

# Avoiding Plagiarism

From Cottrell, S. (2008, p. 128) *The Study Skills Handbook*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Plagiarism is using the work of others without correctly acknowledging your source of information or inspiration. This includes:

- ✗ Using words more or less exactly as they have been used in articles, lectures, films, books, or anywhere else without quotation marks and an appropriate reference.
- ✗ Using other people's ideas or theories without indicating whose ideas they are.
- ✗ Paraphrasing what you read or hear without stating where it comes from.



Even if you change words or sentences you have borrowed, or put them in a different order, the result is still plagiarism. Let's consider the following quotation taken from Stella Cottrell's *Study Skills Handbook* (2008):

**Studying towards deadlines and exams involves different amounts of stress for each student. Added life pressures, such as shortage of money, difficult relationships, bereavement, or changes in your work, family or housing situation, can all add to your stress level. Excess stress can severely affect physical and emotional health, concentration and memory.**

A plagiaristic use of this passage might be:

**Students experience extreme levels of stress at exam times. Further life pressures such as shortage of money, difficult relationships, bereavement, or changes in work, family or housing situations, can all add to stress levels. Factors such as these can severely affect exam performances.**

To make your input clear, it is important to signal your source accurately:

**Students experience extreme levels of stress at exam times. According to Stella Cottrell, life pressures – including shortages of money, difficult relationships, bereavement, and changes in work, family or housing situations – can all further heighten stress levels (Cottrell, 2008: 321). Factors such as these can severely affect exam performances.**

Using the referencing system required by your School, you should ensure that your reader is fully aware of the specific source of your research, and is clearly distinguish it from your own ideas.

Information that is common knowledge, easily verifiable (for example, the death of Elizabeth I, 1603), or well-known phenomena ('global warming'/'the credit crunch') do not require references or citations.