

# Advanced Writing Awareness

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## Introduction

The following series of short articles have been adapted by Courtenay Young, the Editor of the International Journal of Psychotherapy (IJP), from some original articles with similar titles, several written by William Stevenson, and that have been posted as blogs on the **Enago** website, [www.enago.com](http://www.enago.com). Proper attributions are therefore given and the original work is thus respected: to do otherwise would be totally hypocritical – given the subject matter.

Enago is a leading provider of English scientific and medical editing services, particularly designed for non-native, English-speaking authors. It also provides a number of publication support services to a diverse clientele. Some of these ‘posts’ are also ‘advertising’ – to an extent – some of Enago’s publication services.

The purpose of utilising these ‘posts’ here, in this way, is to help IJP authors and potential authors to improve the quality and professionalism of their publication submissions and to help understand the complicated issues around publication ethics and plagiarism.

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## 1. How to avoid ethical problems in your writing or research

Adapted from: [www.enago.com/blog/how-to-avoid-ethical-issues-in-your-research](http://www.enago.com/blog/how-to-avoid-ethical-issues-in-your-research)  
26 September 2014 | Posted in: Academic Fraud, Research Integrity

Too many scientific reputations have been damaged by accusations (or charges) of unethical behaviour. Although we might all think of ourselves as applying the highest possible standards of professional ethics, managing to avoid ethical issues (or problems) completely is not as easy as one might think. So, here are just a few of the problems encountered by researchers and authors and some suggestions about how to overcome them.

### What is Ethical Behaviour?

Defining ethical behaviour is surprisingly difficult. Some things are obvious, like: – don't fake research; don't take credit for another's work; disclose any conflicts of interest, etc. It is sometimes easier to define what is unethical behaviour and there are basically three main types of scientific misconduct:

- 1) **Fabrication** (which is making up results and recording or reporting these) - and a minor form is to quote references supposedly supporting your work that are either non-existent or don't;
- 2) **Falsification** (which is manipulating research outcomes, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting results so that the research is not represented accurately); and
- 3) **Plagiarism** (which is the appropriation of someone else's ideas, work, or words without giving them proper credit).

But, as it is said, the devil is often in the details, and boundaries can get sticky; matters can get tricky. For example, if you are publishing a research paper, what exactly constitutes a possible financial "conflict of interest" that should, or must, be reported? If you own a majority share in a company that benefits from your research? - Almost certainly! Owning 5% of the company? – Maybe? Owning shares in a mutual fund (or structured portfolio) that contains some shares in the company? - Probably not.

First, read the guidelines of the journal – carefully – for its specific policies, and then report anything that might apply, or check it out first with the editor of that journal: that way you get an informed opinion and you have also ‘covered yourself’ in the event of a query.

## Use any Journal Policies or Author Guidance

Disclosure policies, style policies, transparency policies, reference styles and ethical policies have become so complicated, that it's best to go through a checklist of all the journal's guidelines very carefully, both before and during the writing process, and also refer to these periodically to make sure that you are covering all the points. It is not pleasant suddenly to realise, "Wait, I forgot to disclose XYZ!" - especially after the paper has been published.

## Avoid the Slippery Slopes

Fabricating data, falsifying data, or using someone else's research, is obviously completely unethical, but there are also many grey areas to these sorts of ethical issues.

- So, if you were applying a two-sigma statistical screen in order to exclude outlying data points, it might not be a problem – especially if you disclose the practice and if the screen has not significantly changed your conclusions: but, you might need to mention this.
- If you are 'throwing out' a piece of data that you suspect as being inaccurate because of a change in conditions, this is usually justifiable: and again, you may need to mention this.
- But, how about discarding (or ignoring) a troublesome piece of data that you suspect is spurious, just because it doesn't fit your results. So, here we have entered into the arena of "cherry-picking" your data in order to produce the results that you want. And this now becomes a very 'slippery slope'.

Every category of unethical behaviour can gradually lead to "no-nos", such as excessive self-citation; guest authorship; and even plagiarism. The best way to avoid sliding down these slippery slopes into the 'pits', is to stay on the 'high ground' of professional ethical behaviour and to take pride – and care – in doing so at every stage of your work.

