

Academic Integrity Handbook

Including sections
on academic integrity policy,
plagiarism, fabrication, collaboration
and the UA Code of Conduct

*"A people without reliable news is,
sooner or later,
a people without the basis of freedom."
Harold J. Laski,
English political scientist, 1925*

**School of Journalism
The University of Arizona**

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Note to Students

It is vitally important that you reread the following information about academic integrity every semester. Habits of accuracy, completeness, fairness and integrity will serve you well as a student, a working journalist or even if you don't remain in journalism.

You should be aware, if you are not already, that the journalism school has a zero tolerance toward all types of academic cheating. Any student who is caught violating the rules will usually be failed – not just for the assignment, but the entire course. Ignorance of the rules is not an acceptable excuse.

Journalism: Writing Without Footnotes

Recent national headlines have amply demonstrated that the journalism profession has a significant problem with plagiarism and fabrication. So does higher education. Educators are dismayed at the number of students who plagiarize, especially from Internet sources. According to the UA Dean of Students' office, 75 percent of college students admit to some form of cheating.

The School of Journalism has a zero-tolerance policy regarding academic integrity violations. We have produced this handbook so that students will understand fully what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication and falsification and how to avoid them in their reporting.

Proper attribution in journalistic writing is different and often more difficult than in other types of writing. We frequently are writing on deadline and under difficult conditions, and we don't have footnotes or endnotes to rely on. That makes it all the more important that journalists understand how to protect themselves and the public from what are often inadvertent mistakes.

Why is plagiarism such an issue? It betrays the public trust in journalists' independent pursuit of the truth. It destroys credibility not only with the public, but also with the faculty, students, fellow reporters and editors – to say nothing of your own self-worth. Finally, it's an issue because the consequences are so serious. One example:

A veteran reporter for the St. Petersburg Times, when forced to resign over her plagiarism, posted this on the newsroom bulletin board:

Twelve years of dedicated journalism down the drain because of a stupid mistake. It will be easier for me to live with myself knowing that the truth is known. But I hope my mistake will serve as a lesson to others. I have let the Times down. I have let myself down. But most of all, I have let the profession down. And for that, I am truly sorry.

– Quoted from “The Unoriginal Sin,” by Roy Peter Clark, Washington Journalism Review, March 1983, reprinted by the Poynter Institute, July 28, 2000.

School of Journalism Academic Integrity Policy

The journalism school subscribes to the UA's Code of Academic Integrity, which was updated on Feb. 3, 2009. Prohibited conduct covers all forms of academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, fabrication and facilitating academic dishonesty by others. Complete details of the university policy and procedures can be found at the Dean of Students' website: <http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity>. A short video on the subject may be viewed at http://fosters.oscr.arizona.edu/deanofstudents/academic_integrity2.mov.

Journalism examples

The faculty is watchful for – and will penalize – the following code violations:

- Failing to quote accurately, word for word, what a news source writes or says
- Failing to credit a news source when using an exact quotation
- Copying sentences or paragraphs from a publication without putting them in quotes and using attribution
- Using the source's own words too closely when paraphrasing

- Making up quotes
- Making up other information
- Collaborating unfairly with other students
- Cheating on tests and quizzes
- Submitting the same story, report or research paper to fulfill assignments for two different classes, without prior permission from the second instructor.
- Using in an assignment all or part of a story — whether in text, visual, audio or graphic platforms — you have written for the Wildcat or any other news media without prior permission from the instructor. This includes work performed as an intern.

Penalties

If caught cheating – as some are every semester in this school – you will face a range of possible sanctions:

- A failing grade for the assignment
- A reduced or failing grade for the class
- A recommendation of suspension or expulsion from the university.

Appeal procedures

The UA Code of Academic Integrity includes procedures for appeals, to protect the rights of all parties involved. For details, see the Dean of Students' Web site.

Plagiarism

Language experts agree that plagiarism comes from a Latin word for “kidnapper.” Beyond that, opinions vary widely on how to define it. Part of the problem is that plagiarism has no precise legal definition. The journalism school, however, accepts the UA's definition: Representing the words or ideas of another as one's own.

