

PHY315/PHY307 Plagiarism Exercise – Answers

Essay extract 1

This is blatant plagiarism. Large sections of the original article have simply been copied and pasted into the essay.

No reference has been provided to the original source material.

Essay extract 2

This is clear plagiarism. The writing is a very close paraphrase of the original material. The few changes made – deleted words or changing “in addition” to “also” – are not enough to disguise the fact that the material has been copied.

There is no reference to the original material. Even though there is a bibliographic entry referring to physicsworld.com, there is no citation in the text to show how or where this has been used. The bibliographic entry is too vague to be useful. Also, where material has been published in print, this should be indicated, rather than the (possibly ephemeral) web address.

Essay extract 3

This is plagiarism. The writing is a close paraphrase of the original material. Changing a few words (“several” to “a number”, or “reducing” to “minimising”) or reordering clauses in sentences (“once the battery is exhausted the vehicle cannot be used” instead of “the vehicle cannot be used when the battery is exhausted”) does not constitute expressing the material in your own words.

There is no reference to the original material. Even though there is a bibliographic entry, there is no citation in the text to show how or where this has been used. The bibliographic entry is also incomplete – it must make it easy for the reader to locate the original source.

Essay extract 4

This is plagiarism. The writing is again a close paraphrase of the original material. Changing a few words (“weaknesses” to “drawbacks”, or “narrow” to “restricted”) or reordering clauses in sentences (“degradation of the battery occurs after several cycles of discharging and recharging” instead of “many cycles of discharging and recharging the battery degrades its performance”) does not constitute expressing the material in your own words.

A proper reference to the original material is provided, which will allow the reader easily to locate it, and it is correctly cited in the text to show where it has been referenced. The only criticism might be that the extent of the material taken from the source is not clear.

Essay extract 5

There is no plagiarism, as there is no attempt to use the original authors’ words without due accreditation. However, the style is totally inappropriate. Quoted text is used here for no other purpose than to avoid plagiarism! The only justification for using quotations in your writing would be if you were commenting on the original author’s style or exact wording, for example in a book review, or where you were using a formal definition, where the precise wording might be important.

The original source is correctly referenced.

Essay extract 6

This is plagiarism! Although the original authors' words have not been used, their ideas have been taken with absolutely no acknowledgement.

Essay extract 7

This is not plagiarism. The material has been expressed in the student's own words, and due accreditation for the information and ideas provided by the original authors has been given, with a correct reference and proper citation markers in the text.

(For a real essay, however, it would not be expected that individual sections or paragraphs would be summaries of a single source. Material from many appropriate sources should be assimilated and synthesised into the writer's own structured account.)

Essay extract 8

As you will have noticed, the material in this extract is very similar to that in extract 7. However this time the referencing is not adequate. The impression is given that only the specific number "250 km" has been taken from the cited source, whereas in fact most of the information in the paragraph has been drawn from there. It is just as important to accredit general, qualitative information as specific values or quotations.

As explained in the material handed out at the beginning of the module, plagiarism is taken very seriously by both the University and the Department. The Turnitin detection software flags up many cases where students have "borrowed" material from published sources, whether it has been simply copied or restructured and paraphrased as in some of the examples above. Such practices are also very often readily apparent to markers, as writing based too closely on other sources tends to show abrupt changes in style.

The most frequent reason students give for plagiarising sources is laziness or lack of time, rather than a deliberate intention to deceive. This, however, does not lessen the seriousness of the offence, and penalties will always be imposed. (Receiving zero for the essay will make it very difficult to pass the module as a whole!)

The only reliable way to produce an acceptable piece of writing in your own words is to read widely, make sufficiently detailed notes on the important and relevant content of what you have read, produce an outline giving the structure of what you wish to say, and then express the assimilated and synthesised ideas without referring back to the original sources – apart, perhaps to check particular facts, but not their mode of expression.

For further information and exercises on identifying and avoiding plagiarism, you may wish to use the University Library's Information Skills Resource entitled "Guide to Plagiarism". This is available online at:

https://librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/shef-only/info_skills/plagiarism.html