

Citing Sources

You need to cite your sources when you use quotes, paraphrase another's words/ideas, or use evidence (facts, figures, statistics) that are not common knowledge. But what is "common knowledge"? Think of it as something you would not know unless you had done research on the subject. However, common knowledge can also include certain dates, quotes, and specific facts -- provided you can make the claim that you feel most people would know them.

Which of these statements should be cited? Which would be considered common knowledge?

- 1) Harnessing technology for innovative approaches to teaching took off in the late 1980s, when desktop computers showed their potential as multimedia platforms.
- 2) MIT has made strides in improving the gender balance of its faculty. In one department -- the Department of Urban Studies and Planning -- the percentage of women faculty has almost doubled from 20% to close to 40%.
- 3) Since reforms were initiated in service delivery at Mt. Auburn Hospital, the number of patients that are seen by doctors in the walk-in clinic has increased dramatically.
- 4) Since the 9/11 commission made its report on the events leading up to the tragedy, United States intelligence agencies such as the CIA have received much criticism.
- 5) Hybrid vehicles are all around us. Most of the locomotives we see pulling trains are diesel-electric hybrids. Cities like Seattle have diesel-electric buses these can draw electric power from overhead wires or run on diesel when they are away from the wires.
- 6) The nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl left many people with a terrible fear of nuclear power plants. Whenever a nuclear power plant is proposed, some group is likely to protest.

SELF-ASSESSMENT: RULES OF CITATION

Directions: In each case, decide whether you must include a citation of the source for the information described.

1. In a book you find the phrase "cultural tapeworm." You decide to use it in your paper.

___ have to cite it ___ do not have to cite it

2. You conduct a personal interview with a doctor to get information about treatment for skin rashes. You make your own notes. In your paper, you use information from the interview.

___ have to cite it ___ do not have to cite it

3. You create and distribute a survey to shoppers at a mall, asking about the brands of clothing they prefer. You include a table of the results in your paper.

___ have to cite it ___ do not have to cite it

4. In your paper you write, "Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon." This is a fact you have read many times in the past and you now do not remember where.

___ have to cite it ___ do not have to cite it

5. In a paperback almanac published last year, you locate a graph showing the historical rise of energy consumption in the US. You include this graph in your paper.

___ have to cite it ___ do not have to cite it

6. In your paper, you paraphrase but do not quote a federal government document that is not copyrighted.

___ have to cite it ___ do not have to cite it

7. You decide to end your paper with a bit of ancient wisdom, so you quote the traditional old proverb, "Look before you leap."

___ have to cite it ___ do not have to cite it

8. You are writing a paper on childbirth. On a web page, you locate a photograph of a baby in its mother's arms and paste the photograph into your paper.

___ have to cite it ___ do not have to cite it

9. You locate a brilliant argument in favor of an idea you are advancing in a paper. You decide to use this argument but turn it completely into your own words.

___ have to cite it ___ do not have to cite it

Source: Harris, Robert. (2002) Using Sources Effectively. Pyrczak.

ACCEPTABLE USE OR PLAGIARISM?

Read the source text and then compare it with each of the potential uses that follow. The usage may involve a summary, a paraphrase, or a combination, and may include quotation. In each case ask, "Is the potential use acceptable or does it commit plagiarism?" (Note: This review uses APA citation style.)

Source text

To communicate effectively with other people, one must have a reasonably accurate idea of what they do and do not know that is pertinent to the communication. Treating people as though they have knowledge that they do not have can result in miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment. On the other hand, a fundamental rule of conversation, at least according to a Gricean view, is that one generally does not convey to others information that one can assume they already have (Grice, 1975). A speaker who overestimates what his or her listeners know may talk over their heads; one who underestimates their knowledge may, in the interest of being clear, be perceived as talking down to them. Both types of misjudgment work against effective and efficient communication (Nickerson, 1999, p. 737).