## 2. Publication Ethics: Giving credit where credit is due

Adapted from: [www.enago.com/blog/publication-ethics-giving-credit-where-credit-is-due](http://www.enago.com/blog/publication-ethics-giving-credit-where-credit-is-due)  
15 May 2013 | Posted in Impact of article, Journal requirements, Plagiarism, Publication

One essential element of publication ethics requires that an author should give proper credit to those people who have contributed, possibly unknowingly, to the author's concepts, ideas, research, or to their writing. There are essentially two ways that this guideline can be violated: by not giving enough credit; and by giving too much credit.

### Too little credit

Researchers are surprisingly often accused of claiming more credit than is due for their research results. If they are claiming some sort of a breakthrough, without acknowledging any of the previous work leading up to this, this is essentially unethical. It is also (unfortunately) quite common in the history of science and has led to some famous controversies over who has the 'priority' in publication.

For example, Antoine Lavoisier (1743-1794) may not have been (as is often claimed) the "Father of Chemistry", as he was more of a gifted 'synthesist' of several other researchers' work. He was also his own main publicist and gave little credit to others for their discoveries. If this was deliberate, then this was also unethical. However, somewhat unconnectedly, he ended up on the guillotine during the French Revolution.

Another famous early scientist, Isaac Newton (1642-1726), often spoke modestly of "standing on the shoulders of giants", though he was not always quite so generous to his colleagues, accusing Leibnitz (possibly unfairly) of plagiarism with regards to the development of calculus (as well as abusing his position in the Royal Society); arguing with Hooke about his theories of optics and his gravitational work; and also prematurely publishing Flamsteed's work as his own: Flamsteed was the Astronomer Royal and had sent his work to Newton as a colleague in

the Royal Society. This practice is also unethical, but was actually fairly common among scientists and researchers then. Newton was made President of the Royal Society in 1703, and was knighted in 1705, probably more for his political connections than for his numerous scientific discoveries.

### Too much credit

Surprisingly, giving unjustified (or too much) credit is just as unethical as denying someone credit, although it rarely provokes the affected party in quite the same way. Giving copious (but unnecessary) citations to a colleague ("courtesy citations") is one fairly common example; so is including someone as a co-author when s/he has contributed nothing substantive to the content of the paper. This can be quite outrageous, especially if the colleague happens to be one's superior or departmental head. This sort of 'author padding' is said to be quite a common practice in Europe & Russia, and, in this way, the professor gets his name on every paper published by people in his department.

Another example is where there is a known "expert" in a particular field; so, it is quite common to send them a copy of the article and ask them to comment or add something small and thus agree to be included in the list of authors. This gives the 'expert' some somewhat spurious credit, and it also – more significantly – adds a degree of 'expertise' to the article and the author.

Therefore, different customs and cultural factors make this quite a shadowy area: how much autonomy does the individual researcher (in a university department or a company) actually have, and how much does the chairman, or professor, or departmental head actually involve him/herself in the work? When does an acknowledgement of a "helpful discussion" transform into co-authorship?

A flagrant (yet quite amusing) example of unjustified credit occurred in 1948 when a graduate student, Ralph Alpher, prepared an astrophysical paper on "The Origin of Chemical Elements". He argued that the cosmic "Big Bang" would have created all the elements found in the early universe. Before it was sent off for peer-review, his academic adviser, George Gamow, added the name of a friend of his, Hans Bethe, as a co-author. His justification for doing this was simply that, "It seemed unfair to the Greek alphabet to have the article signed by Alpher and Gamow only." [Alpha, Beta, Gamma = A, B, C.] Bethe was amused, but Alpher was not. He thought (probably, quite rightly) that having two well-known physicists listed as co-authors on his paper would result in minimizing his own almost unique contribution, even though his name was still listed first – alphabetically?

