Types of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not always a black and white issue. The boundary between plagiarism and research is often unclear. Learning to recognize the various forms of plagiarism, especially the more ambiguous ones, is an important step towards effective prevention.

The Plagiarism Spectrum was developed as a way to define and distinguish the common ways in which plagiarism can take form. The Spectrum makes these forms memorable by tagging the types with “Digital 2.0” monikers, a gesture that both acknowledges the role that the internet plays in instances of content copying and makes the types more meaningful for a generation of writers who are “digital natives.”

As part of the Plagiarism Spectrum project, a May 2012 survey of nearly 900 secondary and higher education instructors was also conducted to assess the frequency with which these types appear as well as the degree to which each type is problematic for instructors.

Each of the 10 most common types of plagiarism are defined below. The types are ranked in order of severity of intent.

#1. Clone

Submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own

#6. Hybrid

Combines perfectly cited sources with copied passages without citation
#2. CTRL-C

Contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations

#7. Mashup

Mixes copied material from multiple sources

#3. Find - Replace

Changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source
#8. 404 Error

Includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources

#4. Remix

Paraphrases from multiple sources, made to fit together

#9. Aggregator

Includes proper citation to sources but the paper contains almost no original work
#5. Recycle

Borrows generously from the writer’s previous work without citation

#10. Re-tweet

Includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

*Copied with permission from plagiarism.org*