Ethics in Writing

When we write, we must be sure to use our own thoughts as well as our own words. If we use either the words or ideas of anyone else, we must clearly delineate the boundary between our ideas and words, and those of the original author. We must give the reader the source for any ideas that we did not create ourselves.

If we wish to use the words of others, we must enclose the other writer’s words in quotation marks. A citation is not sufficient. Putting a paragraph of someone else’s work in your own words (paraphrasing) is also unacceptable. We must do our own work.

If we wish to use a fact or idea from a source, we must cite the source. In addition, we must make our own tables, reaction schemes, and figures. If take these from a source, we must cite the source. This is true even if we modify the original table, reaction scheme, or figure.

The rules discussed above may sound like mere technical requirements. They are not. If we break these rules, we will be guilty of deception: we will have led our readers to give us credit for words and ideas that are not ours. In fact, we will be guilty of theft: we will have stolen the credit due to the original authors.

---

1 Quotation marks are enough to keep your writing ethical. However, it is very unusual to find direct quotes in scientific papers. Avoid quoting.

2 In fact, this is sufficient only for classwork. When you write for publication, you must obtain the original author’s permission before using or adapting a figure. Citing is not enough.
Ethics in Writing Statement

Please fill out this checklist, sign it, and turn it in to me. Thank you.

1. I have read the handout *Ethics in Writing.*

2. I understand that copying words from any source is plagiarism.

3. I understand that extensive (more than a sentence) paraphrasing is plagiarism.

4. I understand that using figures, tables, or reaction schemes from other sources without a citation is plagiarism.

5. I understand that plagiarism is a form of cheating.

I affirm all of the statements above. ________________________________

Date ________________________________