If a quotation is very long and if some parts of it relate to matters other than the subject you are referring to, you may omit portions of the original quote and indicate the omission by inserting ellipses (three periods (...)--in the quoted material. If the portion omitted is the end of a sentence, insert four periods--three to indicate omission and the fourth to indicate the end of the original sentence. In this case, the closing quotation mark follows the fourth period.

The only thing worse than misquoting your sources is plagiarizing them. Because of your inexperience with your theme, it may be tempting to use the sophisticated language of the trained historians you are reading. In most cases, their expertise enables them to make their points clearly, and it is easy to fall into the dangerous habit of using their words instead of your own. Remember that your instructor is also a historian and can tell the difference between the language of someone who has spent years researching a topic and that of the average history student. Second, and more important, thinking is learning. If you substitute the simple task of copying for the more difficult but rewarding one of thinking about the words in your paper, you are doing yourself a disservice. Finally, plagiarism is cheating and is a very serious violation of college rules. The penalty can be severe, sometimes leading to expulsion.

When taking notes, never copy the author's words unless you intend to quote them in your paper. In that case, be sure to put very clear quotation marks on your note card at the beginning and end of each word-for-word passage. In all other instances, summarize the author's ideas and information in your own words. Of course, proper names, dates, statistics, and other very specific facts need to be recorded exactly as they appear in the material you are using. Even here, you cannot say he was "a great patriot, a great general and our greatest president" and it is close to this without plagiarizing.

There will always be some resemblance between the points that you make in your paper and those that are in your research sources. This is even necessary if you are to correctly interpret your sources. However, all the words in your paper (except for documented quotations) must be your own.

Avoiding Plagiarism

The increasing use of computers in note taking and writing intensifies the difficulty of avoiding plagiarism. If you enter your research notes directly into a computer (rather than using note cards), be sure to put your notes into files that are different from the files that you are using for photocopying and downloading sources from the Web.

It is possible to print out source material that you find on CD-ROMs or the Web. And you can take a book or article from the library shelf over to the copy machine. Whenever you come across a source of modest length (such as an article) that you feel may be very important to your research, photocopying it or downloading and printing it may be preferable to note taking because it will save time. But don't fool yourself. At some point you will have to read and take notes on all this copied pages or downloaded or printed-out computer files. Don't copy or print out anything without reading enough of it to know that it contains material central to your theme.

Photocopying and Downloading Sources

from the Web

It is possible to print out source material that you find on CD-ROMs or the Web. And you can take a book or article from the library shelf over to the copy machine. Whenever you come across a source of modest length (such as an article) that you feel may be very important to your research, photocopying it or downloading and printing it may be

Taking Notes on a Computer.

If you can bring your sources to your computer or, better yet, bring your laptop computer to your sources, you have another note-taking option. You can use word processing to create your notes, and the computer can organize them. For example, you can code your notes and the files you put them in with a term or terms that will allow you to bring them together by using the Search function of your word processing program. Be sure you know your program very well, especially if it does not have special tools for creating and organizing notes. Even a simple program can be useful if you create a series of folders for the major aspects of your paper and type your notes into files within those folders. Be sure to name each file with a word or two that refers to its content. In this way, if you later change the organization of your paper, you will have a clue as to which folders need to be moved to new folders. Also, when you begin to write your paper, be careful to save these text files and folders under names that cannot be confused with the names you created for your notes. Someday almost all research notes will be made in this way. If you are fortunate enough to have the hardware and software, learn how to use them to their fullest potential.

The Computer and Plagiarism

The increasing use of computers in note taking and writing intensifies the difficulty of avoiding plagiarism. If you enter your research notes directly into a computer (rather than using note cards), be sure to put your notes into files that are different from the files that you are using for...
drafts of your paper. Never cut and paste words from a source into any draft of your paper. In your note files, clearly distinguish between quoted and paraphrased material by enclosing the former in quotation marks. It is also wise to change the color or the font of quoted material so that you can never confuse it with your own words.

The computer revolution has also created a new temptation of downloading an entire paper from the Internet. People trying to money and students overwhelmed by the task of conducting independent research and writing come together at Web sites where thousands of papers are available. Submitting such work as if it were your own is dishonest and foolish. Software that allows you to search the Internet for plagiarized papers can be used by your instructor to search for the source of "your" paper. Don't play this dangerous game. It has serious consequences.

The Art of Paraphrasing

To help you avoid plagiarism, here is a passage from J. Joseph Hutchmaker and Warren I. Sussman, eds., Wilson's Diplomacy: An International Symposium (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenckman, 1973), 13, followed by two paraphrasings. Paraphrase A constitutes plagiarism; paraphrase B does not. The subject is the diplomacy of Woodrow Wilson. Here is the original text:

Wilson took personal responsibility for the conduct of the important diplomacy of the United States chiefly because he believed that it was wise, right, and necessary for him to do so. Believing as he did that the people had temporarily vested their sovereignty in foreign affairs in him, he could not delegate responsibility in this field to any individual. His scholarly training and self-disciplined habits of work made him so much more efficient than his advisors that he must have thought that the most economical way of doing important diplomatic business was for him to do it himself. Experience in dealing with subordinates who sometimes tried to defeat his purposes also led him to conclude that it was the safest method, for he, and not his subordinates, bore the responsibility to the American people and to history for the consequences of his policies.

PARAPHRASE A Wilson took personal responsibility for conducting diplomacy because he believed it was right for him to do so. Believing that the people had vested their sovereignty in foreign affairs in him, he couldn't delegate this responsibility. His scholarly training and self-discipline made him more efficient than his advisors. He thought that the most economical way of doing important business was to do it himself. Experience in dealing with subordinates who sometimes tried to defeat his purposes led him to conclude that it was the safest method because he bore responsibility to the American people for the consequences.

PARAPHRASE B Wilson felt personally responsible for major diplomacy because he believed that the voters had entrusted him with such matters. He was more capable than his advisors in this area. He, and not his advisors, was responsible to the people.

Paraphrase A is too close to the original. Rather than recording the main points of the passage, it repeats much of the text word for word. Not only is it time-consuming to take such lengthy notes, but the unacknowledged use of the author's wording constitutes plagiarism. Paraphrase B records only the principal point of the passage— that Wilson decided major foreign policy issues on his own because he felt personally responsible to the people in such matters. It does not copy phrases from the original text. This type of note taking saves time, avoids plagiarism, and still conveys the central idea of the passage.

Paraphrasing that reduces your readings to their essential points and uses your own words is not easy to do at first. But by mastering this technique, you will avoid plagiarism and produce a finished paper that is truly yours.

Guidelines for Avoiding Plagiarism

1. When taking notes from sources, do not use the exact words of the source; instead, paraphrase to summarize source material. If you enter research notes directly into a computer, be sure to put your notes in a file separate from the file you are using for draft versions of your paper.

2. When you intend to quote from a source, be sure to place quotation marks around the exact phrase, sentence, or passage you intend to use and to identify its source. If you enter these selections directly into a computer, change the color or font of the quotation to avoid confusion with your own words.

3. When writing your paper, be certain to acknowledge your sources and to correctly document quoted material.

Plagiarism and Group Work

Working with other students can be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Still, group work can lead to forms of plagiarism different from those arising from individual research. If the work of your team is evaluated as a whole, each member of the group is responsible to see to it that no part of the group's work has been taken improperly from research sources. Do not let the fact that your work is a group product lessen your concern for this vital matter.