



# AVOID PLAGIARISM LIKE THE PLAGUE

**IN THIS GUIDE WE'LL TRY TO SHOW YOU:**

- WHAT PLAGIARISM IS
- HOW TO AVOID IT, AND
- HOW TO REFERENCE YOUR WORK PROPERLY



Definition

# PLA'GIARISM

n. THE ACT OF WRONGFULLY TAKING  
ANOTHER'S WORDS, IDEAS, OR THE LIKE,  
AND REPRESENTING THEM AS ONE'S OWN.

Wordsmyth.net (2006)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup><http://www.wordsmyth.net/live/home.php?script=search&matchent=plagiarism&matchtype=exact>,  
6th November 2006

## FOREWORD

by Boris Johnson MP, Shadow  
Minister for Higher Education



**What can you do, eh? Your child comes to you and says Da-aad, can you help with my homework, and you agree, don't you?**

Then you look at the homework, and you have a brilliant idea. This stuff about the design of a Roman villa, or the English civil war - it's all on the Internet, isn't it? So in a few clicks you have lifted the text from cyberspace, copied it, pasted it, and passed it on to your grateful progeny.

That is how we beleaguered parents cope with the huge volume of coursework our children must endure, and the result is that a mental barrier is being broken down in our educational system.

We are eroding the distinction in a child's mind between what is their own intellectual achievement and what is a rip-off. I am fairly sure that this is one of the reasons why there has been such an increase in plagiarism at all levels of education. Pupils are used to seeing stuff come off the web, and thinking of it as "theirs".

There are all sorts of answers, of course. There is software to beat the cheats. There is the good old exam hall, and the three hours of perfect tranquillity in which to pour out what is in your head, rather than what you have downloaded.

But surely the best disincentive to cheating is that it is so personally demoralising, and so counterproductive. You not only have a secret sense of shame, but you also feel a slight sense of uncertainty about any subject unless you have absorbed, internalised and expressed it in your own words.

So, by all means take advantage of all the available sources of information that are out there, but don't cheat yourself – use other people's work intelligently and sparingly, and make sure you give them the credit for it. **"Avoid Plagiarism Like The Plague"** is an easy to follow guide that will help you do this.

# WHAT PLAGIARISM IS...

Plagiarism is a form of cheating and, as with the law, ignorance is no defence. Any attempt to copy or pass off someone else's work or ideas as your own is taken very seriously by exam boards and can incur **severe penalties**.

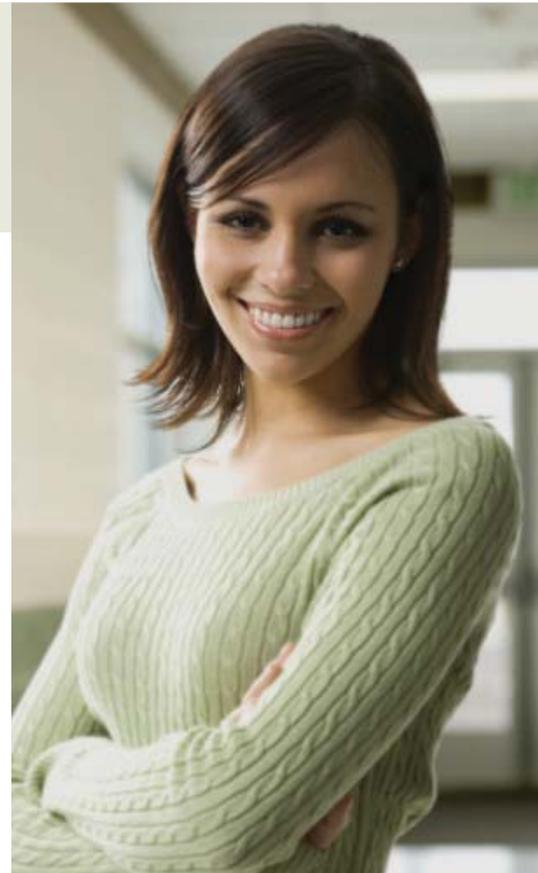
Depending on the offence, exam boards will at best award your work zero and at worst disqualify you from all their exams for a period of time.