Potential use 1

To communicate effectively, we must have a reasonably accurate idea of what our listeners do and do not know that is pertinent to the communication. Treating people as if they know something they do not can result in miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment. On the other hand, a foundational rule of conversation, at least according to a Gricean view, is that we usually do not convey to others information that we can assume they already have (Grice, 1975). A speaker who overestimates what his or her listeners know may talk over their heads, while someone who underestimates their knowledge may be perceived as talking down to them. Both mistakes work against effective and efficient communication (Nickerson, 1999, p. 737).

Acceptable Use

Plagiarism

Potential use 2

For effective communication, it is necessary to have a fairly accurate idea of what our listeners know or do not know that is pertinent to the communication. If we assume that people know something they do not, then miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment may result. At the same time, a fundamental rule of conversation is that we should not convey information that we assume our listeners already have. If our assumption is wrong, we may talk over our listeners' heads, or possibly be perceived as talking down to them. Both errors work against effective and efficient communication (Nickerson, 1999, p. 737).

Acceptable Use

Plagiarism

Potential use 3

Nickerson (1999) argues that effective communication depends on a generally accurate knowledge of what the audience knows that "is pertinent to the communication." If a speaker assumes too much knowledge about the subject, the audience will either misunderstand or be bewildered. However, assuming too little knowledge among those in the audience may cause them to feel patronized. In either case, the communication will be less successful than it could have been (p. 737).

Acceptable Use

Plagiarism

Potential use 4

As Nickerson (1999) reminds us, "To communicate effectively with other people, one must have a reasonably accurate idea of what they do and do not know that is pertinent to the communication" (p. 737). If we treat people as if they have knowledge that they do not have, we can cause miscommunication and perhaps embarrassment. On the other hand, it is important not to convey to others information that we can assume they already have. A speaker who overestimates what his or her listeners know may talk over their heads, and one who underestimates their knowledge may be perceived as talking down to them. Both of these wrong estimations work against effective and efficient communication.

Acceptable Use

Plagiarism

Potential use 5

We are informed by Nickerson (1999), "To communicate effectively with other people, one must have a reasonably accurate idea of what they do and do not know that is pertinent to the communication." It is crucial to assume neither too much nor too little knowledge of the subject by the audience, or the communication may be inhibited by either confusion or offense (p. 737).

Acceptable Use

Plagiarism

Potential use 6

If we are to engage in effective communication, we must not talk down to our audience nor talk beyond their understanding. It is therefore very important that we have a generally accurate idea of what our audience knows about the subject.

Acceptable Use

Plagiarism

ANSWER KEY

Acceptable use or plagiarism?

Potential use 1. *Plagiarism.* This passage is virtually a word-for-word copy (with only a few words changed here and there), yet there are no quotation marks or other indication that it is a quotation: The citation by itself is inadequate indication of the source. Quoted words must always be marked as quoted. Changing a few words here and there does not change the fact that most of the words are quoted.

Potential use 2. *Plagiarism.* This passage is an inadequate paraphrase of Nickerson, since the passage has many words and phrases that echo the source. Also note that, as in Potential Use 1 above, the passage does not have an opening tag to indicate where 'use of the source begins. A citation at the end of a paragraph is not sufficient to indicate what is being credited to the source.

Potential use 3. *Acceptable use.* This passage is an acceptable summary of . Nickerson's words, and where it uses an exact phrase, it puts the phrase in quotation marks. Note the opening tag, "Nickerson (1999) argues," to indicate the beginning of the use of the source.

Potential use 4. *Plagiarism.* This passage begins with a properly quoted and cited passage; but then it continues with a lightly modified quotation of the subsequent words in Nickerson's passage. The implication to the reader is that the words and ideas following the cited quotation are the student's, when in fact they are still Nickerson's.

Potential use 5. *Acceptable use.* This is an appropriate combination of quotation and summary, with the summary in the student's own words and the citation in the proper place. Note that the beginning tag, "We are informed by," and the concluding citation enclose the borrowed material completely:

Potential use 6. *Plagiarism.* Even though the student here has not quoted the passage word for word, the ideas have been taken from the passage and not cited. The lack of citation of sources is plagiarism.