Copyright Defined

The moment an original work is fixed in a tangible medium, it is copyrighted. Therefore poems, Web pages, paintings, photographs, novels, songs, videos, computer software, or architectural drawings are copyrighted the moment the “author” has expressed herself or himself in an original work. Using this logic, it is true that the following expressions are also copyrighted: texts of advertisements, choreographed dances, maps, statues, and stuffed animals.

For a summary of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 (DMCA), visit the U.S. Copyright Office’s Web pages.

Text of the Copyright Law of the United States of America

Visit the Karrmann Library’s Copyright Web page for links to UW-Platteville and UW System copyright guidelines and more.

Note: Intellectual property and free speech are protected in a society where ideas and creativity are like a “currency”. Access to the ideas of others may be “free”, but once those ideas are fixed into a medium, they are protected by copyright. (Renaud)

Plagiarism Defined

Plagiarism is stealing or using the writing or ideas of others as though they are one’s own. The word comes from Latin, plagium which means “kidnapping”.

From WEST ENCY AM LAW V7, 2nd edition, copyright 2005 Thomson/Gale:

“Plagiarism is theft of another person’s writing or ideas. Generally, it occurs when someone steals expressions from another author’s composition and makes them appear to be his own work...plagiarism can be based on the appropriation of any form of writing, music, and visual images.

“It is not necessary to exactly duplicate another’s work in order to infringe a copyright: it is sufficient to take a substantial portion of the copyrighted material. Thus, for example, plagiarism can include copying language or ideas from another novelist, basing a new song in large part on another’s musical composition, or copying another artist’s drawing or photograph.”
In the interest of helping students avoid plagiarizing, here are some errors that students sometimes make:

1. Out and out copying
2. Paraphrasing without attribution (simply re-wording is not enough)
3. Failing to attribute a quotation
4. Misquoting
5. Mixing the author’s words with one’s own
6. Citing a paragraph with no indication of what came from whom or where
7. Failing to document interviews (Brownlee 27)
8. Downloading an official document from the Web, altering the language or data, then submitting it with a research paper as supporting material (Stebelman 3)
9. Unauthorized collaboration on an assignment that is supposed to be an individual effort

Reasons why students cheat that instructors might bear in mind:

1. Time pressures
2. Grade pressures
3. Leniency of professors (including allowing students to do independent work without supervision)
4. Prevailing attitude that anything found on the Internet or purchased from a paper mill is “fair game” and in the public domain
5. Lack of awareness of some types of plagiarism (Gourlay 20)
6. Lack of competence of students to do the work (Love 5)

“...believe that, given enough time, resources, and motivation, all students are capable of original work.” (Johnson 552)
**Dissuading Plagiarism**

**Instructors can:**

Talk with students about why academic integrity matters.

Define plagiarism and discuss with students that there are different levels of copying someone else’s work, but it’s still cheating.

Deal with issues around plagiarism early in the semester so that assessments and grading are easier at the end of the semester. (Renaud)

Discuss how instructors are responsible for the integrity of all the grades of all the students. (Renaud)

Explain that there is no difference between plagiarizing a printed essay and one that appears on the Web. (Stebelman 2)

Encourage students to trust their voices, to be original, to “own” their papers, and to recognize the difference between writing a report (listing facts) and writing a research paper. (Renaud)

Encourage students to realize they are a part of the exchange of intellectual ideas, and citing sources is an important part of this exchange. (Dunn)

Explain to students that instructors have experience with detecting plagiarism. (Ryan 22)

Discuss the existence of paper mills, and show familiarity with them. Download a typical paper from a paper mill and discuss its strength and weaknesses with the class. (Clayton 3)

Talk with students how to research properly, including how to evaluate printed and electronic resources and how to cite them.

Collaborate with librarians in teaching researching methods and in creating assignments. (Scribner 2)

Work with students during the process of writing papers. Review thesis statements for papers, require outlines and rough drafts to be handed in. (Clayton 3)

Work on research strategies together in classes.

Assign annotated bibliographies or lists of works to be cited.

Require recent sources in bibliographies. Many paper mill papers cite old sources.

Give assignments which are closely tied to the individual course goals. (Clayton 3) For example, assigning a paper on hybrid vehicles is too broad. Students need to learn how to narrow topics, and paper mills often offer papers on broad topics only. (Stebelman 3)

Help students avoid plagiarism or over use of secondary sources by making the writing process a multilayered one (turn in thesis statements and have a conference with students), requiring scans or printouts of the first page of each source, and requiring students to annotate their bibliographies—which are also graded. (Renaud)

Teach how to cite resources correctly.

