

interpreting or distorting what they say. It also means crediting the sources—not plagiarizing, or presenting sources' ideas and information as if they were your own. On most campuses, plagiarism is a punishable offense.

Plagiarism can be deliberate or careless:

- **Deliberate plagiarism** is outright cheating: copying another writer's sentence or idea and passing it off as your own, buying a paper from the Web, or getting someone else to write a paper for you.

- **Careless plagiarism** is more common among students, often arising from inattentive or inexperienced handling of sources. For instance, you might cut and paste source information into your own ideas without clarifying who said what, or you might present a summary of a source without recognizing that parts of it are actually quoted. In these cases the plagiarism is unintentional, but it is still plagiarism.

See Chapter 53 for more on plagiarism.

**2 Developing perspective on a subject**

Consider your own knowledge and perspective on a subject before you start to research. This forethought will make it easier for you to recognize other authors' perspectives and to treat them fairly in your writing—whether or not you agree with them.

- **Before you consult sources, gauge what you already know and think about your subject.** Give yourself time to know your own mind before looking to others for information. Then you'll be able to reflect on how the sources reinforce, contradict, or expand what you already know.

- **Evaluate sources carefully.** Authors generally write from particular perspectives, and some are more overt about their biases than others. You needn't reject a source because it is biased; indeed, often you'll want to consider multiple perspectives. But you do need to recognize and weigh the writer's position. See 7 pp. 375–87 for a discussion of evaluating sources.

- **Treat sources fairly.** Represent an author's ideas and perspectives as they were originally presented, without misunderstanding or distortion. Be careful in paraphrasing and summarizing not to misrepresent the author's meaning. Be careful in editing quotations not to omit essential words.

**3 Managing sources**

You can avoid plagiarism by keeping track of the sources you consult, the ideas that influence your thinking, and the words and sentences you borrow—and by carefully citing the sources in your

Sentence Parts and Patterns

4

Clarity and Style

3

Spelling and Mechanics

6

Punctuation

5