To be specific, the Modern Language Association says plagiarism is:

- Failure to attribute quotations or another person's ideas
- Failure to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks
- Failure to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words.

Roy Peter Clark of the Poynter Institute identifies common opportunities for journalistic plagiarism. It can occur when reporters:

- Lift background information verbatim from their organization's library
- Include wire service copy in their stories without attribution
- Borrow information from other publications or the Internet
- Use copy from other reporters without permission.

It is worth noting that all plagiarism/fabrication/falsification is not intentional. Journalists (including student journalists) work under conditions that are generally far from ideal. But even when it isn't intentional, it still is wrong and can get you a failing grade or fired.

Preventing plagiarism

Take good notes

In the rush to meet class or newsroom deadlines, it is easy to lose track of who said what or which words are direct quotes. Make it easy on yourself: clearly and fully identify the source and the quote.

Put your notes away

To keep from inadvertently copying your source information too closely, write your first draft without using your notes. Then check and double check your accuracy before writing the next draft.

Treat the Internet like any other source

All information on the World Wide Web is not in the public domain, as students commonly assume. When using

When in doubt

If you are not sure whether attribution is necessary, it is.

Rewrite, rewrite

Regardless of the source – past stories from the library, the wires, other publications or news releases – get in the habit of putting everything in your own words.

Watch the clock

Leave yourself ample time to fact-check, proofread and polish your work.

Be honorable

Plagiarizing is being dishonest with the public. It is stealing intellectual property from someone. It is also stealing from yourself – your opportunity to learn, your reputation among your peers and your own self-respect.

Attribution

At its most basic, plagiarism is a failure to understand attribution, or the acknowledging of the source of information used in news stories or academic papers.

What needs attribution

Here are the primary types of information that need attribution, whether in the classroom or on the job:

- Another person's actual spoken or written words
- A paraphrase of another person's spoken or written words
- Another person's ideas, opinions or theories
- The source of any facts that you didn't personally witness
- The source of any statistics, graphs or drawings
- Accusatory, opinionated, unsubstantiated or controversial information, especially in crime or accident stories.

You don't need to attribute:

- Facts that are on record or are general knowledge: The Tucson City Council meets Monday nights.
- Information you observe directly: The protesters paraded through the Student Union.

Identifying sources

When you attribute information, sources need to be fully identified. Rules of identification include:

- Every person you interview must be fully identified in your story, generally by first name, middle initial, last name and the relevance of the source to the story: Gov. Harold P. Jenkins defended hiring his brother-in-law for the position by saying, "He was the best person for the job."
- All published sources have to be identified: The Arizona Daily Star reported.
- All Internet sources must be identified by telling the public about the individual or group that operates the site: A website sponsored by the Humane Society said.

See the journalism school's Reporter's Handbook for more details.

How to use quotations for attribution

Journalists continually need to combine direct quotations with paraphrasing. Quotes give the public accuracy and color. Summarizing is needed to help condense long meetings, detailed interviews or complex events, issues or ideas into a story of a few paragraphs.

The mechanics of using quotation marks and attribution (he said, etc.) are available in any grammar book or journalism text. For example, A Pocket Style Manual by Diana Hacker gives the following example of the right and wrong way to distinguish between your thoughts and those of the source, according to Modern Language

Original

We see conflicting pictures of the mountain lion through the eyes of hunters, rangers, scientists, wildlife managers and preservationists. Each viewpoint, like a piece of glass in a kaleidoscope, is a shard, a fragment until it is combined with the other pieces to create a total image.

– Karen McCall and Jim Dutcher, *Cougar: Ghost of the Rockies*, p. 137

Plagiarized version

McCall and Dutcher observe that we see conflicting pictures of the mountain lion through the eyes of hunters, rangers, scientists, wildlife managers and preservationists. Each viewpoint, like a piece of glass in a kaleidoscope, is a shard, a fragment until it is combined with the other pieces to create a total image (137).

Acceptable version

McCall and Dutcher observe that “hunters, rangers, scientists, wildlife managers, and preservationists” see the mountain lion quite differently: “Each viewpoint, like a piece of glass in a kaleidoscope, is a shard, a fragment until it is combined with the other pieces to create a total image” (137).

