

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

The growing electronic availability of scientific texts, data, and graphs greatly assists scientists in the production of new work and facilitates academic exchange worldwide. With the option to copy and paste, however, committing plagiarism has also become easier.

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is understood as the utilization of someone else's published or unpublished scientific work without giving credit to the original author. The missing citation suggests that the work is the plagiarist's own idea.

The connection between the following two aspects is central to the definition of plagiarism:

- the use of someone else's work or partial work
- the lack of an indication that someone else's work is being used (no citation).

It is irrelevant, whether (partial) texts excerpts have been copied, paraphrased or only used for inspiration; the adoption of another author's words or ideas must be indicated as such. This rule applies to every type of source: Books, essays, journal articles, dissertations, bachelor's and master's theses, seminar papers, official reports as well as graphics, computer programs, pictures, videos, and audio documents must all be cited.

The Problem

Plagiarism as described above contradicts the central objective of science: academic progress builds on the results obtained in previous work. For this reason, citing correctly does not represent a form of plagiarism. Rather, citations strengthen the author's arguments and indicate extensive knowledge of the state of the art.

Plagiarism is a Serious Offense

Plagiarism is the gravest offence in the scientific world.

There is no excuse for committing plagiarism; anyone who deliberately plagiarizes commits fraud. Several university laws already prohibit plagiarism, many others foresee to ban it in the future.

Please note that a confirmed case of plagiarism – the technical possibilities in this regard have decidedly improved – can have serious consequences: from automatically failing the assigned task or exam to further disciplinary measures, including the expulsion from the institution of higher education. In the case of expulsion, the student in question will no longer be able to receive a diploma.