## 3. When does 'fair use' become plagiarism?

Adapted from: [www.enago.com/blog/fair-use-become-plagiarism](http://www.enago.com/blog/fair-use-become-plagiarism)  
20 February 2015 | Posted in Plagiarism, Research Ethics

### What is Fair Use?

The term "fair use" refers to the use of copyrighted material in circumstances where there is no requirement for permission from the copyright holder. In reality, "fair use" is a limitation on copyright, however, it is also quite a legally confused area, as there is only limited guidance and no proper legal precedents. There are four factors that generally identify "fair use":

- **Purpose and Character of Usage:** Was the material copied for educational purposes, academic purposes, or for commercial use?
- **The Nature of the Work:** The closer that the present work is to the original creative work, the less likely it is that it will be considered as "fair use", unless it is being used deliberately and clearly, as a comparison or critique.
- **The Amount Used:** How much was used – in relation to the whole – i.e. the smaller the amount used, the more likely it can be considered as "fair use".

- ***The Effect of the Use:*** Is the 'new' work claiming credit where credit is due elsewhere? Will benefits accrue to the 'new' claimant, and/or be deprived from the originator?

### The Critical Role of Attribution

Any attempted defence against plagiarism, or direct copyright infringement, will stand or fall given the presence of a clear attribution. If the 'questionable' use of material was clearly attributed to the copyright holder, then the debate moves on to being judged by the four factors (above). If there is no referencing or citation, i.e. a case of alleged plagiarism - then there is no "fair use" defence. You have copied someone else's work and then, deliberately (or otherwise), presented it as your own.

### A Growing Prevalence of Plagiarism

According to a survey by PlagiarismAdvice.org in 2013, about 92% of teachers and lecturers said that their students had plagiarized other people's work, and nearly 30% thought that such incidents of plagiarism were on the increase. There are some possible reasons for this:

- ***Ease of Use*** – a block of text on the internet can be cut and pasted with a couple of 'mouse clicks'. It is also easy to think that one's tutor will not realise this.
- ***Insufficient Preparation*** – given assignment deadlines, it's easier to cut and paste someone else's work, taking the gamble that the tutor won't use something like, 'turnitin', 'grammarly', or any other text-comparison programme.
- ***Lack of Academic Skills*** – many students do not properly understand what plagiarism is and what the consequences of it can be?

### Confusion of Terminology

Copyright litigation against infringement of the rights of a copyright holder is a very complex, combative (and, for lawyers, extremely lucrative) area of legal work. The prevalence of cases and case studies on the web has resulted in considerable confusion over the terms "plagiarism" and "fair use". Unfortunately, students often defend their inclusion of a paragraph (or two) of unattributed text as "inadvertent plagiarism", either because they thought it constituted "fair use" or they thought they could get away with it.

It is to be hoped that the lack of developed academic skills will be properly addressed, either prior to a person's undergraduate studies or during their college courses, but – in the likely event that it doesn't – it falls to professors, research supervisors, lecturers - and editors - to ensure that students and trainees understand the rules of appropriate attribution and give them the attention that they deserve.

## 4. How to avoid plagiarism in research papers & articles?

Adapted from: [www.enago.com/blog/category/research-ethics/research-integrity](http://www.enago.com/blog/category/research-ethics/research-integrity)  
01 October 2014 | Posted in Plagiarism, Research Integrity

Writing a research or theoretical paper poses a number of different challenges, as you are gathering ideas from literature, references, and providing evidence in order to make your paper stronger. Drawing upon previously established research, ideas and values, and adding this sort of information to your article, is a necessary step. However, it needs to be done extremely cautiously, so as not to fall into the trap of plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the 'unethical' practice of using other people's findings, work, concepts and ideas and even words, (either planned or accidentally). It is generally considered as a serious academic and intellectual offence, and it can result in very negative consequences (such as the retraction of an article; the loss of your credibility and reputation; and more). It is a seriously increasing problem in the field academic publishing.

It is thus imperative for authors and researchers to become much more aware of plagiarism and its consequences. In some cultures, the prevailing academic traditions might not be so insistent on authentication, by citing the source of any ideas or quotations. However, this form of validation is a necessary prerequisite in the global academic world and part of the current professional code of conduct in publishing. It is clear that non-native English speakers face a higher challenge of communicating the technical content of any of their ideas in English, as well as complying with ethical rules, journal styles and literary conventions. Researchers and authors now have much easier access to material and data on the internet and this makes it all too easy to 'copy and paste' other people's work.

