

How to Avoid Plagiarism in Research Papers (Part 1)

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Writing a [research paper](#) poses challenges in [gathering literature](#) and providing evidence for making your paper stronger. Drawing upon previously established ideas and values and adding pertinent information in your paper are necessary steps, but these need to be done with caution without falling into the trap of [plagiarism](#). In order to understand how to [avoid plagiarism](#), it is important to know the [different types of plagiarism](#) that exist.



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What is Plagiarism in Research?

Plagiarism is the unethical practice of using words or ideas (either planned or accidental) of another author/researcher or your own previous works without proper acknowledgment. Considered as a serious academic and intellectual offense, plagiarism can result in highly negative consequences such as paper retractions and loss of author credibility and reputation. It is currently a grave problem in [academic publishing](#) and a major reason for [paper retractions](#).

It is thus imperative for researchers to increase their understanding about plagiarism. In some cultures, academic traditions and nuances may not insist on authentication by citing the source of words or ideas. However, this form of validation is a prerequisite in the global academic code of conduct. Non-native English speakers [face a higher challenge](#) of communicating their technical content in English as well as complying with ethical rules. The digital age too affects plagiarism. Researchers have easy access to material and data on the internet which makes it easy to copy and paste information.

Related: Conducting literature survey and wish to learn more about scientific misconduct? [Check out this resourceful infographic today!](#)

How Can You Avoid Plagiarism in a Research Paper?

Guard yourself against plagiarism, however accidental it may be. Here are some guidelines to avoid plagiarism.

1. Paraphrase your content

- Do not copy–paste the text verbatim from the reference paper. Instead, restate the idea in your own words.
- Understand the idea(s) of the reference source well in order to [paraphrase correctly](#).
- Examples on good [paraphrasing](#) can be found here (https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase.html)

2. Use Quotations

Use quotes to indicate that the text has been taken from another paper. The quotes should be exactly the way they appear in the paper you take them from.

3. Cite your Sources – Identify what does and does not need to be cited

- The best way to avoid the misconduct of plagiarism is by self-checking your documents using [plagiarism checker](#) tools.

- Any words or ideas that are not your own but taken from another paper [need to be cited](#).
- Cite Your Own Material—If you are using content from your previous paper, you must cite yourself. Using material you have published before without citation is called [self-plagiarism](#).
- The scientific evidence you gathered after performing your tests should not be cited.
- Facts or common knowledge need not be cited. If unsure, include a reference.

4. Maintain records of the sources you refer to

- Maintain records of the sources you refer to. Use [citation software](#) like EndNote or Reference Manager to manage the citations used for the paper
- Use multiple references for the background information/literature survey. For example, rather than referencing a review, the individual papers should be referred to and cited.

5. Use plagiarism checkers

You can use various [plagiarism detection tools](#) such as [iThenticate](#) or [HelioBLAST](#) (formerly eTBLAST) to see how much of your paper is [plagiarised](#).

Tip: While it is perfectly fine to survey previously published work, it is not alright to paraphrase the same with extensive similarity. Most of the plagiarism occurs in the [literature review section of any document](#) (manuscript, thesis, etc.). Therefore, if you read the original work carefully, try to understand the context, take good notes, and then express it to your target audience in your own language (without forgetting to cite the original source), then you will never be accused with [plagiarism](#) (at least for the [literature review](#) section).

Caution: The above statement is valid only for the literature review section of your document. You should NEVER EVER use someone else's original results and pass them off as yours!

What strategies do you adopt to maintain content originality? What advice would you share with your peers? Please feel free to comment in the section below.

If you would like to know more about patchwriting, quoting, paraphrasing and more, read the [next article](#) in this series!

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