

**Virtual Academic Integrity Laboratory  
(VAIL)  
Student Guide:**

***Student Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism  
through Critical Thinking and  
Research Skills***

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## Introduction

This guide is intended to give a quick overview of skills you can adopt to foster academic integrity in your own scholarship. Pointers are given to other VAIL guides for a more thorough treatment of some of the suggestions offered.

Simply said the first and most important tips are to...

- **Respect the intellectual sweat of others.** This means giving credit for work that is not your own and ensuring you cite others' works both within, and at the end, of your paper or project.
- **Know your campus and departmental policies on academic integrity, academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism.** This can usually be found in your student handbook, your course syllabus or sometimes posted online in student services resources. Ask a campus representative for assistance. For more on academic integrity policies see the VAIL guide on Academic Policies: [http://www.umuc.edu/odell/cip/vail/students/academic\\_integrity/intro.html](http://www.umuc.edu/odell/cip/vail/students/academic_integrity/intro.html)

## Thinking About the Assignment

- **Discuss the requirements of the assignment, your topic, and your research progress with your instructor as needed.** Simple mistakes can be avoided by understanding the assignment. It is okay for beginning scholars to ask questions to clarify research terms and language. Research rarely happens in a vacuum, scholars ask many questions and consult with others about their research.
- **Make note of any special requirements including citation style and format requirements.** Some instructors require students use only journal articles, web pages, government studies, etc. Know the instructor's parameters for the assignment before you begin.
- **Begin the research early so you are not rushed in the end.** Build in time for planning and thinking about the project in the beginning and as you research your topic.

### **Questions to ask yourself in the planning phase:**

- **What am I looking for?**
- **Who is likely to publish information about it?**
- **Where can I find this information?**
- **Am I expected to take on a specific role as the author? ...like a scientific or social science researcher? Am I a reporter?**
- **Am I supposed to be a neutral observer? Support a specific position or opinion?**

## The Research Phase

- **Save yourself time and frustration by keeping a thorough record of your research. A *Research Journal* should include the following:**
  - where you looked (on the free web, in a research database, etc.)
  - your search terms (subject headings or keywords used)
  - what you found
  - where you found it (book, a free web site, a full-text database, etc.)
  - what you learned
  - diligently recording quotations and paraphrases
  - complete citations for every source
  
- **Devise a way to visually highlight the words of others in your notes to distinguish them from your words.**
  
- **Use different colored pens or indent every time you paraphrase or quote someone.**
  
- **Diligently put all the words of someone else in quotations (“”) and write a bibliographic citation for the original source.**
  
- **Do not wait until you are writing your final paper to assemble bibliographic citations. IMMEDIATELY follow any written notes with a complete bibliographic citation for the author and source or the original text while you are taking notes (not at the end of writing your paper) For more see the VAIL guide titled Citation! Citation! : <http://www.unuc.edu/odell/cip/vail/students/citation/intro.html>**

### Questions to ask yourself in the research phase:

- Who is the author?
- What is the author saying?
- Why is the author saying this?
- Do other authors disagree?

- Use note cards or a word processor and fill out a form like this for each resource you consult:

<p><b>Source read:</b></p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>What it said:</b> Check <input type="checkbox"/> Paraphrase or <input type="checkbox"/> Quote: <i>Insert paraphrase or direct quotation</i></p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p><b>My thoughts or reactions:</b></p> <hr/> <hr/>

## Blank Research Notes

**Source read:**

**What it said:** Check  Paraphrase or  Quote:

**My thoughts or reactions:**

**Source read:**

**What it said:** Check  Paraphrase or  Quote:

**My thoughts or reactions:**

**Source read:**

**What it said:** Check  Paraphrase or  Quote:

**My thoughts or reactions:**

## Your Drafts & Final Writing

- Give credit where credit is due!

Always give proper attribution to all works, words or thoughts that are not your own. This includes but is not limited to: graphs, charts, graphics, pictures from the web, websites, plays, articles, speeches, handouts, e-mails, listserv or bulletin board discussions, online notes, class lectures, movies, computer programs, textbooks, encyclopedia articles, music clips and sounds files.

- Recognize that when writing you must acknowledge the work of others in two places:

- within the paragraphs of your paper and
- at the end of the paper in a Bibliography or Works Cited List. [Page 10 for an Example](#)

- Use quotation marks when you use someone else's words exactly as they have said or wrote them.