Coursework often provides you with an opportunity to conduct independent research into a specific topic. This, of course, means that you will be encouraged to read books, journals or newspaper articles, and model student essays related to your topic.

You may also find information from the television, the radio or the internet. Whatever your source of information, you need to acknowledge it in your work – more on this later.

Clearly, any chance to increase your knowledge in a certain area is a good thing. Reviewing examples of other students' work is a great way of quickly getting your head around a topic, whilst simultaneously giving you ideas on how you might (or indeed might not!) approach your response.

However, you should also be aware of the possibility of copying unintentionally. At nine o'clock in the evening, having read various textbooks and articles on the internet, and with a deadline in the morning, it can be very easy to overlook the details of good essay practice and fail to acknowledge your sources correctly.





# HOW TO AVOID IT

Whenever you use a source for your research, make a note of its **title**, its **author**, the **date of publication** any **page reference** and, in the case of books, the **publishing company** (in the case of the internet you should **bookmark the websites** that you use). Keep a record of these notes and keep it up to date – it's difficult to refer to your source if you've taken the book back to the library!

When it then comes to acknowledging these in your work, it's a simple matter of crediting your sources. Writers don't mind you using their words in your work – in fact they're normally very flattered! – but they will become slightly annoyed if you don't mention the fact. They've more than likely spent a great deal of time and effort producing their work and it's only fair that this is recognised.

Another common error among students is the idea that changing the words used by the original author and passing them off as your own is OK. It isn't. Whether you use their original words, or paraphrase what they say in your own words, you still need to reference it just the same.

If information is 'common knowledge' you don't need to reference it at all. For instance the fact that Buckingham Palace is in London is common knowledge.

## TWO DISTINCT PROCESSES NEED TO BE MENTIONED HERE: HOW TO QUOTE IN AN ESSAY, AND HOW TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE AUTHORS YOU'VE READ...

One way of showing your teacher that you've spent some of your valuable time reading on their behalf is to quote some of it within your essay. Obviously, you need to keep it relevant: don't quote unnecessarily or at inappropriate length – it will seem like padding, which it is. If you can't illustrate your point by quoting a short paragraph at the most, then avoid it. Most of the time, a few well chosen words will be perfectly sufficient.

**The key things to remember here are that you should:**

- Use quotation marks around the extract you're using
- Indent your quote (come in from the margin at both sides), and
- Make a reference to where your extract came from giving the author's name and date of publication.

# HOW TO REFERENCE YOUR WORK PROPERLY...

**Here's an example, from J.G.Ballard's novel, 'Empire of the Sun':**

"Perhaps Mr Guerevitch was right, and he should have followed the trucks. His mother and father might already have arrived at the prison to which they were being taken."  
Ballard (1985)

You'll notice at this stage that you don't have to provide any further information, since you'll be giving full **referencing** details in your **bibliography** at the end of your essay.

A bibliography is a method of listing the texts that you've used in the service of your essay. You should always offer one at the end of your piece of work, usually on a separate page. It's also important that you mention, not only the authors you've quoted directly in your piece, but also those whose work you've read but not referred to in the essay itself. This way, you'll avoid any accusations of unintentional plagiarism!

**THERE ARE A NUMBER OF DETAILS YOU NEED TO INCLUDE IN A STANDARD BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

- FIRSTLY, THE AUTHOR'S NAME, SURNAME FIRST
- THE DATE OF PUBLICATION (IN BRACKETS)
- THE TITLE OF THE BOOK, OR OTHER SOURCE
- THE PUBLISHER (THE PUBLISHER AND DATE ARE USUALLY FOUND INSIDE THE TITLE PAGE)
- THE PAGE REFERENCE

**FOR A WEBSITE IT IS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT AND YOU SHOULD INCLUDE:**

- THE AUTHOR (IF THERE IS ONE)
- THE TITLE OF THE ARTICLE (IF THERE IS ONE)
- AND ALWAYS, THE ADDRESS OF THE WEB PAGE
- AND THE DATE YOU CONSULTED THE WEBSITE

