

# WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

Questions that MUST be asked:

Are any IDEAS in this paper or presentation not mine?  
Have I given credit to the individual(s) or source(s)  
from which I obtained these ideas or opinions?

Are any WORDS in this paper  
originally from another source?  
Have I credited that source through citation?

## DEFINITION

“The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and the presentation of them as one’s original work.”

-Random House College Dictionary 1014

**Plagiarism is a form of CHEATING.**

Crediting someone else for words or ideas you have borrowed from him or her is a simple matter; failure to grant such credit is a serious breach of the honor code.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

You are responsible for the information on this sheet.  
Every student in the Upper School receives one.

*“Oh, I didn’t realize...”* is no excuse for plagiarism.

*“I thought I could use the information if I just put it in my own words.”*

Such rationalizations have been offered in the past and are not acceptable.

## **When should you use outside critics?**

Always ask your teacher for his or her policy. On most assignments, your teacher will want to see how effectively you can analyze material on your own. At other times, your instructor may ask you to explore different and often conflicting critical opinions and then reach your own conclusions. As a rule, do not consult outside sources unless your instructor advises you to do so. If you use supplemental sources (like *Cliff's* or *Monarch Notes*) to augment your reading, you must tell your instructor in advance. Any ideas that enter into your written work as a consequence of reading such sources must be cited using the MLA format (see below). That said, teachers reserve the right to ban the use of supplemental sources at their discretion.

## **What temptations should you avoid?**

1. Reading a condensation (*Cliff's* or *Monarch Notes*, for example) *instead of* an assigned text.
2. Referring to secondary sources (critics or summaries) before you have formed your own ideas about a book.
3. Letting critics do your thinking for you when you find yourself with a paper due sooner than you think you can have it finished.
4. Failing to condense and use your own words when taking notes from an outside source. (See your teacher if you have any questions about the appropriate way to take notes so as to avoid inadvertently quoting your source—a form of plagiarism.)

## **How do you give credit when you wish to use someone else's words or ideas?**

Whether you agree or disagree with a source, if words or ideas from that source appear in your essay or report, you **MUST** cite the source. You must also cite any quotations you use from any text you are analyzing. In any critical paper, the **GOVERNING IDEA MUST BE YOUR OWN.**

You should use the form of internal documentation outlined on pages 104-107 and 184-188 (4th edition) or pages 114-117 and 204-208 (5th edition) of your *MLA Handbook*, unless your teacher has another particular method he or she prefers. Just ask.

When it comes time to do research, your English instructors will go over the particulars of MLA citation with you, but the rules for plagiarism apply regardless. When in doubt, err on the side of caution.