Avoiding Plagiarism

What is Plagiarism?
Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else’s words or thoughts without giving proper credit to the author. Plagiarism usually means improper or inadequate citation when:

- Using facts or research presented in a paper without citing them.
- Using an author’s ideas about a certain topic without citing him or her.
- Intentionally copying from another source, such as, a textbook, another person’s essay, an Internet source.

When to Give Credit
Make sure that you are giving appropriate credit when you use:

- Another person’s idea, opinion or theory.
- Any facts, statistics, graphs or drawings.
- Another person’s actual spoken or written words.
- A paraphrase of another person’s spoken or written words.

How to Avoid Plagiarism
When something is common knowledge you don’t have to cite it. Anything that is commonly known by the audience reading your essay can be used without citation.

For example:

- Jean Chretien is the former prime minister of Canada. (common knowledge)
- Jean Chretien appointed Bertha Wilson first woman justice of the Supreme Court of Canada in 1982. (not common knowledge – requires citation)

Often plagiarism begins in the note-taking stage. When taking notes, students sometimes think that if they put information in their own words, it doesn’t need to be cited. This is not the case.

- Pay attention when copying down direct quotations. When a word is misspelled or a quote is worded incorrectly, it also qualifies as plagiarism.
- Always distinguish between paraphrases and direct quotes.
- Learn citation methods. Both MLA and APA styles have specific guidelines and formats for citing quoted or paraphrased material.
- Find out from your professor which style format he or she wants you to use (e.g. MLA, APA, Chicago Manual, etc.)
- Check spelling and grammar when copying quotes. The biggest insult to a writer is to be misquoted or quoted with a spelling error.
• Log or record quotations as you are reading so that you know where you got them from and can easily locate citation information.

Remember that you will never get in trouble for citing, but you may get in big trouble for not citing. It is always better to cite the quotes that you have, rather than trying to pass them off as your own words and ideas. It is not only your academic career that is at stake, but also your own personal integrity.

VISIT THE ncLIBRARIES CITATION HELP GUIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION:
https://nclibraries.niagaracollege.ca/citations