Understanding Plagiarism

The Oxford English Dictionary defines plagiarism as “The action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own.” It is obviously plagiarism when you copy or buy a paper from someone else and pass it off as your own work. But you can also plagiarize unintentionally by not giving proper credit in your paper to the sources where you got your words, phrases or ideas. Below is a paragraph from an original source. The examples that follow show what would be considered plagiarism and how you can avoid plagiarizing by using proper citation using the MLA formatting style.

Original source


From pages 282-283:

The second discovery is perhaps even more momentous: there is a name for me. That is, the child learns not only to associate a sound with himself or herself but also to repeat that sound and to enjoy the social response that follows. When the child learns that he or she is the object to which others refer when they use a certain name, and that he or she can also use this name, the child has made a significant leap toward the full acquisition of self. A rudimentary sense of the distinction between the child and his or her others has been replaced by a more precise way of designating self and others. Only after this crucial development occurs does the child really begin to possess a self, for only then does the child have a way of getting outside his or her own perspective and viewing self from the perspective of others.

Quoting sentences

Plagiarized:

In the process of self discovery, a momentous leap is made when the child learns there is a name for me. That is, the child learns not only to associate a sound with himself or herself but also to repeat that sound and to enjoy the social response that follows. When the child learns that he or she is the object to which others refer when they use a certain name, and
that he or she can also use this name, the child has made a significant leap toward the full acquisition of self.

➔ The sentences in bold are taken directly from the original source but no credit is given.

Cited Properly:

In the process of self discovery, a significant milepost is reached when the child learns his name. This is important because, “the child learns not only to associate a sound with himself or herself but also to repeat that sound and to enjoy the social response that follows. When the child learns that he or she is the object to which others refer when they use a certain name, and that he or she can also use this name, the child has made a significant leap toward the full acquisition of self” (Hewitt 282).

➔ Because the quote is shorter than 4 typed lines the quote is enclosed with quotation marks. The author’s name and page number are in parentheses----no “p.” needed. (For a longer quote use a separate indented paragraph. In a longer quote, no quotation marks are needed.)

Quoting Phrases

Plagiarized:

When a child learns his or her name he begins to possess a self so he is able for the first time to get outside his or her own perspective and see himself as others see him.

➔ All the words in bold are taken directly from the original source but no credit is given.

Cited Properly:

When a child learns his or her name he begins to “possess a self” so he is able for the first time to
move “outside his or her own perspective” and see himself as others see him (Hewitt 283).

- The quoted phrases are enclosed in quotation marks and authors name and page number is cited.

Using Ideas

Plagiarized:

For a child, learning their name is a crucial part of developing a self concept. When they recognize the sounds that make up their name they begin to see themselves as distinct from others and have learned a clear-cut way to differentiate themselves from others.

- Even though the word is completely different the ideas all came from the original source and no credit is given.

Cited Properly:

According to Hewitt, for a child, learning their name is a crucial part of developing a self concept. When they recognize the sounds that make up their name they begin to see themselves as distinct from others and have learned a clear-cut way to differentiate themselves from others (282-283).

- The authors name is mentioned in the text and the page number cited in parentheses at the end of the paragraph.