Check yourself.
WRITING/RESEARCH EDITION

Working on a written assignment? Use these check points to help yourself avoid some common plagiarism pitfalls in academic writing. Review this checklist throughout the writing process. Assignment expectations can vary, so always clarify questions about requirements with your instructor before submitting work.

❑ **Did you use credible, scholarly sources?**

*Avoid non-academic sources, such as blogs, "essay help" sites, and "notes" sites providing summaries of texts. Using Summon at **library.ok.ubc.ca** and getting research help from the Library are simple and **FREE** ways to ensure you're accessing credible sources. Don't get tricked by sites asking you to pay for "study notes" or "essay help." Ask at the Library service desk if you can't locate a source you are looking for.*

❑ **When reading, did you make notes?**

Take careful notes, track all source details (i.e. author, title, page #, URL), and record which info came from which source, which words are direct quotes, and which words are your own.

❑ **Did you provide in-text and bibliographic citations for every source?**

Each time you use someone else's words or ideas, provide an in-text citation. Each source must also have an entry at the end of the paper. Course readings, textbooks, and websites (any kind of information you borrow words or ideas from) should be cited. Even emails, lectures, YouTube videos, and instruction manuals can be cited. Ask your instructor or librarian if you aren't sure!

❑ **Are your words clearly differentiated from others' words?**

*For each and every sentence, can readers easily tell who is saying what? (i.e. using "quotation" marks or reporting verbs, such as 'Eaton (2021) **argues**...')*

❑ **Did you read your syllabus/assignment instructions closely? Did you follow an appropriate citation style?**

Did you clarify any confusions with your instructor? Speak with your instructor if you're unsure about expectation or about what citation style they require/ suggest. Acceptable citation styles are often listed on the assignment sheet or your syllabus.

❑ **Does your paraphrasing/summarizing use different language & sentence structure than the original source?**

*If your paraphrase relies too much on the original (ex. word choice, word class, word order), this is called **patchwriting,** a form of **plagiarism.** Even if you provide a citation, patchwriting misleads readers into thinking the writing is your original interpretation of another source. Successful paraphrasing involves changing the words (**studies** to **research**), word class (**mountainous regions** to **in the mountains**), and word order (**The civilization collapsed** to **The collapse of society began**). Close the source, write from memory, then check for accuracy.*

❑ **Did you provide a citation every time you quote, paraphrase, *or* summarize?**

*Even if you use different words from the original source, you are borrowing ideas, which **must** be cited. Academic writing is a conversation between scholars (including yourself), so ensure your readers know who is speaking.*

❑ **Do you know what is and is not considered common knowledge?**

*Common knowledge, broadly, is information that: most people would consider reliable without looking it up; is widely agreed upon; and/or, is shared by those in a certain group or field. Common knowledge, generally, does not need citing (ex. The chemical formula for water is H_2O). **However,** if you had to look it up (ex. How much water is on the whole Earth?), then you should definitely cite it. If you're unsure whether something is common knowledge, remember: **when in doubt, cite!***

❑ **Did you know you can get 1-on-1 support with all this and more?**

Get free support for all things academic integrity from an Academic Integrity Matters (AIM) consultant. Send an email to aim.ok@ubc.ca to arrange your meeting or to ask questions.

Academic Integrity Matters (AIM)   aim.ok@ubc.ca