

## Preventing Plagiarism

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**N**urse scientists submit research results to professional nursing journals to disseminate new information. Oncology nursing professionals may submit an idea for a journal article or book on their own initiative, or be recruited by editors, publishers, or employers to write a review of the literature for publication (Nicoll, 2011).

When writing, professionals need to take appropriate steps to prevent plagiarism, which is “appropriating any material—ideas, writings, images, or portions of those—and claiming to be the original creator” (Gilmore, 2009, p. 7), “knowingly taking and using another person’s work and claiming it, directly or indirectly, as your own” (Neville, 2010, p. 30), and “a species of intellectual fraud” (Posner, 2007, p. 106). For the purpose of this article, plagiarism is defined in general terms as taking credit for the creative, expert, or scientific work of someone else.

### Types of Plagiarism

Many types of plagiarism exist and one or more of those may be committed in a single work. Intentional plagiarism is when an author deliberately reports or quotes the work of someone else without crediting the original author (Gennaro, 2012; Gilmore, 2009). Unintentional plagiarism, or accidental plagiarism (Berkey, 2011), occurs when an author overlooks crediting the work of another (Posner, 2007). Unintentional plagiarism occurs for many reasons, including the author’s unfamiliarity with citations and reference styles, failure to accurately proofread manuscripts, lack of focus, or laziness (Gilmore, 2009). Although neither form of plagiarism is acceptable, intentional plagiarism may have more severe consequences and can damage the plagiarizing author’s career.

### History

Plagiarism was not a concern until the creation of the printing press in 1455 (Francis, 2005). The printing press produced large quantities of a manuscript, which meant more people could read someone’s ideas (Francis, 2005). Later, as writers were compensated, ownership of creative work became an issue. In the late 1600s, creative work was considered to be intellectual property (Francis, 2005). Copyright law was enacted in the United States by Congress in 1790; it evolved from the understanding that creative work was an author’s property and protects the specific works of an author (U.S. Copyright Office, 2011b). Breaking that copyright law became known as plagiarism (Neville, 2010; Posner, 2007).

### Copyright Law

The Internet has only compounded the possibilities of plagiarism because it offers virtually unlimited access to sources of information that were challenging to locate or previously not well known. Everything on the Internet is either copyrighted or in the public domain, and authors need to know how to determine the difference. Copyright protection is extendable to “original works that are fixed in any tangible medium of expression . . . from which they can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device” (U.S. Copyright Office, 2011a, p. 8). Ideas, general knowledge, facts, procedures, processes, slogans, principles, or discoveries cannot be copyrighted (U.S. Copyright Office, 2011b). Copyright grants authors the right to determine how their published or unpublished original works are reproduced, used, and distributed (Brent, 2011; U.S. Copyright Office, 2012), which enables the copyright

holder to require a fee for reprints of all or parts of a work, and requires that the copyright holder is cited in subsequent publications. Posner (2007) clarified that “copyright law does not forbid the copying of ideas . . . or of facts. Only the form in which the ideas or facts are expressed is protected” (pp. 12–13). Therefore, reprinting or adapting a table or figure from a copyrighted work requires permission to do so from the copyright holder, possibly for a price.

### Fair Use

Copyright infringement is always illegal. Copyright law does not offer details about the amount of copyrighted material (i.e., the number of words or lines) an author may use without permission, presenting a challenge to every author. According to the U.S. Copyright Office (2012), “acknowledging the source of the copyrighted material does not substitute for obtaining permission.” The doctrine of fair use serves as a guideline for the use of copyrighted material.

Fair use is a doctrine that provides an exception to copyright law. It stipulates specific circumstances when the reproduction of a short excerpt of copyrighted material with accurate citation is considered fair. Those include news reporting, teaching, research, scholarship, criticism, and comment (Brent, 2011; U.S. Copyright Office, 2012). For example, the “quotation of excerpts in a review or criticism for purposes of illustration or comment,” and, when properly cited, the “quotation of short passages in a scholarly or technical work, for illustration or clarification of the author’s observations,” qualify as fair use (U.S. Copyright Office, 1961, p. 24). In those instances, quotations from the copyrighted article require an in-text citation and reference in a standard reference style. If copyrighted material does not fall under fair use, permission to use the material must be

