I. PLAGiarism – Some Definitions

The Oxford English Dictionary explains that to plagiarize is "to take and use as one's own thoughts, writings, or inventions of another." Its definition of plagiarism is "the wrongful appropriation or purloining, and publication as one's own, of the ideas, or the expression of the ideas (literary, artistic, musical, mechanical, etc.) of another."

The honor code of the Liberal Arts and Sciences of Tulane University defines plagiarism as the “Unacknowledged or falsely acknowledged presentation of another person's ideas, expressions, or original research as one's own work. Such use is defined as plagiarism regardless of the intent of the student.”

http://www.tulane.edu/~jruscher/dept/Honor.Code.html#Plag

In effect, all definitions of plagiarism suggest that using, borrowing, appropriating another's work (words or ideas) in any way without acknowledgement or proper citation constitutes an instance of plagiarism. It is the language equivalent of stealing from another whether it involves using another's exact words without giving credit or paraphrasing those ideas, opinions, graphs, statistics, facts, etc. (that are not common knowledge).

II. Different Citation Formats

There are a range of different specific styles for how to format borrowed material in a paper, often according to the academic discipline in which one is working. For example, people writing about literature often use MLA (or Modern Language Association) format. Psychologists, by contrast, tend to use APA (American Psychological Association) format. The sciences, both natural and applied, often have their own preferences for how researchers must note borrowed material and its original location. There are some non-discipline-specific citation styles that are widely used and recognized, for example the Chicago Manual of Style and Turabian style (after Kate Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations). Regardless of what style is required for a given discipline, the above rules that govern how to indicate where material is borrowed from and from whom it is borrowed applies no matter what the discipline.

III. How to Avoid Plagiarism

Avoiding plagiarism is basically simple. Documenting sources carefully enhances your research and clarifies that you have done your work before embarking on an original work of your own. Simply be certain to acknowledge any information or idea that is not your own. Some ideas below will help you avoid plagiarizing from your sources:

- When giving facts, figures, dates, or other information which are not general knowledge among educated people, refer to the source of the information either in the text itself or by means of a footnote (or endnote).
- When composing material that is to be submitted as your own work, clearly acknowledge any condensation or paraphrase of another’s ideas or arguments.
In addition, these guidelines also apply to graphs, statistics, visual texts, musical compositions, works of art, etc.—any material that is not totally your own.

IV. Basic Guidelines

A. Verbatim Quotation (word-for-word):
Place quotation marks around every word that appears in the source, no exceptions. If you quote someone or cite something precisely, you must acknowledge and document the original source. This should be done within the text of your paper with either a footnote, an endnote superscript, or with a parenthetical in-text citation. In addition, for each source you use, be sure to supply a separate citation with complete bibliographic information on a Works Cited or References page at the end of your document.

Whether you use footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical notation depends on what documentation style your professor requires you to use (for example, MLA, Chicago, APA, or Turabian). In addition, the formatting of bibliographic information (author’s name, title, publisher, date of publication, etc.) should also be formatted according to the course’s required documentation style.

Following MLA guidelines for in-text citations, place the author’s name and the page number from the original source inside the parentheses.

Example 1: Most professors agree that “Every student must properly document sources following the specific guidelines of a particular association” (Smith 213).

If you use the author's name in your text, you simply need to place the page number in the parentheses.

Example 2: According to James Smith, “Every student must properly document sources following the specific guidelines of a particular association” (213).

B. Paraphrasing:
Be careful of paraphrasing (putting ideas in your own words) and summarizing facts or ideas without crediting the original source. A good paraphrase will use none or nearly none of the words used by the original source and will conform to your own style and expression.

Example: Most professors who require research demand that students follow accurate guidelines designated for their discipline when documenting sources (Smith 213).

Be careful to note that paraphrasing is more complex than simply borrowing an author’s sentence structure and switching around a few words.
C. Common Knowledge:
Generally, if information is common knowledge (e.g. Bill Clinton was president of the United States or The moon revolves around the earth), you do not need to cite the source of that information. But if you are not certain as to whether or not something is common knowledge, or if you think your readers may not be familiar with certain facts, it is best to provide a citation for the information. It is always best to err on the side of caution.

V: INTERNET SOURCES AND PLAGIARISM
Because the internet and web-based sources are extremely popular among students, confusion arises in most classes about proper documentation of such information. In most instances, the same rules apply here as for printed sources. If you borrow any information from an internet source, you must cite it, including visuals, graphics, statistical reports, lab reports, even personal essays posted online. For sources with no pagination, many style manuals ask that you count the number of paragraphs contained in the document and refer to the information that you cite by paragraph number.

You must be careful of the information provided from such sources so that you are quoting legitimate information, but any borrowed information must be documented so that your readers are clear about the origin of such information and know precisely where to go to obtain additional information from a cited source. Copying graphs and texts may require permission from the site's owner. Once again, always err on the side of caution.

Works Cited