

Why is it Important to Follow the Rules of Referencing?

When writing an essay or dissertation, many would believe that their content and essay structure are the most important factors to be considered. However, within any essay, of equal importance is the need to correctly follow the rules of referencing. To fail to do so, can lead to the writer being charged with plagiarism, which in essence, is academic theft. This can be the theft from a published writer or a fellow student. This can lead to points being deducted before your essay is even read properly, you could face your essay being rejected, severe penalties may be imposed by your place of study, and at worst you could face criminal charges.

The main point to remember is: **If it is not your original work it must be referenced fully!**

The accusation of plagiarism can, and often, arises simply through the incorrect or insufficient referencing of another's material within your essay. Students often unknowingly or unintentionally commit acts of plagiarism. Examples of this happening are:

- A student choosing to paraphrase another's work by changing a few words and then failing to acknowledge that they are not their own words
- A student paraphrasing another's work without the correct use of quotation marks even if there is acknowledgement of the true source
- A student quoting another's work, but failing to acknowledge them in their referencing

Any essay of merit, will always contain reference to another individual's work or theories, this could occur in many formats including; direct quotes, indirect citations, website data, journal entries or online newspaper articles. Each and every occurrence should be referenced appropriately and sufficiently both within the text and at the end of the essay, within the References and /or Bibliography section.

It is important not only to remember to reference but to also reference in line with your particular essay guidelines. Your tutor, school, college or university will be able to provide you with the exact referencing rules that apply to you. It is wise to get to grips with these at the start of your course so that the process of referencing becomes second nature to you as you write your essays.

Top tips

1. Find out, learn and understand the referencing rules for your essay
2. Ensure that any comment, thought, theory or data that isn't directly from you, is referenced
3. If in doubt, reference.

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