Rewards and Repercussions

“A well-written paper, properly documented, gets a good grade every time.” (Vivian Jones, Co-Chair, English Department)

From the North Harris Montgomery Community College District 2007-2008 Catalog on line:

"The District upholds the core values of learning: honesty, respect, fairness, and accountability. We promote the importance of personal and academic honesty. We embrace the belief that all learners – students, faculty, staff and administrators – will act with integrity and honesty and must produce their own work and give appropriate credit to the work of others. Fabrication of sources, cheating, or unauthorized collaboration is not permitted on any work submitted within the District.

“Consequences for academic dishonesty to be determined by the professor, or the professor and Academic Dean, or the professor and Chief Student Services Officer can include but are not limited to:

1. having additional class requirements imposed
2. receiving a grade of zero or “F” for an exam or assignment
3. receiving a grade of “F” for the course
4. being withdrawn from the course or program
5. being expelled from the college district” (52).

What to Document and What Not To

The simplest way to consider this is to remember there are only two instances in which you are not expected to document words or ideas: 1) When they are common knowledge (The Bible says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”); and 2) When they are your own ideas or expressions (unless you’ve used them in a previous paper). In all other cases, you must indicate what you borrowed and from whom and where.

The Five Ws (and one H) of Documentation

Who and What—Anyone or thing from whom you borrow ideas or words and the ideas or words you borrow.

Where, When, and How—In the text you must briefly indicate your source (usually in parentheses), leading your reader to your bibliography (sometimes called “Works Cited” or “References”) where you provide the full documentation. The manner in which this is done differs from one style manual to another (MLA, APA, etc.), so you must ascertain from your teacher which documentation style he/she will accept. If you are borrowing the ideas but using your own words, you must still follow this procedure, but you don’t have to use quotes; however, you must use quotes around any actual words or phrases that are not your own.
Why—Think of it this way—this is one of the few times in life that you’re allowed to borrow from a complete stranger without having to get permission or pay; the least you can do is return the credit to the author. And in addition, to cite another is one of the highest forms of academic praise; and your reader, having read what you’ve borrowed, may want to read from the source as well. On the other hand, it is a form of theft, or at least of misrepresentation, to suggest that words and ideas that you have found are actually your own.

References and Resources


