What is Plagiarism?

Merriam-Webster defines plagiarism as “the act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person” (retrieved September 12, 2011 from: http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/plagiarism).

It is a simple matter to avoid plagiarism. Anytime you use information that is not your own, you must provide the reader of your assignment with the source of your information. This includes telling the reader in the body of your assignment AND in the Works Cited/Reference/Bibliography page where your information came from. It is NOT plagiarism to cite information that is considered common knowledge, for example, Martin Luther King Jr.’s birth date, nursery rhymes, or urban legends.

Examples of Plagiarism

1: Outright copying of the original excerpt into your paper: Do not take all or part of a quotation or information on a website without informing the reader of where you got the information.

2: Substitution of words: Rearranging words, omitting words, or changing a word is plagiarism if you do not inform the reader where you got the information.

3: Paraphrasing: Paraphrasing is plagiarism if you do not give credit for the source of your information.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

What is the best way to avoid plagiarism?

- Use your own words and ideas.
- Give credit for copied, edited/adapted, or paraphrased materials.
- Paraphrase but be careful not to simply rearrange or make slight wording changes.
- You should cite every piece of information including facts, figures, statistics, and/or multimedia materials.
- Enclose quotations with quotation marks (depending upon length/citation format) followed by a parenthetical reference.
- When using information from a web page, print it out. This will give you the URL and the date you printed it, making it easier to cite and find the page later if need be.

Plagiarism is Plagiarism whether it is accidental or not.

For additional assistance:

- Stop by the Library Services Main Desk on the 3rd floor
- Call 301-687-4395
- E-mail libref@frostburg.edu