

Things that Make English Teachers Crazy

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These are some characteristics in a paper that might make an instructor start to look to see if a paper is plagiarized; in and of themselves, these are not absolute signs of plagiarism. But these are things that will make a teacher a little crazy.

1. **Immaculate Conception papers.** Paper topics that change at the last minute and come in with no pre-writing or drafts that have minimal corrections look suspicious. Start on your paper early, have rough drafts, and be able to show your research.
2. **Uncited direct quotes, statistics or ideas that come from others.** Good journalists include attributions but no citations in their articles; sloppy journalists and many websites offer neither. Students, however, must include both attributions and citations in academic papers.
3. **Words and sentences that don't sound like you.** Do not try to sound like your sources. If the words and phrases are unfamiliar, it is difficult to use them correctly, and consulting with the original source to try to use them correctly can easily lead a student plagiarize accidentally—if you try to sound like your sources, you might end up sounding more like them than you intended.
4. **Ideas that are very familiar.** Your teacher does not want you to just repeat back to them what they have said, so always try to add your own stamp onto an idea—give an example or extend on the sources idea of apply what they say to what you know. And remember that you don't always have to agree with what a source says!
5. **Missing context or information or lack of logical transitions.** Sometimes students believe that if they can see a connection between a statement and a quote that the connection is clear to everyone—especially the teacher. Not only is this false, but what many teachers are looking for IS how you explain the connections between your assertions and the quote that supports it. The link that your mind is making is the most important thing for the teacher to see!
6. **Inconsistent/improper work cited page.** Know what style of citation you are supposed to use, keep the handout or book right in front of you while you are doing it, ask questions when you are confused, and go to the Writing Center to double check. The first thing I look at on a research paper is the Works Cited page. If it is a mess, the paper almost always is too.