

6

Using Other People's Ideas



During your university study, you will have to write various kinds of texts. One challenging aspect of writing these texts is writing in a *form* that is acceptable to your readers, who are primarily your lecturers. Many of these texts require the use of information derived from other sources, which must always be acknowledged.

This chapter will advise you on appropriate ways of citing borrowed information in your texts, using commonly used documentation styles.

There are four important things to remember when you use other people's ideas in your writing:

- Practise academic integrity
- Use the appropriate documentation style
- Acknowledge sources of borrowed information properly
- Use software resources

6.1 Practise Academic Integrity

Professional and student writers are expected to practise academic integrity, which is the honest disclosure of borrowed information and its sources. This information may be *language* (e.g. words or phrases) and *content* (e.g. ideas or research findings) produced or owned by others.

As academic writers, you are responsible for properly acknowledging every source from which you have borrowed information. Any intentional or unintentional omission of a source in your written work will be considered to be misrepresenting others' original work or plagiarising somebody else's work. In other words, the most important thing to know is that **you must give sources to everything you use.**

Table 1 shows borrowing practices that demonstrate academic integrity and those considered plagiarism.

Table 1: Text borrowing practices

Practices that demonstrate academic integrity	Practices that demonstrate plagiarism
Citing sources of borrowed text, diagrams or equations inside the text (use of <i>in-text citation</i>) or below the text on a particular page (use of <i>footnotes</i>)	Doing cut-and-paste of text, diagrams or equations without attribution inside the text
Citing sources of borrowed text, diagrams or equations at the end of the text (use of <i>references</i>)	Taking text, diagrams or equations from sources without referencing those sources at the end of the text
Providing a sufficient paraphrase of borrowed information and acknowledging sources inside the text and at the end of the text (more on paraphrasing in Example 3 below)	Closely paraphrasing texts using the same elements (e.g. key words, sentence structure and/or sequence of ideas), even if the source has been acknowledged

6.2 Use the Appropriate Documentation Style

- A documentation style is a prescribed approach to presenting different kinds of information and their sources in a format acceptable to a particular discipline or professional organisation.
- There are different styles according to different disciplines. A few common styles are shown in Table 2. You should use the style appropriate for your discipline.
- Each style has a set of distinct features; some common features are presented in section 6.3 of this chapter. Before you embark on any significant writing task, such as a report or research paper, familiarise yourself with the appropriate style.
- You must be consistent in your use of a particular documentation style. You cannot create your own style or combine existing styles.

A comprehensive list of documentation styles used in various disciplines is available at the NUS Library Instruction Online (LION) Citation Styles site, <http://www.lib.nus.edu.sg/lion/slb/citeacs.html>.

You can also use the referencing tools from the *Word 2007 References* function, which can help you manage and prepare your citations using the APA, MLA, Chicago, Turabian and other styles.

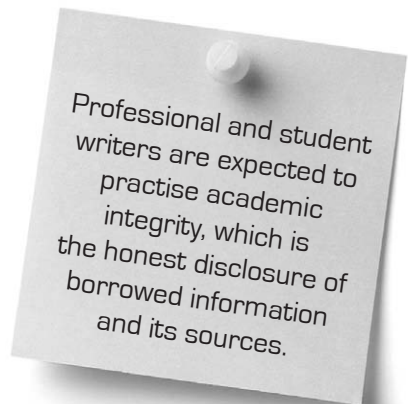


Table 2: Commonly preferred documentation styles

Discipline	Documentation style	Resource books and websites
Arts and Social Sciences	<i>APA Style</i> , 5th ed. (American Psychological Association)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>APA Publication Manual</i>, 5th ed. • http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html • <i>The Online Writing Lab</i> at Purdue; http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/
Chemistry	<p><i>ACS Style</i>, 3rd ed. (American Chemical Society)</p> <p><i>ACIE Style</i> (Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ACS Style Guide</i>, 3rd ed. • http://pubs.acs.org/page/books/styleguide/index.html • http://courses.chem.psu.edu/chem431/ManuscriptFiles/QuickRefGuide2.pdf (an online quick guide for students compiled by N.J. Butkovich, Pennsylvania State University) • <i>Angewandte Chemie International Edition 2009</i> • http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/26737/home/2002_guideline.html
Engineering	<i>IEEE Style</i> (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>IEEE Standards Style Manual 2009</i> • http://www.ecf.toronto.edu/~writing/handbook-docum1b.html (a student version is available at the website of the Engineering Communication Centre of the University of Toronto)
Law	Preferred styles depend on the context of the legal writing or the lecturer of your course; there are guides to uniform citation in Canada, Australia, Singapore, and the United States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Canadian Guide to Uniform Legal Citation</i>, 6th ed. • http://www.fedpubs.com/subject/law/legal_cit.htm

6.3 Acknowledge Sources of Borrowed Information Properly

A general guideline for citing borrowed information is clearly expressed as follows: "An author should identify the source of all information quoted or offered, except that which is common knowledge" (American Chemical Society, 2006).

