Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another person and claiming them as your own. While the most blatant violation is the direct use of another individual’s work, the most common form is the unintentional misuse of one’s sources. In working with the writings of others, it is important to learn and adhere to the scholarly conventions of documentation.

An obvious form of plagiarism is copying any direct quotation from a source without using quotation marks and without properly crediting the source. A more but equally egregious form is paraphrasing material or using an original idea that is not properly introduced or documented. It’s important to remember than another person’s ideas, interpretations, and words are his/her property. They are protected by law, in fact, and must be acknowledged wherever you use them.

Consequently, your use of source material requires you to conform to these rules:

1. Acknowledge borrowed material within your text by introducing the quotation or paraphrased idea with the name of the authority from whom it was taken.

2. Do not “float” quotations without proper identification of the author of the original.

3. Enclose all directly-quoted materials within quotation marks or intent them if they are longer than four typed lines.

4. Ensure that any paraphrased material is rewritten in your own style and your own language. Simply rearranging words and changing sentence patterns is not acceptable—the material must be completely in your own words.

5. Provide specific, proper documentation for each borrowed item, depending on the regulations in the specific style guide you are using.

6. Provide an individual bibliographic entry for each specific source you refer to in your composition. This can be omitted if (and only if) the only texts you refer to are ones you are using in the class for which your paper is due. In this case, you still must make sure to clearly reference the text you are using.