

Avoiding Plagiarism: Examples

Original (From “Understanding Comics” by Scott McCloud in *The Norton Reader*, 13th ed., 2012, pages 1022-1027):

In comics at its best, words and pictures are like partners in a dance and each one takes turns leading. When both partners try to lead, the competition can subvert the overall goals.

What you CANNOT do:

Plagiarism:

In comics, the words and pictures are similar to two people dancing and taking turns. When the two people don't take turns, the struggle can undermine the objectives.

The student used a thesaurus to change a few words but relied on the dance example and the overall sentence structure of the original. The student also forgot to provide a citation of the original source. However, even if the student had provided a citation, this example would still constitute plagiarism.

What you CAN do:

Quote:

“In comics at its best, words and pictures are like partners in a dance and each one takes turns leading. When both partners try to lead, the competition can subvert the overall goals” (McCloud 1027).

Use quotation marks, copy the words of the original exactly, AND provide a citation of the original source—you must do all three of these things each time you quote. Failing to do so constitutes plagiarism.

The citation above is shown in MLA format and provides the author's last name and a page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence. You may also introduce the author's name at the beginning of the sentence:

According to Scott McCloud, “In comics at its best, words and pictures are like partners in a dance and each one takes turns leading. When both partners try to lead, the competition can subvert the overall goals” (1027).

Paraphrase:

Comics are most successful when the words and pictures are alternately subordinate to one another and less successful when the words and pictures fight for dominance on the page (McCloud 1027).

This paraphrase is successful because it changes the wording AND the sentence structure of the original source. Note that even when we paraphrase, we must provide a citation for the original source. Failing to do so constitutes plagiarism.