Whatever style you employ to acknowledge that you are using other people's ideas, there are certain common features.

6.3.1 Acknowledge your sources inside the text and at the end of the text

Whichever documentation style you use, the sources of borrowed information must be presented inside the text (often referred to as *in-text citation*, although *footnotes* are sometimes used to accomplish this task) and at the end of the text (referred to as a list of *References*, *Bibliography* or *Works Cited* depending on the documentation style). A list

of sources enables your readers to easily locate the references you cite in your paper. Here is an example of an in-text citation using the IEEE style:

Example 1 In-text citation using the IEEE style

Sensor networks have recently received significant attention in the areas of networking, embedded systems, pervasive computing, and multiagent systems [1] due to its [sic] wide array of real-world applications (e.g. disaster relief, environment monitoring). In these applications, the distributed sensing task is achieved by the collaboration of a large number of static sensors, each of which has limited sensing, computational, and communication capabilities.

Source: Low, Leow & Ang, 2006, p. 315

In Example 1, the authors cite their first source of borrowed information by using a bracketed number, i.e. [1] immediately following that borrowed information. Example 2 below shows the full reference for [1].

Example 2 End-of-text citation, or References, entry using the IEEE style

References

[1] V. Lesser, J.C.L. Ortiz, and M. Tambe, *Distributed Sensor Networks: A Multiagent Perspective*. Norwell, MA: Kluwer, 2003.

In the IEEE style, a book reference takes this form. Do note the specific use of initials, lower/uppercase letters, italics, and punctuation.

A. A. Author, A. A. Author, and A. A. Author, *Title of book*. Place of publication: Publisher, Year.

The IEEE style lists references in the order of their appearance in the text.

6.3.2 Paraphrase or quote verbatim the information that you borrow

A paraphrase is commonly used in writing assignments in various disciplines, while a quotation is rarely used in papers in the hard sciences. If you quote verbatim, make sure that you do not overdo it. Use only the words or sentences which are relevant to your point or argument. That is, do not quote an entire paragraph if only one sentence is crucial to your paper. If you think you need an entire paragraph because its content is important in your paper, you might want to consider paraphrasing it.

Your paraphrase is considered acceptable if its language is sufficiently different from the original and its content accurate and properly acknowledged. The sufficient difference in language lies in a substantial difference in word choice, sentence structure and sequence of ideas. If your paper is still very close to the original, your work will be considered a plagiarised text.

Example 3 illustrates how to acknowledge sources properly and accurately through paraphrasing, using the ACIE or Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. style (which is similar to the American Chemical Society style). Notice that each in-text citation consists of a number

that corresponds to a specific reference. Each number is placed in *square brackets* and then typed as *superscript*.

Example 3 Paraphrase using ACIE style of in-text citation

Original text:

Since its first isolation from a human patient a decade ago, the avian flu virus H5N1 has caused pandemic life-threatening influenza outbreaks in multiple areas around the world.^[1] Efforts to find an orally active neuraminidase inhibitor were fruitful upon the discovery of Tamiflu...by Gilead Sciences.^[2] However, the daily dose of 150 mg per patient requires large quantities of the drug to meet the global need, especially that from the developing world.^[3]

Source: Trost & Zhang, 2008, p. 3759

Paraphrase:

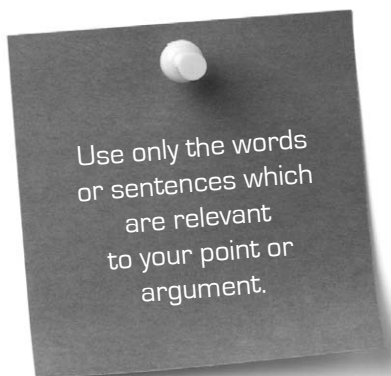
Tamiflu was discovered by Gilead Sciences^[1] and is an effective oral treatment for the recently emerged bird flu. It acts by blocking a key enzyme in the life-cycle of the avian influenza virus H5N1.^[2] Unfortunately, Tamiflu must be taken in relatively large doses ^[3] and a bird flu pandemic would require the rapid manufacture and distribution of vast amounts of this drug to prevent mass casualties.

The numbers in the text refer to sources given in *footnotes* at the bottom of the page. The paraphrase is a good one because:

- there is substantial difference in word choice, sentence structure and sequence of ideas.
- there is correct citation of sources using the ACIE style.

You might want to consult the following references should you need to know more about paraphrasing techniques:

- (a) University online sites: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/03/> and <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf> and
- (b) Writers' handbooks: *A writer's resource: A handbook for writing and research* by Maimon and Peritz (2003), *The basics: A rhetoric and handbook* by Buscemi, Nicolai, and Strugala (2005), and *Keys for writers* by Raimes (2005).