See the VAIL Guide titled [Citation! Citation! Citation!](#), <http://www.umuc.edu/odell/cip/vail/students/citation/intro.html> and the VAIL Tutor: <http://www-apps.umuc.edu/forums/pageshow.php?pagepage=research&forumid=3> for more on using direct quotations in the text of your paper.

- Provide parenthetical references for all thoughts that are not your own but you have put into your own words.

See the VAIL Guide titled [Citation! Citation! Citation!](#), <http://www.umuc.edu/odell/cip/vail/students/citation/intro.html> and the VAIL Tutor: <http://www-apps.umuc.edu/forums/pageshow.php?pagepage=research&forumid=3> for more on paraphrasing.

- Secure [style manual](#) for the documentation style (ALA, MLA, etc.) you have been assigned to use for your Bibliography or Works Cited List.

- Identify the item in hand.

Is it a book, an article from a subscription database, a dissertation, personal letter, e-mail messages, etc...?

- Apply the rules for formatting in the appropriate [documentation style](#) for the resource used.

- Consult your instructor or librarian if you need assistance.

Libraries keep multiple copies of citation manuals and often write quick help guides such as this one to help you get started properly citing resources.



- **Write at least one draft!**  
Expect to make mistakes. The draft process can help reduce obvious unintentional mistakes. See if your school has a center for writing assistance or offer peer-tutors.
- **Check Yourself!**  
Double-check your final writing against the original text to guarantee that you have properly cited research.

- *Review your research journal and all notes.*
- *Compare your draft to your journal.*
- *Verify that you have correctly attributed all words and ideas.*
- *Have a writing counselor read your drafts or final paper and edit before submission for a grade.*
- *Plagiarism detection services such as TurnItIn.com or Edutie.com can be an effective self-evaluation tool.*

These services allow you to compare your writing against a large and growing database of student papers, scholarly writing, web sites and web resources for similar phrasing in language.

**Questions to ask yourself in the drafting phase:**

- **What do my notes say about this idea?**
- **Where did I find that information?**
- **Am I using a paraphrase or a quotation?**
- **What do I think about this idea?**

## Sample Bibliography and Works Cited List

### Example of In-text- Parenthetical Citation

Although most people are familiar with the image of the creature in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, as well as with the terrible image of the monster in the adaptation of James Whale's 1931 movie of the same title, few have seen the 1935 movie *The Raven*, which has been called a homage to Poe's poem of that title (Sauertieg, 1998).

### Example of Bibliography or Work Cited List

#### Work Cited List

- Cookson, C., Hargreaves, D., & Parker, G. (1999, March 21). Mad cow disease linked to humans. *Financial Times*, 1. Retrieved April 17, 2002, from Health Reference Center Academic database.
- Groark, M., Oblinger, D. & Choa, M. (2001). Term paper mills, anti-plagiarism tools, and academic integrity. *Educause Review*, 36(5), 40-43.
- Lathrop, A. & Foss, K. (2001). *Student cheating and plagiarism in the Internet era: A wake-up call*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Moen, P., Elder, G., & Luscher, K. (Eds.). (1995). *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Sauertieg, H. (1998). The Wayward Movie Page: The Strange And Terrible History of Frankenstein in Hollywood, 1931-1943. Retrieved October 28, 2001, from <http://hometown.aol.com/hsauertieg/movies/index.htm>

## Group Work

- **Discuss the group's expectations for work quality.**
- **Pass out handouts or review the citation style & methods necessary for the assignment. Don't simply assume that all of the group members understand when it is necessary or how to give attribution to other authors in their writing.**
- **Suggest that each member keep a research journal for his or her portion of the work. This can be a very important record for multiple-authored projects.**
- **Review the completed final draft for citation and attribution errors before submitting it for evaluation. This helps to maintain consistency in citation formatting and remove replication of ideas and content.**

## Reviewing Your Sources

- **Don't Panic!** If you've kept your research log, checked your work, and followed the tips in this guide, let your instructor know. This will likely help you and him/her to evaluate your work fairly.
- **Go back to your research log and any annotated bibliographies or research notes.**
- **Is the text in question in your notes?**
- **Did you mention the author?**
- **Is the text in question simply a re-phrasing of the original author's words? If so, properly site the item.**
- **Check your campus policies for potential sanctions. For more on policies see the VAIL guide titled Academic Policies:  
[http://www.umn.edu/odell/cip/vail/students/academic\\_integrity/intro.html](http://www.umn.edu/odell/cip/vail/students/academic_integrity/intro.html).**
- **Share your self-evaluation with your instructor, department chair or dean.**