You, therefore, need to guard yourself against plagiarism (however accidental it may be) and here are some effective tips to help to avoid plagiarism:

### 1. Paraphrase

- \* Do not copy and paste any text directly (verbatim) from the reference or published article - unless it is to be used as a 'proper' quotation. Instead, you must paraphrase - i.e. restate the original ideas and concepts in your own words, and then enter this restatement into your paper. However, you will need to understand the idea(s) of the reference source properly in order to be able to paraphrase correctly.
- \* You must also make a separate note of the reference source (so that it can be entered into the list of references at the end of your paper: including any relevant page numbers).
- \* You should still quote the original source and clearly identify any quotations. You should also modify the author's style, language and structure to fit the new context and purpose.
- \* There is some good information about paraphrasing (on the internet): here - [writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA\\_paraphrase.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_paraphrase.html) and here - [www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/paraphrasing.php](http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/paraphrasing.php)

### 2. Quotations

If you are going to quote another author (or yourself), you must indicate that the text has been taken from another paper by using quotation marks or similar indications. The quotation should be copied exactly in the way that it appears in the article or book that you have taken it from (including all punctuation). The page number of the quotation should be noted and given in the text reference: e.g. "... *quotation* ..." (Author, Year, p. xx).

### 3. Identify what needs to be cited and what doesn't

- \* Any words or ideas that are not your own, but taken from another paper, need to be cited properly. This includes using material that you have published before, as doing so without any citation is called 'self-plagiarism'.
- \* Any scientific evidence that you may have gathered after performing any tests or research (discussed in the paper) should not be cited in a research paper.
- \* Details that are facts, or common knowledge, need not be cited. If you are unsure, then include a reference.

### 4. Manage your references

- \* Maintain good records of all the sources that you have used or that you refer to – and it is best to do this as you go along: always keep an up-to-date "reference list" - including page numbers. If you have missed one out, then you can try to find it again using citation software like 'EndNote' ([www.endnote.com](http://www.endnote.com)) or 'Reference Manager' ([www.refman.com](http://www.refman.com)): however, these programmes can be quite expensive.

### 5. Use Plagiarism Checkers

- \* You can also use various computer plagiarism detection tools such as "CrossCheck" ([www.crossref.org](http://www.crossref.org)), powered by "iThenticate" ([www.ithenticate.com](http://www.ithenticate.com)), or "grammarly" ([www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com)), or "eTBLAST" (which is free from Medline), to check for any inadvertent plagiarism in your manuscript.

## 5. The role of an editor in combating plagiarism

Adapted from: [www.enago.com/blog/role-of-an-editor-in-combating-plagiarism-by-esl-authors](http://www.enago.com/blog/role-of-an-editor-in-combating-plagiarism-by-esl-authors)  
01 December 2011 | Posted in Plagiarism

Academic and professional journals are responsible for safeguarding the general research record – the ‘web of science’ – and thus have a critical role in dealing with any suspected misconduct. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (Wager, 2011) have published clear guidelines about the role of editors in combating plagiarism. It states that editors should "maintain the integrity of the academic record" and "should take all reasonable steps to ensure the quality of the material they publish". Editors should also have "systems in place to detect ... plagiarised text ... either for routine use or when suspicions are raised". ([www.psupress.org/Journals/jnls\\_CodeofEthics.html](http://www.psupress.org/Journals/jnls_CodeofEthics.html))

There are several things that editors can do to counteract plagiarism, as well as choices about what they can do (and need to do) once they suspect or detect any plagiarism.

As mentioned, there are now powerful text-matching software systems (such as 'CrossCheck' or 'grammarly' or 'eTBLAST') that can match sections of text against their large databases of articles, as well as with information that is 'out there' on the web. All that editors now need to decide upon is when to use such systems and how to interpret their results.

There are different strategies that editors use for screening for plagiarism: (i) all manuscripts can be screened on receipt; or (ii) just those that are sent out for peer-review; or (iii) just those that are accepted provisionally; or (iv) by screening a random sample; or (v) just when plagiarism is suspected. Some journals now screen articles as a matter of course, and there are also considerable problems in checking retrospectively for plagiarism.