In Example 4 below, you will find the corresponding footnotes for the references cited in the original text in Example 3.

Example 4 Footnotes using the ACIE style

- [1] For information on avian flu and H5N1 virus, visit:
<http://www.nature.com.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/avianflu/index.html>.
- [2] Contributions from Gilead Sciences: a) C. U. Kim, W. Lew, M. A. Williams, H. Liu, L. Zhang, S. Swaminathan, N. Bischofberger, M. S. Chen, D. B. Mendel, C. Y. Tai, G. Laver, R. C. Stevens, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **1997**, *119*, 681-690; b) J. C. Rohloff, K. M. Kent, M. J. Postich, M. W. Becker, H. H. Chapman, D. E. Kelly, W. Lew, M. S. Louie, L. R. McGee, E. J. Prisbe, L. M. Schultze, R. H. Yu, L. Zhang, *J. Org. Chem.* **1998**, *63*, 4545-4550; c) N. W. Bischofberger, C. U. Kim, W. Lew, H. Liu, M. A. Williams, US Patent 5763483, **1998**.
- [3] a) For a recent review on the supply problem and syntheses of oseltamivir, see: V. Farina, J. D. Brown, *Angew. Chem.* **2006**, *118*, 7488-7492; *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.* **2006**, *45*, 7330-7334; b) for a recent microreview on synthetic strategies for oseltamivir, see: M. Shibasaki, M. Kanai, *Eur. J. Org. Chem.* **2008**, DOI: 10.1002/ejoc.200800033.

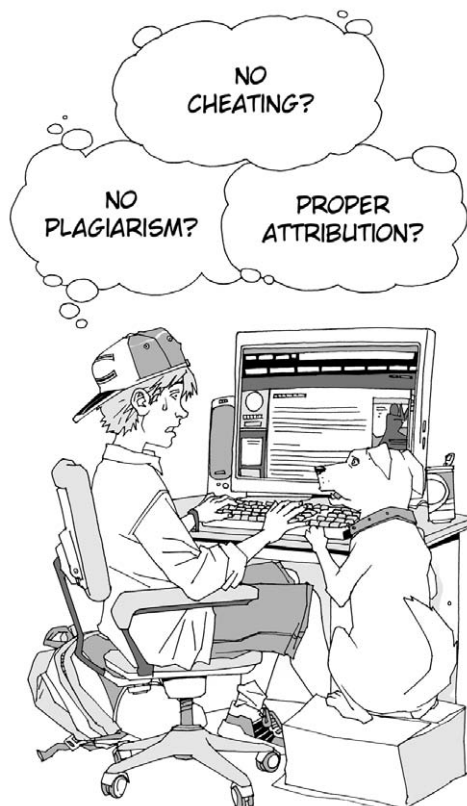
Note that this list includes the following entries:

- Reference [1] constitutes a content footnote directing readers to an online site for more information on a particular subject.
- Reference [2] contains multiple references for a particular piece of information; note that it contains three different sources, listed as a, b, and c references.
- Reference [3] provides a content footnote referring readers to more information on a specific relevant subject.

Notice how the elements of a journal source entry must be written using the ACIE style. See reference [2]a for instance:

C. U. Kim, W. Lew, M. A. Williams, H. Liu, L. Zhang, S. Swaminathan, N. Bischofberger, M. S. Chen, D. B. Mendel, C. Y. Tai, G. Laver, R. C. Stevens, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **1997**, *119*, 681-690.

A. A. Author, A. A. Author, A.A. Author. *Title of journal in acceptable abbreviated form.* **Year of publication**, *Volume*, Page Numbers.



6.3.3 Cite the sources of information you have summarised

In Example 5 below, you will find an excerpt from an article providing summary statements of two studies on the effects of training on peer response. This article uses the APA (5th ed.) style.

Example 5 Summaries of two studies using APA style

Generally, studies on peer response include some form of training such as modelling and/or peer response forms. Several studies have looked at the adequacy of such general training by studying the effects of more extensive and specific training. Two studies (Stanley, 1992; Berg, 1999) examined the effects of extensive training on peer response skills to prepare the students for the task of making effective responses. Stanley (1992) compared the interactions of L2 international ESL freshmen who received extensive training in peer responding and those of students who only participated in a 1-hour demonstration session. The results showed that the extensive training resulted in more productive conversations. Berg's (1999) study, involving a larger group of international ESL students, found that compared to untrained students, trained students made more meaningful revisions and their second drafts also showed greater improvement. However, it was also highlighted that while ESL teachers are probably supportive of providing training, they may have to contend with time constraints in relation to the institutional framework or resistance from ESL students who may find training sessions for peer response too time-consuming as compared to traditional ESL teaching activities.

