# **Avoiding Plagiarism & Using Sources| QC Writing Center**

**Plagiarism 101**

Plagiarism can be defined as the use of another’s wording/phrasing, ideas, or collection of facts without proper credit. Because any such violation of academic integrity is seen as extremely serious—even when unintentional—it’s important to properly use and acknowledge source material.

The following **must** be acknowledged by documentation:

* Direct quotations from other sources
* Ideas from other sources, whether paraphrased or summarized
* Facts that are not considered common knowledge

Whenever you are in doubt about a particular item, document it! You must not only document material taken from other sources, but also indicate each and every use you make of another author's wording.

**Why do we cite sources?**

Documentation serves an important purpose in preserving academic integrity by providing proper credit when/where credit is due. It indicates to your reader the extent and quality of your research; it also allows readers to verify or further pursue aspects of your research on their own.

**How do we cite sources?**

* **Direct Quotations**
  + Quotations should be used sparingly, only when you determine they’re better suited to the writing than paraphrasing or summarizing would be (such as because of the importance or striking quality of the quote, or because of the speaker's particular authority on your topic).
  + Direct quotations should not overwhelm your prose.
  + Direct quotes do not to omit any relevant words or punctuation; irrelevant portions can be replaced with ellipses.
  + Place brackets around any word or comment you add within the quotation.
* **Paraphrase or Summary**
  + Any paraphrasing or summarizing that you do make should be completely in your own words and sentence structure. Integrating paraphrases and summaries fully into your own style has the virtue of demonstrating your clear comprehension of the subject matter and can make for a more readable essay.

**See an Example**

The following example of poor versus proper paraphrasing is modified from *The Little, Brown Handbook* (Fowler 484-5):

Original  
In each case I have tried to show that all the action in a "Jamesian novel" may be taken as a result of philosophical differences of opinion among the principle characters, and that these differences in turn are explainable by reference to the characters' differing social backgrounds.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Poor/Plagiarized Paraphrase  
The action in a "Jamesian novel" comes from philosophical differences of opinion between characters. These differences can be explained by examining the characters' differing social backgrounds (Crews 8).

🡪 The paraphrase uses several expressions verbatim from the source, without change and without quotation marks. Thus, even though the writer acknowledges the use of the author's work (indicated by the parenthetical citation), it’s plagiarized because they do not also acknowledge the use of the author's words with quotation marks.

Improved Paraphrase  
In Henry James's novels, Crews writes that the characters live out philosophies born of their upbringing and their place in society (8).

🡪 In this revised paraphrase, the writer retains Crews' essential meaning, but does so with a condensed, original construction.

1. Crews, Frederick C. *The Tragedy of Manners: Moral Drama in the Later Novels of Henry James*. Hamden: Shoe String Press, 1971. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)