**Table 1. Common Methods to Prevent Plagiarism**

Method	Comments
Use one's own voice.	Everyone has one, explain as it makes sense to you. Write as if speaking.
Know which reference style to use.	Check author guidelines. Adhere to the style 100%.
Color-coded highlighting	Use one color to highlight quotations. Use other colors for paraphrasing and summarizing.
The Q-code system	Enclose the quotation with a letter Q—one at the beginning and one at the end. Add the page number after the first Q (e.g., Q12. Plagiarism is defined here as taking credit for the creative, expert, or scientific work of someone else's Q).
Open a blank document.	Keep track of references as you write. Creates a reference list if done in alphabetical order.
Limit the publication of study results to an original study report.	Useful for nurse scientists Prevents self-plagiarism

Note. Based on information from Brent, 2011; Gennaro, 2012; Gilmore, 2009; Lipson, 2008.

obtained, documented in the manuscript, and submitted to the publisher with the manuscript. In the absence of clear rules regarding fair use, an author may have difficulty defending his or her rationale for considering material fair use. Specific questions about permissions should be directed to the publisher as rules may vary.

## Public Domain

Public domain doctrine is another exception to the copyright law. Everything published or funded by the U.S. government falls into the category of public domain, as well as work that is not currently copyrighted or has an expired copyright. However, although information in the public domain can be used without restraint and without obtaining permission, it cannot be used without accurately citing the source (Brent, 2011; Copyright Clearance Center, 2010).

## Citations and Sources of Information

Citations identify references used in the development of scholarly manuscripts. References are listed at the end of the work in the style dictated by the publisher (Rhoads, 2006). Various fields of study have developed different reference styles, such as the American Psychological Association ([APA], 2010) and the American Medical Association ([AMA], 2007). According to the APA

(2010), sources supporting ideas, theories, conclusions, quotations, or any borrowed content must be cited in text and associated with a specific entry in the reference list. That involves noting the author(s) and year of publication in parentheses immediately after citing information from the source (APA, 2010; Gilmore, 2009; Menager & Paulos, 2009). However, regardless of reference style, all sources cited in text must be referenced.

Sources of information are categorized as primary or secondary. Nicoll (2011) noted that "anything that serves as an original source of research data" (p. 53) is considered a primary source. Professional journal articles are the most common primary source, but abstracts, unpublished theses, and dissertations also are primary sources (Nicoll, 2011). However, the *American Journal of Nursing* (2009) documented that "a secondary source analyzes, interprets, assigns values to, provides conjecture on, summarizes, reorganizes, or draws conclusions about events reported in primary sources" (p. 76). Finding and citing the primary reference are recommended even if the author found it in a secondary source.

## Preventing Plagiarism

The most important way to prevent plagiarism is to produce an original work and devote the time and effort to correctly and accurately cite every source in the required reference style (Menager &

Paulos, 2009; Rhoads, 2006). Other ways to prevent plagiarism include paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting.

Preventing plagiarism is not as difficult as it is time consuming (Berkey, 2011). Common methods that authors use to prevent plagiarism are delineated in Table 1. Many publishers use software programs that screen for plagiarism by detecting specific words in a series that match the work of someone else, identifying passages that appear to be copied verbatim, and determining a percentage of the total similar text (Gennaro, 2012).

## Conclusion

Language is dynamic and changes with societal and cultural standards and values, making a perfect definition of plagiarism impossible. Manuscripts submitted for publication establish originality by supporting the author's ideas and findings with collaborative sources that are properly cited and referenced (Brent, 2011). Reference styles are designed to give proper credit to the individual who originated the work, data report, systematic review, or clinical review. Conversely, writing with integrity can make the statement that the work is an important contribution to nursing and to patient outcomes—something every nurse should be encouraged to do.

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## Leadership & Professional Development

This feature provides a platform for oncology nurses to illustrate the many ways that leadership may be realized and professional practice may transform cancer care. Possible submissions include, but are not limited to, overviews of projects, accounts of the application of leadership principles or theories to practice, and interviews with nurse leaders. Descriptions of activities, projects, or action plans that are ongoing or

completed are welcome. Manuscripts should clearly link the content to the impact on cancer care. Manuscripts should be six to eight double-spaced pages, exclusive of references and tables, and accompanied by a cover letter requesting consideration for this feature. For more information, contact Associate Editor Judy A. Schreiber, RN, PhD, at [judy.schreiber@louisville.edu](mailto:judy.schreiber@louisville.edu) or Cindy Rishel, PhD, RN, OCN®, at [rishelmom@gmail.com](mailto:rishelmom@gmail.com).