Breadcrumbs: avoiding plagiarism in academic work

Part 2, Quiz

Narrator: Here’s a quick quiz, to test your knowledge about plagiarism.

**Question 1:** Plagiarism is using someone else’s words or ideas, without providing a reference to help the reader retrace the steps you took in your research.

**TRUE/FALSE**

**Answer:** True, you need to provide references to help the reader retrace the steps you took in your research.

**Question 2:** Which of the following types of sources does not need to be referenced?

a) A website  
b) A scientific presentation  
c) Abraham Lincoln’s date of birth, found in an encyclopedia article  
d) An email  
e) The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) amount for 2012, found in an encyclopedia article.

**Answer:** C, Abraham Lincoln’s date of birth.

If you use specific phrases or ideas from any source, including web sites, presentations and emails, you need to provide a reference. Specific information like GDP, and economic numbers, also needs a reference so your reader can retrace your research steps. But a very famous person’s date of birth is common knowledge, found in many sources, and does not need a reference.

**Question 3:** Hansel has used several sources for his paper, and has put a list of those sources in a bibliography at the end of the paper. That’s all he needs to do.

**TRUE/FALSE**

**Answer:** False. Citation includes two steps – first, wherever in the paper you use the idea, you have to add a brief reference (name, page number) right there. Second, you then add a full reference in your final bibliography.

**Question 4 & 5:** Do I need to reference that Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863? **YES/NO.**

Do I need to create a reference if I use that Professor Smith writes that the Emancipation Proclamation was the cause of a radical shift in U.S. policy, one which signaled a sea change for the other colonial governments? **YES/NO**
Answer: No for 4, and yes for 5.
First, you don't need to create a reference for common knowledge. The date of the Emancipation Proclamation is not an idea, it is a fact that can be found in many sources.
For 5, yes, since this is an idea and not common knowledge, you must create a reference.
Part 4, Quiz

NARRATOR: One more quiz! Read carefully to determine which of the examples is plagiarism. In this quiz, you’ll need to pause the slide and proceed when you’re read to answer the quiz question. You’ll do the same for each question. Pause the slide now:

Question 1: Two students use this passage from an article about fish:
The net benefit of cannibalism is higher in the piscivitory state than in the stunted state, because in the piscivitory state cannibals “spare” victims until they have become bigger. We refer to this effect as the “Hansel and Gretel” effect because, to our best knowledge, that tale is the first account of the idea to postpone cannibalism until the victim has become more nutritious.

(From Claessen and De Roos’s article, “Bistability in a size-structured population model of cannibalistic fish – a continuation study.” From the journal Theoretical Population Biology, volume 64 (2003) pages 49-65.)

Student A writes:
Like the witch in Hansel and Gretel, cannibalistic fish should wait until their prey has grown. Claessen and De Roos’s research shows that the benefit the fish will derive from their cannibalism increases with this postponement. (Claessen and De Roos, 62-63)

Student B writes:
Cannibalistic fish benefit from postponing their meal; if they wait until their fellow fish are larger, the benefits of their cannibalism will increase.

Which of these is plagiarism?

Answer: Student B has used Claessen and De Roos’s research, without adding any references to their article. This is a straightforward case of plagiarism.

Question 2: A student uses this passage:
The story of Hänsel und Gretel is one of the most popular of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s Kinder- und Hausmärchen. Yet despite this popularity, very little is known about its earlier history. According to expert opinion, the ancestry of the tale is unclear.


The student writes:
Hänsel und Gretel was a fairy tale written by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and published in Kinder- und Hausmärchen.

Is this plagiarism?
Answer: No, this isn’t plagiarism. You can find the names of the Brothers Grimm and the original title of their collection of fairytales in many sources. This type of information is considered common knowledge – no reference required.

Question 3: A student uses this passage:
In the original story of Hansel and Gretel, the children are sent away into the dark woods because of scarce family resources. In the 1990s, families experience scare resources as well, and many families feel that they require two salaries to maintain an adequate standard of living. Time, too, has become a significant scarce resource of parents today...Like Hansel and Gretel at the beginning of the fairy tale, these children are left behind by their parents. They are not able to care for themselves and consider themselves to be helpless in their ability to control their fate.


The student writes:
Today’s parents feel the effect of scarce resources such as insufficient salaries and lack of time. They leave their children alone, like Hansel and Gretel in the woods. This causes feelings of abandonment and a lack of control.

Is this plagiarism?

Answer: True, this is plagiarism. The student has borrowed several ideas from the above passage. While they may have been paraphrased, she still needs to add a reference to Chambers’ original article.

Question 4: A student uses this passage:
The next day, recognizing the gingerbread house as a solution to their hunger, the children understandably eat; but the extent to which trauma has impaired ego functioning is also apparent. They indulge all impulses, pulling off pieces of the roof and window. When the witch inquires, they lie, blaming it on the wind...It is striking that two children raised on the edge of a forest would not have been more wary of such a creature, but their judgment is also faulty. Vulnerability is blossoming into addiction.

(from David Dan’s article, “Beyond the gingerbread house: addiction, recovery and esoteric thought.” Quadrant 24:2, 1991. 41-55.)

The student writes:
David Dan points out that Hansel and Gretel’s hunger leads them into addictive behavior. Trauma has impaired their ego functioning, and they indulge their impulses by pulling off pieces of the gingerbread house. Their behavior exhibits faulty judgment, one of the signs of addiction.

(Dan, 51)

Is this plagiarism?

Answer: True, it’s still plagiarism. Although the student has appropriately acknowledged David Dan’s
work in the first sentence and has added a reference at the end of the paragraph, she continues to use not only his ideas, but almost his exact words. The words need to be presented as a quotation, i.e. “trauma has impaired ego functioning...they indulge all impulses,” OR this passage needs to be completely re-worked until it is written in the student’s own words.

THE END.