Discuss the consequences of plagiarizing and what has happened to former students who were caught plagiarizing.
“Although plagiarism is...understood as a deliberate act of dishonest rule-breaking for personal gain...(this study reveals) a proportion of plagiarism is committed via confusion over how to integrate and reference source materials into academic writing…” (Gourlay 19)

**Factors which inhibit students from plagiarizing:**

Student’s desire to learn, to be fair to authors, to be honest and ethical in their work

Student’s perception of a need to know information once he or she is employed, and plagiarizing would cheat them out of learning

Student’s fear of being caught, including an understanding that instructors are knowledgeable about the literature in their fields

Student’s dislike of feeling guilty, including the concept that the time and energy it takes to make sure they aren’t caught is just not worth the effort

Student’s understanding that it is dangerous to skew data and thus misinform people. (Love 4)

“We need to provide students with tools that will help them see what they are doing is wrong before they give the final version of the research paper to the instructor.” (Janowski 1)

**Investigating and Identifying Plagiarism in Student Papers**

**When to suspect plagiarism:**

The level of sophistication of the writing in the paper is above expectations for the course level.

The context changes within a student’s paper. For example, a student quotes a statistic from Great Britain, and the sources in the bibliography are published in the United States. (Ryan 22)

Footnotes or parenthetical references are missing. Plagiarizing students, if confronted with missing footnotes or parenthetical references, may point to a bibliography and claim ignorance of the need for footnoting. When this happens, an instructor could schedule time to discuss the issues in the paper or in the sources in the bibliography. If the student doesn’t have a working knowledge of the subject matter, he or she probably didn’t write the paper. (Ryan 22)

References are proven to be false. Instructors can check to see if the sources listed in the student’s bibliography are real. (Ryan 22) One hint might be whether or not the library holds or subscribes to the titles. Another hint might be whether or not the book is out of print.
Tools to help identify plagiarized papers or phrases

Use Web search engines with exact phrase searching.

If plagiarism detection includes uploading student papers into a database, be sure to remove the student’s name. (Grugel)

Julie Ryan, in her article “Student Plagiarism in an Online World”, states, “The (Web) provides plagiarists with a rich library of material from which to gather information, but it also provides professors with a powerful tool to check sources and catch the word thieves.” (Ryan 22)

Consequences of Plagiarism Established at UW-Platteville

For regulations within the University of Wisconsin System visit The Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter UWS 14 for the established “Student Academic Disciplinary Procedures”.

Instructors need to be familiar with a student’s rights and due process. (Grugel)

It should be noted that cheating is cheating, and ignorance of the law is not an excuse. Students who have not cheated deserve fairness.


Term paper mills, or businesses that sell papers to customers, have been in existence for decades. Many term paper mills have printed and online searchable catalogs of the papers they offer for sale. (Anderson 371)

Because of the unethical nature of this process, that is, students purchasing papers from mills and submitting them as their own work, the author of this web page is choosing not to link to any of these term paper mill sites. Examples of the sites may be found by searching the Internet for “term paper mills”.

Internet Resources for Fighting Plagiarism

Web sites have been developed to help detect plagiarism. Additionally, tools and subscription services have been developed which cross-reference student papers with other papers to find structural similarities. (Mirsky 98)

- Copyright Clearance Center
- Copyright Management Center from Indiana University
- Copyright Website This site provides practical real-world copyright information.
- Dupli Checker This resource is a free online tool for plagiarism detection.
- Glatt Plagiarism Services Site to help deter plagiarism and encourage academic integrity.
- International Center for Academic Integrity “The ICAI works to identify, affirm, and promote the values of academic integrity among students, faculty, teachers, and administrators.”
- Plagiarism in Colleges in the USA By Massachusetts attorney and Electrical Engineering professor Ronald B. Standler, this resource concentrates on the serious legal issues of plagiarism, reviews court cases in the U.S. of plagiarism by students and professors, and offers statutes and court cases about companies that sell term papers.
Internet Resources for Fighting Plagiarism, continued

- **PlagSpotter**  Tool for online duplicate checking and monitoring.
- **United States Copyright Office**
- **WATCH (Writers, Artists, and Their Copyright Holders)**  From the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Reading Library, WATCH is a database containing the names of copyright holders or their contact persons.
- **World Intellectual Property Organization**

Citation Guides

For help citing resources according to MLA and APA styles, use the style manuals.

For additional help visit the UW-Platteville Karrmann Library’s [Citation Guides and Writer’s Resources](#) Web page.

List of Works Cited


List of Works Cited, continued