There are some different types and degrees of plagiarism and there are several features or factors that can help distinguish between these different types. These factors are: (a) the ‘extent’ of the copied material; (b) the ‘originality’ of the resulting material; (c) the ‘position’ and ‘context’ and ‘type’ of the published material; (d) the degree of ‘referencing’ or ‘attribution’ given; (e) the ‘intention’ behind the copying of the material; (f) the ‘seniority’ of the author - more senior authors should know better; and (g) the ‘language’ of the author, the original material, and of the article.

### How to detect plagiarism

As mentioned, there are now many software tools available to detect plagiarism. Some of these are available free, or relatively cheaply; others are available commercially, and can cost quite a lot of money. Other than using these plagiarism-detection software tools, a good editor can often detect (or suspect) plagiarism by noticing changes in the author's style and language.

There are obvious significant cultural differences between Western and non-Western countries, and it has been suggested that the ‘copying’ of text is not considered as such a serious professional issue by authors with English as a second-language (ESL), as by people from other countries. (Hayes & Inrona, 2005)

Plagiarism, or even a lesser form of it – ‘patchwork-writing’, where sentences and structures are "borrowed" from other authors – also seems to be on the increase and quite common among ESL authors. ESL authors often employ ‘language editors’ to improve their manuscripts, prior to publication in an English-language journal. These ‘language editors’ sometimes encounter cases where the authors have copied sentences from published papers of other authors to use as their own. Even if they are employed by the author, they should still work to counteract plagiarism.

There is an excellent article by K. MacDonnell (2004) that presents a good overview of the reasons behind the plagiarism, specifically as practiced by ESL authors. If these points indicate that the plagiarism was not too serious, or that it was unintentional, or that it was poorly attributed,

then the editor should probably suggest that the author just 'corrects' the article – ideally before peer-review or publication.

Often a document, written by a non-native-English speaker, typically has many grammatical errors or a different syntax or language-structure. Good editors can detect plagiarism, especially if some of the paragraphs are well-written, in an otherwise poorly written document. The editor can also 'Google' random sentences from the author's text to see if they could be copied from the internet. Editors can also check the author's references to see if some of the text from these references has been copied.

### **Communicating with the authors**

When any such plagiarism is suspected or detected, it becomes important to convey this to the authors, ideally without using too much of an accusatory tone. Most authors are reasonably accomplished academicians and they might feel slighted if an editor accuses them of something that they perhaps did not know, or properly realise, is a 'crime', or an unethical issue, or a misdemeanour, or even a mistake.

The extent of any possibly copied material will also play a role in the editor's decisions and actions. If whole paragraphs seem to have been copied from someone else's work, then the editors should respectfully decline the work, as it stands. In so doing, they might present the authors with the similar passages from the original source and then request that the author should rewrite the affected passages, or quote them properly with proper attributions.

Alternatively, if the author has only copied a few words or sentences, the editors can "correct" the affected passages, possibly by paraphrasing them, and also just ask the authors to cite the original source.

Given that there are different types of plagiarism, a separation can be also made between major plagiarism (involving unattributed copying; 'stealing' another person's work; the verbatim copying of more than 100 words of original material without any citation; or the unattributed use of another's work, concepts, arguments, etc.) and minor plagiarism (the verbatim copying of less than 100 words without attribution; close copying or patch-copying; and other forms). Plagiarism can also apply to the unattributed use of images.

Editors should probably establish some policies for 'dealing with' plagiarism: so that here are different levels of 'action' like: (a) educating authors and asking them to re-write any copied text; or (b) rejecting the article and requiring the author to make substantive changes; or (c) issuing a correction (or retraction) for an already published article; or (d) - in extremis - informing the author's institution.

### **Other strategies**

If (or when) a large-scale case of plagiarism is encountered, it is sometimes a good strategy to tell the authors to re-write the relevant text in their own language and then get someone else to translate it back into English. The translated text can then be edited: this can work quite well for some ESL authors.

