

### From student's essay

Unbelievably, we have to pay defense companies when they merge.

**Question:** "Since this is a summary, I don't need to cite it, right?"

**Answer:** Wrong. Since you learned of this from a source, it must be cited. Again, not doing this could substantially lower your grade.

**Solution:** Add a citation.

Unbelievably, we have to pay defense companies when they merge ("Corporate" 15).

### From student's essay

Unbelievably, "U.S. taxpayers must cover the merger costs for the consolidation of defense corporations" ("Corporate" 15).

**Question:** "This is right . . . right?"

**Answer:** Right. You've marked the specific words you've taken from your source with quotation marks and have cited it.



*You should now have a basic understanding of what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. For more information refer to the Student Handbook, specifically the "Cheating and Plagiarism Policy" and "Academic Honesty" sections under the heading "Academic Information and Regulations."*

For more information on citation (such as how to), check with your professor or check with the Writing Center, Russell 144.

The Academic Standards Committee  
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# Plagiarism

# Right Wrong Maybe





## Let's start with some definitions.

### Plagiarism:

**Taking words or ideas from a source without documenting them.**

**Words:** any words (even one or two) taken from a source and included in your own work need to be in quotation marks and documented. There may be exceptions to this (common knowledge), but when in doubt, use quotation marks and document or check with your instructor.

**Ideas:** when you get an idea from a source, be it from an article, lecture, person, etc., it must be documented – even if you put it in your own words (and if you use the same words, they must be in quotation marks).

**Source:** the person, book, or article from which you obtained information.

**Documenting:** following a particular documentation/citation style such as Modern Language Association (usually called MLA) or American Psychological Association (usually called APA) to let the reader know where you acquired your information. See your writing textbook/ instructor for specifics on the styles.

## Avoiding Plagiarism (General)

**Question:** “I got a paper off the internet – but I changed it around. That’s okay, right?”

**Answer:** Wrong. When teachers assign essays, they expect you to complete the work yourself. This would be a form of plagiarism and result in an F for the assignment and possibly for the course.

**Solution:** Write your own draft.

**Question:** “I borrowed a bit of code from an existing program for a class assignment. That’s okay, right?”

**Answer:** Probably wrong. Just like writing, computer codes are subject to copyright protection. See above for grade.

**Solution:** Develop your own code – and check with your instructor.

**Question:** “I got my best friend/aunt/cousin – who’s an English Major – to help me with my essay. That’s okay, right?”

**Answer:** Maybe. The problem with this kind of help is that too often it involves your friend/aunt/cousin doing too much of the writing. This could be a form of plagiarism – you’re taking the words and ideas of your friend/aunt/cousin. Since the instructor can’t separate your work from your “helper’s,” the grade is often an F.

**Solution:** Go to your instructor or one of the college’s tutors for help.

**Question:** “In my creative writing/music/art class, I based my project on another story/song/artwork I found – but I pretty much changed it around. That’s okay, right?”

**Answer:** Probably wrong. While much art is based on what’s come before it, most class projects involve developing your own work. See above for grade.

**Solution:** Focus on your own talents – and check with your instructor for specifics.

## Citing Sources (specific examples)

Now we get to more specific questions/examples about citing sources and avoiding plagiarism. Below, you’ll see two short paragraphs from *Mother Jones* magazine, and then some questions on how you might use it in an essay. Citations below are in MLA format.

Under a Defense Department policy initiated in 1993, U.S. taxpayers must cover the merger costs for the consolidation of defense corporations. The tally so far has reached \$856.2 million, including \$405 million for the Lockheed/Martin Marietta merger, to name one example. Because of the policy, Lockheed was able to bill the Pentagon up front for \$2.4 million for CEO Norman Augustine’s salary.

In 1996 Congress created the Defense Export Loan Guarantee program to finance U.S. weapons sales to foreign countries. Its first beneficiary? A United Industrial sale of pilotless aircraft and training systems to cash-strapped Romania. If Romania defaults on its payments (not a bad bet for a country in economic turmoil), U.S. taxpayers will be left holding the bag: \$16.7 million. United Industrial will get paid either way.

“Corporate Welfare.” *Mother Jones* March/April 1999: 15.

### From student’s essay

Unbelievably, U.S. taxpayers must cover the merger costs for the consolidation of defense corporations.

**Question:** “I put this sentence in my essay – is this okay?”

**Answer:** No. You’ve used the exact wording from the source and haven’t documented it. If done even once, this could result in an F.

**Solution:** You need to include quotation marks and a citation.

### From student’s essay

Unbelievably, U.S. taxpayers must cover the merger costs for the consolidation of defense corporations (“Corporate” 15).

**Question:** “Okay, I added the citation – is this okay?”

**Answer:** Not yet. Good job of adding the citation, but the reader will think you came up with this wording. If done even once, this could substantially lower your grade.

**Solution:** You need to include quotation marks.