Avoid Plagiarism When Writing Research Reports

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn how to avoid plagiarism when researching information for a research report.
• Practice avoiding plagiarism.
• Discuss the strategy and how they can apply it to their independent writing and research.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text and anchor chart onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.

1. Focus

Explain Avoiding Plagiarism

Say: Plagiarism is the act of copying sentences, phrases, paragraphs, or ideas from other sources without giving these sources credit or acknowledgment. There are some things we can do to avoid plagiarizing other people’s ideas. Today we will look at how to do this.

Model Avoiding Plagiarism

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Read aloud the original and then the unacceptable paraphrase.

Original: The acid in the water dissolves the shells of the tiny creatures that are a primary source of food for salmon in the ocean stage of their life cycle.

Unacceptable Paraphrase: The acid in ocean water dissolves shells of small animals that are an important source of food for salmon living in the ocean.

Modeling Text

Say: We often think we are avoiding plagiarism by rearranging words or replacing words in our sources with other words that mean the same thing. Even though the paraphrase has reworded the original text, it is still an example of plagiarism if we don’t provide credit to the original source. It is too close to the original. What can we do to avoid plagiarism?

Read aloud each tip on the anchor chart and explain how students can avoid plagiarizing when they write.

Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism

1. As you take notes, put everything that you copy directly from the source in quotes.
2. Try to write just key words from your sources.
3. If you take more detailed notes, paraphrase the information.
4. Make sure to write down the source of your information so you can reference it in your writing.
5. Recognize common knowledge facts.

Avoiding Plagiarism Anchor Chart

Read tip 1. Say: Sometimes with complicated information, you might want to copy it so you can think about it later. If you do, make sure to put quotes around
your notes. This will remind you not to use the same words in your writing or, if you do, to put quotes around it and tell where the information comes from.

Read tip 2. **Say:** It’s tempting to write everything you find, but the best way to avoid copying someone else’s writing is to just list keywords in your notes. That way, when it’s time to write, you have to fill in the gaps with your own words.

Read tip 3. **Say:** If you can’t just use keywords, make sure to paraphrase the information. Read the information, think about what it says, reread it, and then cover it and write out the notes in your own words. Then check your paraphrase against the original. But remember, even if you paraphrase another person’s idea, you still need to give the author credit.

Read tip 4. **Say:** Always make sure to note the author, name of book or website, and page numbers on your note-taking chart. You will need this information when you want to provide credit for an idea in your draft.

Read tip 5. **Say:** Some information is common knowledge. Usually this is information that can be found in many sources, such as that whales are mammals or that the American Civil War began in 1861. If you are not sure an idea is common knowledge, credit the source.

**2. Rehearse**

**Talk About Avoiding Plagiarism**

Invite students to work with partners on the tips from the anchor chart and tell how they will use them. If students have already begun taking notes, ask them to share their notes with their partners and think about whether they need to apply some of the tips to avoid plagiarism. If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

**Share Ideas**

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share ideas about ways they can avoid plagiarizing the work of other authors and why this is important.

**Strategies to Support ELs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Intermediate and Advanced</th>
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<tr>
<td>This skill is too difficult for beginning ELs. As other students work with partners or independently, work with ELs one on one to reinforce writing and research skills.</td>
<td>Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.</td>
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**3. Independent Writing and Conferring**

**Say:** Today we learned that we must be careful not to plagiarize the writings of other authors. We learned some tips that can help us avoid plagiarizing. Remember these tips as you research your topic.

Encourage students to use the tips on the anchor chart as they research their report topics during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

**4. Share**

Bring students together. Invite students to share how they applied the tips for avoiding plagiarism as they did their research. Ask them to provide examples.