Additionally, it is important for editors to educate their authors about the seriousness of plagiarism. As mentioned before, the copying of text may not be considered as grave an issue in some cultures. Therefore, as editors, we should consider it our responsibility to point the authors the seriousness of using someone else's words.

Some plagiarisms can arise from poor mentorship or supervision, rather than intentional misconduct. Different 'sanctions' can therefore be applied to junior authors, as opposed to senior authors. Sometimes the editor may want to contact the author's head of department to raise the issue with them.

There may be some fears with respect to this, but, if it is done in order to help improve scholarship, this is a matter that only the institution can properly remedy. It might also prevent the author from simply submitting the manuscript, relatively unchanged, to another journal.

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## 6. The Effect of Scientific Misconduct on an Author's Career

Adapted from: [www.enago.com/blog/the-effect-of-scientific-misconduct-on-a-researchers-career](http://www.enago.com/blog/the-effect-of-scientific-misconduct-on-a-researchers-career)  
05 September 2014 | Posted in Research Integrity, Scientific Misconduct

Scientific misconduct is not only deplorable morally; but it can also have serious consequences for an author's, or researcher's, future. At the very least, the record of misconduct will hang over an author or researcher hampering their efforts to fund future work to to get published. But serious misconduct can also result in dismissal, jail time, or even worse. Consider the following examples:

### Fired

- \* In 1998, a British physician, Andrew Wakefield, became notorious with a sensational paper claiming a link between child vaccination and autism. As a result of this paper, child vaccination rates dropped significantly throughout the UK for a number of years. Wakefield's paper was later found to be largely composed of fabricated data. In 2010, he was struck off the British Medical Register in 2010, and cannot now practice medicine.
- \* In 2011, a German researcher, Joachim Boldt, was stripped of his professorship at the University of Giessen after questions arose as to the accuracy and ethics of about 90 of his research studies. Many (from 18 different journals) had to be retracted and Boldt faced criminal charges.
- \* In 2012, a Japanese researcher, Yoshitaka Fujii, was found to have fabricated data and falsely listed co-authors in about 170 articles to do with anesthesiology. He was dismissed from his position as professor at the Toho University in Tokyo. Both these latter cases also raised serious questions about the scrupulousness of the journals' editors.

### Jailed

- \* An American medical researcher, Eric Poehlman, fabricated data in several papers about hormone therapy and used these to obtain millions of dollars in grants. Once exposed, he faced criminal charges and pled guilty. He was finally sentenced to a year in jail in 2006.

### Disgraced

- In 1972, Dr Alfred Steinschneider wrote a seminal article in "Pediatrics" (Vol. 50, No. 4) about connections that he had 'observed' between childhood sleep apnea and sudden infant death syndrome (cot deaths). In 1994, 22 years later, and after millions of dollars of wasted research, his findings were somewhat discredited after Waneta Hoyt (the mother in the research paper) was convicted (possibly controbersially) of second-degree murder by smothering her 5 children to death (possibly Münchausen syndrome by proxy). The paper in "Pediatrics" has been frequently cited and is still listed on databases without comment.
- In another famous case, Jan Henrik Schön, a German scientist working for Bell Labs in New Jersey, claimed a breakthrough in nanotechnology and that he had developed molecular-sized semi-conductors (transistors). He published an amazing amount, much in the prestigious journals, 'Science' and 'Nature', and was awarded several prizes, But other scientists soon noticed 'mistakes' in his published findings and could not replicate his work. In 2002, an independent committee produced a report that detailed 24 allegations of

misconduct, finding definite evidence in 16 cases. Whole data sets had been reused in different experiments. All of his co-authors were (somewhat surprisingly and controversially) exonerated: sparking a debate that if co-authors get the credit, they should also get the blame. A total of about 35 published papers of his were eventually withdrawn. Schön later had his doctoral degree revoked and the DFG, the German research foundation, also declared civil sanctions against him.

