



USC

Trojan Integrity

A Guide for
Avoiding Plagiarism

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An Undergraduate's Guide for Avoiding Plagiarism

Introduction

The following information, with minor modifications, is excerpted from the *Student Guide to the Expository Writing Program*. **Students should assume these general principles apply to all courses at USC unless an individual instructor gives explicit alternate instructions for his or her assignment.**

By its very nature, writing involves both individual and collaborative activity. Even when a piece of writing has but one author, that author employs a language system that is shared with others and draws upon ideas and values that are not his or hers alone.

Indeed, one of the most important parts of becoming a writer within the academic community is learning how to balance the obligations of individuality and collaboration.

As a college writer, you are expected to use writing to develop and assert your own ideas and beliefs—to think for yourself. At the same time, however, you are expected to integrate the thinking of others and place your own criticisms and arguments within the context of academic discourse. This double obligation provides a framework in which to discuss plagiarism.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another individual.

Plagiarism undermines the intellectual collaboration — the exchange of ideas — that should mark academic discourse because it permits the writer to avoid any genuine involvement with the concepts or opinions of others.

Because the false discourse of plagiarism corrupts values to which the university community is fundamentally committed — the pursuit of knowledge, intellectual honesty — plagiarism is considered a grave violation of academic integrity and the sanctions against it are correspondingly severe. The sanctions recommended by the university range from a grade of “F” in the course to suspension from the university.

Most simply, plagiarism can be characterized as “academic theft.”

As defined in the University Student Conduct Code (published in each year’s edition of *SCampus*), plagiarism includes:

- “The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student’s own work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near verbatim form;”
- “The submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style;” and
- “Improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers.” (§11.11)

It is important to note that the Student Conduct Code applies the above standards to *any* written