

Teaching about Plagiarism: In Class and Take-home Ideas

How do we address the shifting sands of plagiarism?

What we think of plagiarism shifts across historical time periods, across cultures, across workplaces, even across academic disciplines.

...and once we have acknowledged that plagiarism is part of an ongoing, evolving academic conversation, we can invite students to add their own voices to that conversation. (Price page 90.)

The teaching ideas listed below have been borrowed from the following article:

Price, Margaret. (2002). Beyond 'Gotcha!': Situating plagiarism in policy and pedagogy. *The Journal of the Conference on College Composition and Communication*, 54(1), Pages 88-115.

(1) Class discussion.

(Price, pgs. 90, 106)

The most constructive way to approach teaching on plagiarism is to invite students into a dialogue about the subject, welcoming their perspectives on its complexities (Price 106).

- **Explain/discuss in class the context of plagiarism in the specific discipline(s) that the students will be working with.**

(2) Review the CCC policy, clarify, and assess.

(Price, 107)

Have prompts for students to write ideas or questions about the policy.

1. Students could write a statement that explains various concepts to their own satisfaction, then share it with the class. This exercise would encourage students to clarify the ideas found in the policy for themselves and would also help point out the areas of the definition that are hard for them to understand. (It would also be valuable practice in how to paraphrase.)
2. A policy/definition sheet could also have blank sections led off by prompts such as, "One thing I know is true about plagiarism is ..." and "One thing I'm not sure about in regard to plagiarism is...". When questions do come up (for students individually or for the class as a whole), students could be asked to research their questions and report their findings (with attribution of sources) to the class.

(3) Differing ways of referring to outside sources.

(Price, 108)

This exercise gives practice in the nuts and bolts of quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. Students will also gain some experience with the idea that their reading of a text will be slightly different from anyone else's – in short, that writing a research paper involves creation and interpretation as well as reportage.

1. Provide students with an article to read, then ask them to present its information in several ways: first to summarize it as a whole, then to paraphrase individual parts of it, then to choose a quote they might use from it. In this exercise, students could also be asked for various levels of summary: a one-sentence summary, then a three-sentence summary, then a paragraph-long summary with one or two appropriate quotes. This exercise can incorporate practice with citation forms as well.

2. An addition: Practicing in contextualizing quotations.
Contextualizing a quote means including information about (1) what a quote is saying (a paraphrase), (2) who is saying it, and (3) how it relates to the paper's main point or purpose. Asking students to include these three steps in their use of quotes helps reduce the tendency to present a research paper as a quilt of loosely connected quotations.
3. Another addition: Go around the classroom and share our paraphrases or summaries, then discuss the minor (or sometimes major) differences in the ways each of us understood the reading.

(4) Patchwriting to effective summary exercise.

(Howard as found in Price, 108 & 109)

This exercise could be carried out in class or as a combination of in class and take-home work. Provide some text for students to read.

Directions for the student exercise:

1. Skim text.
2. Read text again more slowly.
3. Go through the text again and take notes.
4. Let some time lapse, a half hour should be enough, and write your own summary without looking at the text.
5. After drafting your summary – go back to the text and check to see if any of your paraphrasing resembles that of the source – if so – quote it exactly. Provide page citations for both your paraphrases and quotations.
6. Check your version to see what you forgot; what you forgot is usually what you didn't understand. Now it is time to visit your instructor for additional help in understanding the material.

(5) Distinguishing paraphrases, quotes, and our own words.

(Price, 109)

Another area for possible focus is the differences among and possible intersections of, what we mean by paraphrasing, quoting, and our own words.

1. Distribute colored pencils to your students. Ask each of them to create a legend at the top of a peer's paper: one color for what they determine to be paraphrases, one for quotes, and one for the author's own words.
2. Students go through each other's papers, underlining sections, lines, and words in appropriately alternating colors.
3. They then retrieve their own papers and examine the alternation of colors for balance and flow.

Additions:

- Students could also try this with their own papers.
- This could be a lead-in to a conversation about the problem of distinguishing between "outside" words and the author's own words.

(6) Plagiarism and authorship

(Price, 109)

1. Ask students to write at least one collaborative exercise or paper. Topics could include text authorship, ownership, and word- and idea-sharing.
2. An addition: If time permits, discuss changes in what is meant by **author** across different contexts: historical, academic workplace vs. business workplace, a paper book vs. a hypertext book, in collaborative papers, on the Web, etc. These topics can also be carried through the quarter.