# REFERENCING COURSEWORK.INFO DOCUMENTS

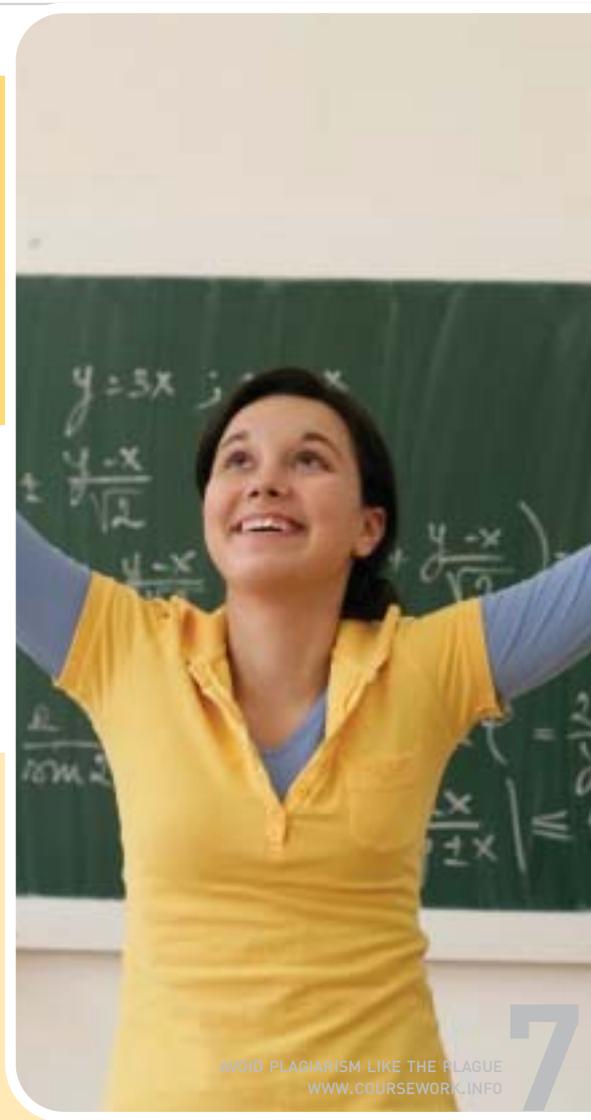
Any essay you have read from Coursework.Info, whose ideas or words you choose to use in your own work, should be listed in your bibliography.

If you choose to use a quote that is referenced by a Coursework.Info document, or from any other secondary source, then we strongly recommend that you read the original source and then reference only the original source.

If you are not able to read the original source for some reason, then you should only reference the Coursework.Info document in your bibliography, and make it clear in the body of your document that you are referring to information from a secondary source. e.g. As Ballard said "Perhaps Mr Guerevitch was right". Coursework.Info (2006)

## HERE ARE SOME BIBLIOGRAPHY EXAMPLES:

- A BOOK** Ballard, J.G. (1985), 'Empire of the Sun', Panther. p.63
- A JOURNAL** Hall, C. (1996), 'Future Shock', in Granta, February Edition. pp.23-24
- A WEBSITE** 'JGB on Empire of the Sun', <http://www.jgballard.com/index.php>, Accessed 3rd November 2006
- COURSEWORK.INFO** 'Empire of The Sun', [http://www.coursework.info/GCSE/English\\_Literature/Prose\\_Fiction/empire\\_Of\\_The\\_Sun\\_L33376.html](http://www.coursework.info/GCSE/English_Literature/Prose_Fiction/empire_Of_The_Sun_L33376.html) Accessed 6th November 2006





## FURTHER READING

This guide follows the principles of the popular Harvard referencing system. Some universities use other systems, so to be safe, if you're at uni, ask your faculty for their guidelines on referencing.

For a more advanced guide on referencing, mainly aimed at university students, then we recommend the **"Cite them Right: Essential Guide to Referencing and Plagiarism"** which is published by Northumbria Learning and can be purchased from Amazon.co.uk.

Many thanks to the Plagiarism Advisory Service for their help in editing this guide. They provide more info on plagiarism and referencing at [www.jiscpas.ac.uk](http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk)

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## AVOID PLAGIARISM IN 3 EASY STEPS:

1. MAKE A NOTE OF WHAT YOU READ
2. MAKE IT CLEAR WHEN YOU'RE QUOTING IN AN ESSAY
3. USE A BIBLIOGRAPHY AT THE END.