Plagiarism Resources

Preventing Plagiarism
Numerous resources are available at Federation University to support your academic development, including the area of academic integrity. Central to this is ensuring that your work acknowledges that of others through the appropriate use of referencing and citation.

This document summarises the educational services you can access to improve your skills in constructing and presenting academic work. It covers:
1. What is plagiarism?
2. How to avoid plagiarism
3. How Turnitin software can help
4. Resources and support
5. References

What is plagiarism?
If you use someone else’s ideas, information or words without acknowledging them, then you are plagiarising. Most students don’t aim to be dishonest in their academic writing, but even accidental plagiarism can trigger academic penalties for improper conduct. Apart from the penalties, the act of plagiarism is wrong on a number of levels. It is:
- dishonest, as it equates to theft
- unfair to other students
- disrespectful to your lecturer, teacher or tutor
- harmful to your reputation and that of the University.

Being aware of different forms of plagiarism that can occur may help you to avoid it. These include:
- **Verbatim copying**: copying material word-for-word, or cutting and pasting it, and presenting it as your own without citing the source.
- **Sham paraphrasing**: copying material word-for-word, or cutting and pasting it, and presenting it as a paraphrase rather than a direct quote.
- **Illicit paraphrasing**: using material that is closely paraphrased or summarised, without using direct quotes or citing the source.
- **Self-plagiarism or recycling**: submitting an old assignment, or parts of it, as new work without acknowledgement or permission from the Course Coordinator.
- **Ghost writing**: using work written by another person and presenting it as your own, including material produced for free or at a cost.
- **Bullying**: taking and using work written by another and, even if edited, presenting it as your own; and where material was obtained inappropriately such as through emotional, social or physical pressure. (Walker, 1998)

How to avoid plagiarism
Referring to work that has been undertaken in your field of study is a positive part of learning at university. It demonstrates that you have sourced expert research and material to inform your work. It also provides signposts for your reader, should they wish to follow up on your research. The key to avoiding plagiarism is developing good writing habits and applying them to each of your written assessment tasks. Try these four strategies:

1. **Acknowledge your sources**
   - Referencing, or citing, is the method of identifying the source of information within your written work. This includes where you have done any of the following:
     - Paraphrased or summarised an idea, argument or analysis
     - Quoted exact words
     - Copied or adapted a graph, image, diagram or table
     - Copied a procedure or method
     - Presented factual information, data or results

   Sources can take many forms, such as: books, journals, presentations, exhibitions, magazine and newspaper articles, programs aired on television and radio, computer-stored data, DVDs, and internet sites. Sources **do not** need to be cited for commonly-known facts or arguments.

   First, familiarise yourself with the referencing system used by your school/faculty. The three most commonly-used citation styles at FedUni are APA, MLA and Chicago concise note. It is preferable to know which style you are required to use before you start work, as their use and presentation varies.

   Next, record the identifying details of each and every resource you use in researching your topic so that you could locate it again, such as who wrote/created it, the title, and who made it available and when.

   Then, the act of referencing is simply to identify each source at the point you use it in your writing. You then include further identifying details at the end of your paper. This information appears in a particular way depending on the referencing style you use.

   For details of how to apply these referencing styles, refer to the FedUni publication, the *General Guide to Referencing*. See Resources and support following.

2. **Avoid copying**
   - Avoid copying large amounts of information and evidence by another author, even where you are correctly acknowledging the source. Your lecturer is interested to see how you interpret key concepts and theories and apply them to your course material, as demonstrated in your writing.

   There are three methods you can use to incorporate the
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ideas of authors into your own writing: direct quoting, paraphrasing or summarising. By expressing the material in your own words, you demonstrate your understanding of it. This also helps you to avoid accidentally plagiarising, as copied material is reduced or removed from your work. All three methods still require you to include a reference to the original source.

**Direct quotes**
Insert quotation marks around a sentence that you have copied exactly. Use a direct quote only when the author’s exact words will enhance your argument. Keep your use of quotations to a minimum in any assignment.

**Paraphrasing**
Paraphrasing the author’s text shows that you’ve understood what you have read. It can be used to change the order of ideas to suit your writing purpose, and is a useful way to help your reader understand complex concepts or terminology. A good paraphrase is more concise than the original.

**Summarising**
Summarising is a useful way to highlight the main points from a chapter, a whole study, or a collection of related research. Use it to outline someone else’s argument in your own words, without details or examples, and using fewer words than the original text. Also use it to give brief examples of differing points of view on a topic.

**Examples**
**Direct quote:** According to Parker (2014), Batman is “the best superhero, because he didn’t need to get bitten or thrown in acid to be great. He was just naturally awesome all on his own”.

**Paraphrase:** According to Parker (2014), Batman was superior to all other superheroes due to his natural ability and the fact that he was not gifted with superpowers.

**Summary:** According to Parker (2014), Batman lacked any superpowers.

For more detail about using these methods, refer to the FedUni publication, the *General Guide to Writing and Study Skills*. See Resources and support following.

3. Seek help
You are not expected to know the intricacies of academic writing conventions prior to commencing university study. However, your lecturers, teachers and tutors will expect you to build on your skills in this area. A range of support is available at FedUni to help you to do this, from downloadable help sheets to workshops and individual assistance. Many students seek out help with referencing, so you are not alone. See Resources and support following.

How Turnitin software can help
Turnitin is an Internet-based plagiarism-detection service that allows you to check your assignments to ensure you have cited all non-original material. The software compares submitted documents against passages of text in millions of books, journals, Internet pages and submitted student assignments to determine similarities. The originality report provides a similarity percentage and links any matching text with its source. Course Coordinators may use an originality report to determine where plagiarism may have occurred. You can check your work in Turnitin via Moodle prior to submitting your assignment. For more details, refer below.

Resources and support
In the first instance, ask your lecturer, teacher or tutor to clarify their requirements for referencing and citation.

**Individual support** is available from Student Academic Leaders (SALs) and Learning Skills Advisors to develop your effective writing skills. Drop in to the ASK Desk on your campus to find them, email ask.sal@federation.edu.au or go to: federation.edu.au/studentfutures

Library staff also offer referencing advice, and they run workshops about Refworks, software that can help with referencing. Visit the library and go to: http://libguides.federation.edu.au/c.php?g=134605&p=882069

**Online resources, FedUni websites:**
- federation.edu.au/writing-guides
  General Guide to Referencing
  General Guide to Writing and Study Skills
- studyskills.federation.edu.au/how-to-reference
- Turnitin Access: Log in to Moodle, select Turnitin in the Study Help menu, then click ‘Enrol me’.

Other websites:
- academichonesty.unimelb.edu.au/advice.html
- education.indiana.edu/~frick/plagiarism
- student.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism

References