## **Frauds**

- The Bogdanov affair, in France, concerned two brothers who were working for their doctorates at the University of Burgundy in the 1990s. In 1991, they had published a book about 'God and Science' which became a best seller. However, a University professor in Virginia claimed that they had plagiarized his book on the origins of the universe: the affair was eventually settled out of court. Towards the end of the 1990s, they were having difficulty in completing their doctorates, though both eventually succeeded. They then published five papers, which were accused of being nonsensical combinations of 'buzzwords' and therefore "spoofs". There were further spurious citations and supposed links to universities that endorsed their work. Since 1979, they have been known in France as popular television-show hosts, dealing with topics on popular science and science fiction.
- Stephen Glass, an American former journalist, was accused in 1998 of having as many as half of his published article fabricated. In a 3-year period, as a reporter, he had invented quotations, sources and events. Most of them were humorous and entertaining; some were totally fictitious. His career was made into a 2003 film, *Shattered Glass*, and he fictionalised his own story in *The Fabulist*. He later became a paralegal, and was then turned down as a licensed attorney in New York and California.
- Hwang Woo-suk was a South Korean professor of biotechnology, veterinarian and researcher, who – in 2004 and 2005 – claimed to have made breakthroughs in stem cell research, supposedly cloning human embryonic stem cells. In 2006, he was charged with embezzlement and bioethics law violations when it emerged his research was faked. In 2009, he was sentenced to a two years suspended prison sentence, upheld on appeal. He has continued to work and publish in the field.

## **Suicide**

- \* In 1926, an Austrian biologist, Paul Kammerer, challenged Darwin's theory of evolution with experiments that he performed with breeding toads that supposedly supported the rival theory of Lamarck. There were then suggestions that his toads' supposedly 'acquired characteristics' (black foot pads) were fake, produced by injecting black ink. Six weeks later, Kammerer committed suicide.

Most examples of scientific misconduct are not quite as dramatic as these above, but they can still have very negative effects: the consequences can include: failure to get promotion; the loss of editorships; the cessation of research grants; and the reluctance of graduate students to join that person's research programme.

Justice can also come quite slowly in cases of scientific misconduct, but the consequences generally do come and the research is "found out". Of course the opposite can also happen: a dedicated researcher can be travestied by the "establishment", just because 'they' don't want to know about his results.

## **Innocent**

The Austrian researcher, Ignaz Semmelweis, is a classic example. He 'discovered' that the (then) practices of Austrian paediatric surgeons created the very high incidence of puerperal fever. Puerperal fever was then quite common in mid-19th-century hospitals and was often fatal, with a mortality of between 10%–35%. In 1847, when working in a Viennese obstetric hospital, he noticed that the doctors' wards had a much higher mortality (3 times) than the midwives' wards, and so he proposed the simple practice of hand-washing with a chlorinated lime solution, before surgeons examined pregnant women internally. He published several papers and a book of his

findings "Etiology, Concept and Prophylaxis of Childbed Fever", showing that proper hand-washing reduced mortality to below 1%. He even stood at the door of the wards, with a bowl of antiseptic solution, pleading with the surgeons. He was ignored, ridiculed and demoted, and was later confined to a lunatic asylum, where he was beaten up by the guards and died, aged 47.

## 7. How Should an Author Respond to Allegations of Plagiarism?

Adapted from: [www.enago.com/blog/author-respond-to-plagiarism-allegations](http://www.enago.com/blog/author-respond-to-plagiarism-allegations)  
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Plagiarism is a very serious accusation and even though you may be able to prove your innocence, once you have been accused of plagiarism, your name can still be discredited. Unfortunately, it is not a case of "innocent until proved guilty".

There are some ideas to help to prove that you were not academically dishonest, as well as some suggestions to help prevent plagiarism.

Direct copying is not the only crime; any suggestion that an author has taken credit for the work of others and used it as his own counts as plagiarism. So, it includes a lack of proper attribution to others - not just for their text - but also for their ideas or research methods. However, the easiest way to detect plagiarism is still by finding the exact words being repeated.

### Preventing a mistake

The best way to avoid an accusation of plagiarism is by always making sure that you have followed good standards and practice throughout your research and at every step of your writing.

This means: quoting other peoples' work and ideas properly; keeping copies of all the material you have used; keeping copies of the various stages of what you have written; making sure that you have listed all references that you used - and doing this methodically; as well as keeping (dated) notes of all your own ideas. It also implies performing a proper literature review and asking your professors and/or supervisor, in the case of any doubt.

