What Constitutes Plagiarism?

This resource is largely based on information from the Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab) web site, as cited below. For more detailed information about plagiarism and avoiding plagiarism, click here.

Blatant and Unquestionable Instances of Plagiarism

- Purchasing, stealing, or borrowing material written/created by someone else and presenting it as your own.
- Copying a complete online or print resource (paper, article, web page, book chapter) and presenting it as your own.
- Copying, pasting, and combining information from online or print resources and presenting it as your own.
- Using text in your document from any source without quotation marks or proper citations.
- Hiring someone to write your paper for you.
- Using audio or visual media in any format created by someone else without the proper citations.

Possible Instances of Plagiarism

- Using words or passages from a source too closely when attempting to paraphrase without citing the original work.
- Building on someone else’s ideas without citing their work.

Avoid Plagiarism by always properly citing the following:

- Someone else’s words, ideas, or creative output presented in any printed, online, audio, or visual resource or format (e.g. magazines, books, the web, recordings, movies, etc.)
- Information obtained from interviews or conversations with others through any means (e.g. face-to-face, telephone, texting and other social media, written correspondence, etc.)
- Exact words or unique phrases used from any source.
- Paraphrased passages that are someone else’s ideas.
- Reprints or copies of diagrams, illustrations, charts, pictures, printed music, and other visual materials.
- Online media created by someone else (e.g. images, audio, video, etc.)

Citations are not necessary and you are NOT plagiarizing when you:

- write about your own thoughts and experiences, observations and insights, and your own conclusions about a subject.
- conduct and write up results of lab and field experiments.
- use your own artistic or media-based creations (e.g. artwork, photographs, videos, music, etc.)
• use ideas that are considered “common knowledge” (e.g. folklore, common sense observations, myths, urban legends, historical events, etc.)
• use ideas that are generally accepted as facts (e.g. plagiarism is an example of academic dishonesty; the sun rises and sets every day; Christmas is December 25th, etc.)