N.B. With the author's permission, changes in the text have been made for purposes of illustrating the use of the APA style.

Source: Lee, 2009, p. 78

Example 5 shows summary statements of relevant information, namely, the purpose of the studies of Stanley (1992) and Berg (1999) and the subjects, methods and specific findings in these studies.

In Example 6 below, you will find the corresponding end-of-text citations for the references cited in Example 5. Note that in the APA style, references are listed alphabetically. You will find another example of the APA end-of-text referencing at the end of this chapter.

Example 6 End-of-text citation, or References, using APA style

References

Berg, E. C. (1999). The effects of trained peer response on ESL students' revision types and writing quality. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 8(3), 215-241.

...

Stanley, J. (1992). Coaching student writers to be effective peer evaluators. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 1(3), 217-233. doi: 10.1016/1060-3743(92)90004-9

Example 6 shows two formats for citing journal references. The first one, Berg (1999), is a print source article, and the second one, Stanley (1992), is an online source.

Note the distinct features of referencing print and online sources in the APA (5th ed.) style.

Article from a print version of a journal article:

Author, A. A. (Year of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, Volume(Number), page numbers.

Article from an online journal article with DOI assigned:

Author, A. A. (Year of publication). Title of article. *Title of Journal*, Volume(Number), page numbers. doi:0000000/000000000000

A DOI, or digital object identifier, is a publisher's way of providing a stable link for online sources. It consists of an alphanumeric code and is often located on the first page of an online document, such as a journal article.

6.3.4 Cite the source of visual information that you borrow

If you use a table or figure from a previously published work in a journal or from a textbook, you must include a statement about the source of information in both the text and the caption and cite the complete source in the list of references.

6.3.5 Present common knowledge in appropriate ways

While what is referred to as *common knowledge* may appear to be generally understood, you may be wondering how it should be presented in your paper. Here are some guidelines.

- Citing the sources of new words or phrases, such as *nanotechnology*, *big science*, *genomics*, and *click chemistry* is discretionary. For example, click chemistry need not be attributed to Professor K. Barry Sharpless because this term is now in common usage among chemists (Kolb, Finn, & Sharpless, 2001). Alternatively, you could just enclose it in quotation marks the first time it is mentioned to indicate the word itself and then use it without quotes thereafter. However, you would reference Professor Sharpless if, for example, you were writing a review or history of click chemistry.
- Equations are variably treated. While the equation $E = mc^2$ is common knowledge and attribution to Albert Einstein is optional, more recent or less well known equations require a citation.
- If you are in doubt about whether or not information is common knowledge, you need to cite your source.

6.4 Use Software Resources

NUS provides a web-based, text-matching program, *Turnitin*, to help you ascertain that you have properly acknowledged information you have borrowed from others. It helps you prevent plagiarism in your work. After you submit an assignment to *Turnitin*, a report is generated, highlighting text in your paper that is similar to text from other sources in its database and the web and reporting a “similarity score” for your submission. You and your lecturer can use this score to ascertain the presence or extent of plagiarised work, as well as check how closely your text matches any other text which is highlighted as a possible source and whether or not that source has been cited. You can find details on the submission process for *Turnitin* at the NUS Plagiarism Prevention website, <http://www.cit.nus.edu.sg/plagiarism/>.

Conclusion

A recent study on academic honesty, using third year laboratory reports at NUS, revealed extensive copying from seniors’ reports. Almost half of the material submitted in these reports appeared to have been copied. While the scale of this plagiarism was startling, this is not a new phenomenon. Students often have a number of writing assignments to submit at any one time and have sometimes solved this problem dishonestly. When asked about it many years later, however, they almost always regret compromising their degrees in this way.

Learning how to write original papers and practising academic integrity by properly citing borrowed information are invaluable skills that are rewarded with higher grades and a clear conscience. These will be required in whatever career you pursue. There are no short-cuts to appropriately acknowledging borrowed information in your written assignments, but thankfully it becomes easier the more you do it.

Grateful acknowledgement is given to the following publishers, journals, and authors for permission to reprint previously published materials.

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc. for an excerpt from “Autonomic mobile sensor network with self-coordinated task allocation and execution,” by K.H. Low, W.K. Leow, and M.H. Ang Jr., *IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics-Part C: Applications and Reviews*, 36: 315, 2006. Copyright © 2006 IEEE. Reprinted with permission.

Wiley-VCH Verlag GmbH & Co. KGaA, Weinheim for an excerpt from “A concise synthesis of (-)-Oseltamivir,” by B.M. Trost and T. Zhang, *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.* 47:3759, 2008. Copyright © 2008. Reprinted with permission.

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Further Reading

- Lipson, C. (2008). *Doing honest work in college: How to prepare citations, avoid plagiarism, and achieve real academic success*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
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