

A NOTE TO STUDENTS ABOUT PLAGIARISM AND INSUFFICIENT DOCUMENTATION

--PLAGIARISM--

If you ask someone to write an entire essay for you, or if you copy and turn in as your own writing someone else's essay or passages from someone else's writing, you are guilty of **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is simple dishonesty, and because you contribute little or nothing of your own to a plagiarized paper, you profit little or not at all from copying it.

Appropriately, the penalties for plagiarism are severe. As a minimum penalty, your instructor will assign your plagiarized paper a grade of "F" and will report your case first to the Composition Program Coordinator, who may require a meeting with you and your instructor. If in the opinion of your instructor and the Coordinator the flagrancy of your act of plagiarism seriously compromises the value or validity of your other work in the class, you may even receive an "F" for the course. Your instructor will also report your case to the Dean of Students, who in turn may initiate further disciplinary action against you and against any other students involved in that act of plagiarism.

The moral of this story is to avoid plagiarism at all costs, for the penalties guarantee that it is simply not worth the risk.

--INSUFFICIENT DOCUMENTATION--

Some kinds of writing, notably the documented paper, require that you quote or refer to information and opinions that you have gathered in your reading and research. The conventional procedures for writing such papers also require that you fully acknowledge the sources from which you have acquired the material. This acknowledgment is usually contained either in parenthetical references in the body of your paper or in foot- or endnotes, together with a bibliography or a list of works cited at the end. When you document a paper, you at once both acknowledge your debt to others and explicitly introduce them as authorities to support the validity of your own treatment of the topic. Insufficient documentation is, therefore, both a form of **plagiarism** and a weakness in your paper. Instructors will lower the grade of an insufficiently or inaccurately documented paper, and if they consider the fault serious enough, may even fail the paper.

If you have any questions about what plagiarism is or about whether you have used or acknowledged sources legitimately in your paper, be sure to consult your instructor before submitting a final version.