Characteristics of Plagiarism

The following characteristics are based on common knowledge, experience, and a variety of resources that address plagiarism and its attending issues. Common knowledge requires understanding beyond the norm for most characteristics of plagiarism because students need to know when attribution is required and when it is not required. Ideas that are now in the public domain, such as "Big Brother is watching you," do not require attribution beyond using quotation marks. “A modest proposal” is the title of an essay but is so widely used that it does not require attribution. However, other well-known phrases such as, “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” (Orwell, p. 52), or the satirical representation of Poe’s raven require attribution because they are not clearly in the public domain and their creators should be acknowledged. Ultimately, educators need to define for their students what can be acceptably considered "common knowledge" for their assignments.

Acceptable:

- use of Internet accessed sources and materials that are properly attributed to the source or creator
- literal inclusion of material from a text (verbatim quoting) or image with proper attribution
- paraphrasing of material from a text with proper attribution
- using the intellectual or creative property of another individual with that individual's permission and attribution
- authorized use of someone else’s ideas with proper attribution
- providing attribution for the use of texts, ideas, and images that are not the original property, thought, authorship, or creation of the individual or group submitting the
work
- use of any amount of text ranging in length from one sentence up to an entire essay with correct punctuation and proper attribution
- identical essays or products submitted by more than one person (e.g., a cooperative group) with prior authorized permission to do so from the individual approving and evaluating the submission of the work
- establishing and maintaining sustained open communications with the individual who is responsible for approving and evaluating the submission
- use of a consistent style for textual internal citations ( attribution) and references for Works Cited or Works Consulted (i.e., bibliographical) entries

Unacceptable:

- Internet accessed sources and materials that are not properly attributed to the source or creator
- literal inclusion of material from a text or image without proper attribution
- paraphrasing of material from a text without proper attribution
- claiming and/or using the intellectual or creative property of another as one’s own property
- unauthorized use of someone else’s ideas without proper attribution
- any use of texts, ideas, and images that are not the original property, thought, authorship, or creation of the individual or group submitting the work as his or her original and independent effort
- use of "for hire" writers via the Internet or one-on-one (local) contact; original work that is completed on contract by a "ghost writer" or via an Internet source which the user of that work submits as his or her own work is unethical and considered to be plagiarism.
- a criminal offense that reflects negatively upon the intent and character of the offender and those who have placed their trust in the offender
- a violation that ranges from one sentence to an entire essay or other completed work and from a singular instance to multiple occasions
- identical essays or products submitted by more than one person without prior permission to do so from the individual approving and evaluating the submission
- identical essays or products submitted by the same individual (or as the result of a group effort) for more than one assignment or course
- occasions when one person is caught while other offenders might escape detection or punishment but are not reported by the offender who has been caught or charged with plagiarism
- failure to establish and maintain sustained open communications with the individual who is responsible for approving and evaluating the submission
- mis-matching, intentionally or otherwise, of textual internal citations (attributions)
and references for Works Cited or Works Consulted (i.e., bibliographical) entries

- any instance of deliberate or unintentional disguising of someone’s claim to intellectual or artistic ownership