How to paraphrase

To paraphrase properly, you have to be careful to remain faithful to the source’s viewpoint, but use your own words to do so. How much use of the source’s words is too much? There is no legal standard, but notice in the plagiarized example below that the MLA considers even three words (see underlined below) to be unacceptable. Other authorities specify eight words. Use your best judgment, but certainly your limit should be less than one sentence.

In the case below, Hacker said that the paraphrase “is plagiarized – even though the source is cited – because too much of its language is borrowed from the source.” Using some of the same sentence structure and simply substituting alternative words – children for minors, brutally for severely, and assault for attack – is not enough, Hacker said.

Original

The park [Caspers Wilderness Park] was closed to minors in 1992 after the family of a girl severely mauled there in 1986 won a suit against the county. The award of \$2.1 million for the mountain lion attack on Laura Small, who was 5 at the time, was later reduced to \$1.5 million.”

– Reyes and Messina, “More Warning Signs,” p. B1

Plagiarized version

Reyes and Messina report that Caspers Wilderness Park was closed to children in 1992 after the family of a girl brutally mauled there in 1986 sued the county. The family was ultimately awarded \$1.5 million for the mountain lion assault on Laura Small, who was 5 at the time (B1).

Acceptable version

In 1992, officials banned minors from Caspers Wilderness Park. Reyes and Messina explain that park officials took this measure after a mountain lion attack on a child led to a lawsuit. The child, 5-year-old Laura Small, had been severely mauled by a lion in 1986, and her parents sued the county. Eventually they received an award of \$1.5 million (B1).

The Boston Globe reports that Judy Hunter, a teacher at Grinnell College in Iowa, tells her students: “In a bad paraphrase, you merely substitute words, borrowing the sentence structure of the organization directly from the source. In a good paraphrase you offer your reader a wholesale revision, a new way of seeing the text you are paraphrasing. You summarize, you reconstruct, you tell your reader about what the source has said, but you do so entirely in your own words, your own voice, your own sentence structure, your own organization.”

Fabrication

In its policy on academic integrity, Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism defines fabrication as

information in an assignment that was not gathered in accordance with the course syllabus or other course outline.”

The UA journalism school’s (and all newsrooms’) policy is simple: It is never acceptable to make up a source, quote or a fact.

Preventing fabrication

Proper planning often is all it takes to eliminate the need to fabricate a missing fact or quote.

Organize your thoughts

Understand what you were sent to cover. Anticipate the kind of information you will need before you begin. Clearly, you have to let the facts shape the story, but if you have some idea of what you need, you can make the best use of your limited time.

Think like an editor

When you’re interviewing, keep digging for hard facts, colorful details and illuminating quotes. Then evaluate not only what you have, but also what you don’t have – and go get it.

Get contact information

Always ask sources for phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses, so you can contact them if you have additional questions.

Student Code of Conduct

The UA Student Code of Conduct is designed to promote self-discipline and respect for the rights of others in the university community. Students who violate the standards of conduct outlined in the code are subject to disciplinary sanctions.

The code primarily, but not exclusively, covers non-academic issues. Following are some of the types of prohibited conduct:

- Cheating on assignments or tests
- Threatening behavior
- Use of false identification or documents
- False fire alarms
- Forgery or misuse of documents or records
- Unauthorized or improper use of university property
- Stalking or discrimination against individuals or groups.

The academic issues covered by the code include several inappropriate behaviors, such as:

- Unauthorized collaboration with other students
- Asking for access to another person’s work or giving someone access to your work
- Sharing information during an exam
- Falsifying a class attendance record
- Taking a test or preparing an assignment for someone else or asking a student to do the same for you.

The Student Code of Conduct also includes a list of sanctions that can be imposed. They range from administrative holds on student records to warnings, administrative drops from courses, probation, suspension or expulsion. Full details about the code can be found at the following website:

<http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/policiesandcodes/studentcodeofconduct>.

For more information

To learn more about plagiarism and fabrication, see the university library Web site (<http://www.library.arizona.edu>). The journalism faculty also can provide guidance.