

## MLA: AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

The Modern Language Association (MLA) format for documenting sources in research papers follows three basic rules:

1. State the author's name in the sentence, and put the page number in parentheses at end.
2. **OR**, use the author's last name and page number in parentheses.
3. Give complete publication information on the works-cited list.

### COMMON KNOWLEDGE VS. OPINION

Common **knowledge** refers to information widely known and accepted by scholars—i.e., where Thomas Jefferson was born or the year he signed the Constitution. Even if you didn't know this information until you began researching, it *does not* require citing unless you copy the author's exact words. **Ideas, opinions, studies** and **statistics** always need citations.

### SUMMARY VS. PARAPHRASE VS. DIRECT QUOTE

**SUMMARY:** *You put the author's idea in YOUR own words, condensing heavily.* This method works for an overview of multiple paragraphs, entire chapters, or books. Summaries vary in length but are considerably condensed from original material. *Cite a summary, but don't use quotation marks.*

**PARAPHRASE:** *You put the author's idea in YOUR own words.* This method works for explaining large concepts. A paraphrase is approximately the same length as the original source. *Cite a paraphrase, but don't use quotation marks.*

**DIRECT QUOTE:** *You put the author's EXACT words in quotation marks.* This method works if changing a quote would destroy its impact. *Cite quotes, but DON'T OVERUSE THEM.*

### PLAGIARISM and "PLAGIAPHRASING"

Plagiarism (the *unacknowledged* borrowing of words or ideas) is a serious violation of academic honesty. So is "plagiaphrasing": not putting a quote in your own words and style. It takes practice to paraphrase well, but don't just plug different words into a direct quote. The "plagiaphrase" below does just that. Although the student cites author Diane Plattner, instructors would judge this so-called paraphrase unacceptably close to the original.

#### *Original passage:*

*"Today's world of technology and the Internet make research easier, but technology tools also can make plagiarism tempting for students. That is one reason Rockwood School District officials decided to implement EVE2, a new plagiarism detection software" (Plattner 4).*

#### *"Plagiaphrased" passage (only boldfaced words have been changed):*

*The modern world of technology and the **Web** make research **simpler**, but technology tools also **mean** plagiarism **becomes a temptation** for students. That is **why** Rockwood School District **administrators** decided to **install** EVE2, a new plagiarism detection software (Plattner 4).*