Description: To unlock the mystery of what is considered plagiarism, this text aims to outline the different forms of plagiarism to help writers avoid the typical pitfalls that can occur when they write their own texts.

Plagiarism continues to rear its ugly head in the academic world. All of us have heard of it. All of us think we know what it is. But what *is* it exactly? According to the Oxford Dictionary, plagiarism is defined as:

> "The practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015).

This definition appears relatively straightforward, but what does it really mean and how can this definition help writers avoid plagiarism? How does this explanation relate to real life?

Plagiarism is not just a simple "copy and paste" action on the keyboard. Many people plagiarize and do not even know it. In the current day and age, *not* plagiarizing someone else's work is extremely difficult because so much information is easily accessible and right at our finger tips. We are constantly bombarded with ideas, information, facts, opinions, etc. from all different kinds of media. At some point, one begins to wonder, "Did this idea come from me? Is this just 'common knowledge'? Can I include these thoughts in my texts, claim them as my own and have a clear conscience about it?" Here's a reality check: when writers decide to incorporate any ideas that did not come from themselves, this is considered stealing, and stealing (in any shape or form) is wrong.

If we as writers intend to overcome the temptation of plagiarizing, we must look at it from a different angle. The problem stems from the fact that most of us were never formally trained on this subject. Technology has developed so quickly that information is too readily available and easy to claim as one's own, and the academic world has not been able to properly educate people about dos and don'ts. So we must begin taking an active role and start being more aware of what plagiarism means and what the consequences are of overstepping boundaries. How do we do this? We can approach it as if we are declaring war. Consider, for example, what the ancient Chinese warrior, Sun Tzu, said when going to war:

> "Know your enemy and know yourself and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster" – Sun Tzu ("Sun Tzu Quotes", 2015).

The same applies here. We have to know our enemy (plagiarism) and ourselves (as writers) to overcome this challenge. While many people think plagiarism involves simply a word-for-word copying of original source text, this is only a small piece of the puzzle. There are in fact many different forms. Let's look at thirteen different types of plagiarism:

> **Abort Mission** (Military Terms and Definitions, 2011): The entire assignment contains proper citation but the writer includes barely any original ideas, thoughts or work ("What is Plagiarism?", 2014).

> **Backfire** (Military Terms and Definitions, 2011): Writers reuse their own work from a previously written assignment and do not cite themselves ("What is Plagiarism?", 2014).

Camouflage Attempt (German Federal Office of Languages, 2003): This occurs when the writer preserves the core of someone else's text and ideas but simply changes a couple of terms or phrases without citing the original source ("Did I Plagiarize? The Types and Severity of Plagiarism Violations", 2014).

Close Terrain (German Federal Office of Languages, 2003): Similar to the "camouflage attempt", this occurs when proper citation is included but the text's structure is still too similar to the original ("Did I Plagiarize? The Types and Severity of Plagiarism Violations", 2014).

Misfire (German Federal Office of Languages, 2003): The writer fails to interpret the material correctly or takes the source material out of context ("Did I Plagiarize? The Types and Severity of Plagiarism Violations", 2014).

Mixed Explosives (German Federal Office of Languages, 2003): In this situation, the writer copies (rather than paraphrases) work from many different sources and attempts to paste them together to make the combined materials seem like one cohesive text ("What is Plagiarism?", 2014).

Mixed Minefield (Military Terms and Definitions, 2011): Similar to "mixed explosives", this occurs when writers paraphrase (rather than just copy) information from many different sources and "glue" it all together to make it appear as if it is their own work ("What is Plagiarism?", 2014).

Mixed Tactics (Military Terms and Definitions, 2011): Located between "mixed explosives" and "mixed minefield", this technique blends properly cited sources with word-for-word texts without proper citation ("Did I Plagiarize? The Types and Severity of Plagiarism Violations", 2014).

Missing Visual identification (German Federal Office of Languages, 2003): This is plagiarism in which the writer incorporates images, figures, graphs or charts in his/her own work and does not cite the original source (Northern Illinois University, 2004).

Natural Disaster (Military Terms and Definitions, 2011): This occurs when writers leave out citations because they believe the material is simply "common knowledge" ("What is Plagiarism?", 2014).

Partial Mission (Military Terms and Definitions, 2011): A "partial mission" occurs when the writer is careless or cites sources correctly only some of the time. Examples include forgetting to properly cite another writer's ideas (with quotation marks) within a longer paraphrase or failing to note other pertinent information, such as page numbers or names of publishers ("Did I Plagiarize? The Types and Severity of Plagiarism Violations", 2014).

The "Ruse" (Military Terms and Definitions, 2011): This involves citing source material that is either false or simply does not exist ("What is Plagiarism?", 2014).

Vague Situation (German Federal Office of Languages, 2003): Everybody makes mistakes, and this situation arises when a writer includes the wrong author or simply uses wrong words in a citation ("Did I Plagiarize? The Types and Severity of Plagiarism Violations", 2014).

Now that we have successfully done our "intelligence gathering", we do not have to worry about being a prisoner of war, as there are severe consequences attached to plagiarism (ranging from being expelled from school to legal actions). Knowing yourself as a writer is also important. Once you have found your own voice, you can legitimately add the statements and ideas of others to your work to support your view. Just remember to keep your writing balanced. It should feature an equal amount of your thinking along with proper support from other sources to back up your claims.

Armed with this knowledge of the different faces of plagiarism, you are now ready to tackle your writing projects and avoid common pitfalls. So go out into the world, write from your heart and give credit where credit is due. As long as you have your own, original plan of action and properly cite the sources you use, your ideas will shine through for the world to admire.

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Further reading:
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