# Plagiarism: How to avoid it by Bainbridge College, USA [Video Transcript]

So, you have to write a paper and your instructor has lectured you about not plagiarising. Do you know how to do it? Welcome to ‘Plagiarism: how not to do it’.

Plagiarism is simply using other people’s writing or ideas without giving them credit for it, that is, taking the credit for yourself. If you copy the entire text from someone else, say from a website or a book and put it in your paper as your own writing, that clearly is cheating. You didn’t write the words someone else did, that is plagiarism of the worst kind and if you do this, you know you’re cheating.

But sometimes people plagiarise without intending to, when you take sections of other people’s work and include it in your paper you *must* let the reader know, which words and ideas are yours and which ones are someone else's. One way to do this is simply to quote your source, you put quotation marks around it or block-quote longer sections and say where the quote came from. But you also need to cite the source of the material you use in your writing even if you’re not quoting it word for word. For instance, let’s say you’re writing a paper about the invasion of Normandy during World War Two. Because you read that were somewhere between 130,000 and 156,000 troops in the invasion, you write that ‘there were about 150,000 Allied troops in the landing’. While you were not quoting the source where you got this information because you were writing it in your own words, you still need to tell the reader where this information came from. You did not stand there counting troops on D-Day (1..2..), you got the information from a source – so tell your reader.

Depending on the style required such as APA or MLA you cite your source in the paragraph where you used the information. The same thing applies to ideas, if you are using someone else’s idea like ‘The invasion of Normandy was one of the most important battles in American history’ you should let the reader know where you got that idea. If it is your own conclusion after reading about it and studying it, then you do not need to cite a source because the source is you – it is your idea. Sometimes papers are a combination of other sources and your own ideas, that’s ok, just be sure to cite your sources and you won’t be plagiarising.

The only time you do not need to cite other sources is when the information is *common knowledge*. Like ‘George Washington was the first US President’. You do not have to find a source for this since it is common knowledge.

For more detailed help on avoiding plagiarism, see the links below.