorize that there were two main reasons behind the baby boom, namely immigration that remained consistently high and a thriving economy that made young Canadians feel optimistic and gave them the confidence that they would have the means to support a large family if they wanted one.	Proper paraphrasing—no plagiarism!
No quotation marks, some of author's words, author's idea, and a citation	Foot and Stoffman (1996) theorize that <b>a likely reason</b> for the baby boom is that <b>Canadians knew they were able to afford large families</b> . Because the <b>economy was healthy</b> , <i>young people saw a lot of promise in their future</i> , which they <b>desired to share with a large family</b> . Another <b>reason was the high</b> number of immigrants.	Improper paraphrasing—patchwriting/plagiarism! (Bold = exact words; italics = similar words)
No quotation marks, author's words, author's ideas, and no citation	The reason for the baby boom was that <b>the postwar economy was robust, the future seemed full of promise, and young couples wanted to share that bright future with a big family</b> . This meant that <b>Canadians knew they could afford large families</b> .	Unacknowledged use—this is plagiarism! (Bold = exact words)
No quotation marks, your own words, your own ideas, and no citation	After years of hardship and conflict, the latter half of the 1940s marked a significant turning point in Canadian history. Not only did it signal the end of the Second World War, but it also brought about a surprising phenomenon: the Canadian baby boom.	Original work—no plagiarism!

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