

Degrees of Plagiarism

1st Degree Plagiarism

The worst type of plagiarism involves wholesale borrowing of words or ideas with an intent to deceive. In these cases, students not only steal words or phrases from others, but do so without any attributions (or with deceptive ones). This behavior betrays an organized effort to hide a crime. Classic examples of this type of problem include those students who buy term papers or those who cut and paste whole sections of material from other authors.

Penalty = F on the assignment and referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

2d Degree Plagiarism

A serious academic crime, this action involves periodic and sometimes even acknowledged but still inappropriate borrowing. In these cases, students are often guilty of misusing a handful of words or phrases or relying too heavily on another author's ideas and structure because they take too many shortcuts in the act of paraphrasing. Some examples of the second degree are provided below. Penalty = F on the assignment.

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Example 1

"At three o'clock Thursday, February 8, 1855, 'every inch of space' on the floor and in the galleries of the Hall of Representatives was occupied. Among the spectators in the gallery were Mrs. Lincoln and the wife and daughters of Governor Matteson."

--Albert J. Beveridge, Abraham Lincoln (1928)

At three o'clock on Thursday, February 8, 1855, every inch of space *was jammed* as House and Senate *convened in joint session*. Mrs. Lincoln looked on from the gallery, along with Mrs. Matteson and her daughters.¹

--Benjamin P. Thomas, Abraham Lincoln (1952)

Example 2

"Eleanor composed herself, returned to the living room, and said in her most disarming manner: 'It is kind of Mr. Aldrich to offer to be chairman....' At that she turned to Marshall Field; she knew it was a bothersome responsibility, she said, but could he accept the chairmanship? Somewhat startled, the Chicago philanthropist and stalwart New Dealer did." --Joseph Lash, Eleanor and Franklin (1971)

Eleanor *quickly* composed herself, *walked back* into the living room, and said in her most disarming manner, "It was kind of Mr. Aldrich to offer to be chairman...." At that, she turned *immediately* to Chicago philanthropist and New Deal *loyalist* Marshall Field; she knew it would be a *bother for him*, but could he accept? *Though caught somewhat off guard, Field gave his assent.*²

--Doris Kearns Goodwin, No Ordinary Time (1994)

Four Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism

1. When taking notes, develop a system for making quotes appear clearly
2. Never write directly from books or articles --always work from your notes
3. Compare your finished product to your most relied upon secondary sources
4. When in doubt, quote and footnote

¹ Thomas offered no footnotes in his popular biography of Lincoln but he did acknowledge a debt to Beveridge in a bibliographic essay at the end of the work.

² Goodwin provided a footnote to Lash's work at the end of her paragraph.