Keeping copies of all the material that you use during your research might seem like an arduous task and an additional complication added to an already difficult job. However, it can avoid many problems if you are ever being accused of plagiarism, or of any other form of academic misconduct, as well as being very useful if you ever wish to revise, extend, or re-publish your work.

As a proof of your honesty, it is both wise and – even better – 'safe', to keep a copy of your work at every stage of your writing and research (i.e. separate dated versions), rather than regretting not having done that once your material has already been published.

### How to proceed after being accused

If you consider yourself innocent of plagiarism, it is not (unfortunately) a case of being innocent until proved guilty: it is now time to prove your honesty. This accusation can easily have a profound effect on your professional reputation as an author or as a researcher; it can also seriously affect your relationship with the university or research centre you belong to, or the book or journal you publish in.

To proceed, firstly find out what you are specifically accused of. Next, make use of all the proofs you have to be able to demonstrate, not only your innocence, but also your professionalism, and your respect and good manners as an author or researcher.

Copies of literature and work: As was said previously, keeping copies of all the material you use – and the references you have consulted – is a really good idea. That includes any personal notes: and, although it is rare, it is possible that authors might have assimilated sentences or ideas after reading them, and then they end up writing these in their publications (possibly innocently) as if they were their own. If you are ever accused of plagiarism due to a mistake of

this kind, being able to show how, why and when it happened can really help you, especially if you also show the genuine willingness to add in a proper quote, attribution or reference to your paper.

You can also present proofs of other material, or in other forms, such as emails, notebooks, or tapes and transcriptions of interviews. All this can help you to prove: both, how you did your work and research; and where and when you got the information that you used.

You can also show your previous work: this is a good way to prove that there have been no previous plagiarisms, as well as a way of showing your own style. Sometimes, a radical change in an author's style, vocabulary, or method, can raise suspicions of plagiarism. If you can prove, in this way, that all your work has the same (or a developing) style, there is therefore less doubt that it is yours.

### **The importance of showing commitment**

Even though you may consider yourself innocent, you should – at least – show due respect for, and commitment to, any investigation procedure.

- \* It is advisable to stop any type of researching and publishing (at least on this particular topic, or in this area), while an investigation of your research paper or article is on-going.
- \* It is also advisable to surrender a copy (electronic and otherwise) of all material (described above) to a 'third party' (like a solicitor, your departmental head, or to your editor), almost immediately on receipt of the accusation: though you should also keep your originals safely and securely.
- \* Don't touch, or alter, or even open these files up again, after you hear of the accusation. This applies not just to the final version; but any and all of the previous versions. This way you might be able to "prove" something; if – however – the original copies (and any previous versions) have been altered subsequently, after the accusation, then you will have much less of a 'solid ground' on which to claim any sort of a reasonable defence.

These are reasonably good ways of showing commitment and respect for the procedures of the academic world.

And, once you have managed to prove your innocence, it is also important that you dedicate some considerable time and effort afterwards towards "improving" your image. Even though it has now been demonstrated that you didn't commit any academic misconduct, your name has been under suspicion (publically), and you do not know for how long you will be remembered in this way.

### **Editorial services**

In addition to copying from other people, some authors copy some text, or sometimes some paragraphs, or even a whole section, from their own publications. They then ask their 'language editor' to rewrite their text, so that it will not appear as self-plagiarism. Typically, this can happen when a graduate student wants to write a thesis based on his/her articles (or visa versa), but does not have sufficient time.

In such cases, editors can sometimes offer a paraphrasing service, after making sure that the author has actually written the published paper. As mentioned, there are also some paraphrasing web-based computer programmes.

If ESL authors feel they have problems with producing good English-language text, they can sometimes make a request for some "language correction" of their manuscript, so that the editors can include some slight paraphrasing into their typical editing service. Depending on the amount of "language correction", the journal editors may make a legitimate charge for this. They should not 'demand' or 'require' being cited as a co-author, except in exceptional circumstances where they, as an independent author or researcher, have made an original contribution to the manuscript.