

Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing by Miguel Roig, Ph.D.

1. An ethical writer ALWAYS acknowledges the contributions of others and the source of his/her ideas.
2. Any verbatim text taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks.
3. We must always acknowledge every source that we use in our writing; whether we paraphrase it, summarize it, or enclose it quotations.
4. When we summarize, we condense, in our own words, a substantial amount of material into a short paragraph or perhaps even into a sentence.
5. Whether we are paraphrasing or summarizing we must always identify the source of our information.
6. When paraphrasing and/or summarizing others' work we must reproduce the exact meaning of the other author's ideas or facts using our words and sentence structure.
7. In order to make substantial modifications to the original text that result in a proper paraphrase, the author must have a thorough understanding of the ideas and terminology being used.
8. A responsible writer has an ethical responsibility to readers, and to the author/s from whom s/he is borrowing, to respect others' ideas and words, to credit those from whom we borrow, and whenever possible, to use one's own words when paraphrasing.
9. When in doubt as to whether a concept or fact is common knowledge, provide a citation.
10. Authors who submit a manuscript for publication containing data, reviews, conclusions, etc., that have already been disseminated in some significant manner (e.g., published as an article in another journal, presented at a conference, posted on the internet) must clearly indicate to the editors and readers the nature of the previous dissemination.
11. Authors of complex studies should heed the advice previously put forth by Angell & Relman(1989). If the results of a single complex study are best presented as a 'cohesive' single whole, they should not be partitioned into individual papers. Furthermore, if there is any doubt as to whether a paper submitted for publication represents fragmented data, authors should enclose other papers (published or unpublished) that might be part of the paper under consideration (Kassirer & Angell, 1995)
12. Because some instances of plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and even some writing practices that might otherwise be acceptable (e.g., extensive paraphrasing or quoting of key elements of a book) can constitute copyright infringement, authors are strongly encouraged to become familiar with basic elements of copyright law.

13. While there are some situations where text recycling is an acceptable practice, it may not be so in other situations. Authors are urged to adhere to the spirit of ethical writing and avoid reusing their own previously published text, unless it is done in a manner consistent with standard scholarly conventions (e.g., by using of quotations and proper paraphrasing).
14. Authors are strongly urged to double-check their citations. Specifically, authors should always ensure that each reference notation appearing in the body of the manuscript corresponds to the correct citation listed in the reference section and that each source listed in the reference section has been cited at some point in the manuscript. In addition, authors should also ensure that all elements of a citation (e.g., spelling of authors' names, volume number of journal, pagination) are derived directly from the original paper, rather than from a citation that appears on a secondary source. Finally, authors should ensure that credit is given to those authors who first reported the phenomenon being studied.
15. The references used in a paper should only be those that are directly related to its contents. The intentional inclusion of references of questionable relevance for purposes of manipulating a journal's or a paper's impact factor or a paper's chances of acceptance is an unacceptable practice.
16. Authors should follow a simple rule: Strive to obtain the actual published paper. When the published paper cannot be obtained, cite the specific version of the material being used, whether it is conference presentation, abstract, or an unpublished manuscript.
17. Generally, when describing others' work, do not rely on a secondary summary of that work. It is a deceptive practice, reflects poor scholarly standards, and can lead to a flawed description of the work described.
18. If an author must rely on a secondary source (e.g., textbook) to describe the contents of a primary source (e.g., an empirical journal article), s/he should consult writing manuals used in her discipline to follow the proper convention to do so. Above all, always indicate the actual source of the information being reported.
19. When borrowing heavily from a source, authors should always craft their writing in a way that makes clear to readers which ideas are their own and which are derived from the source being consulted.
20. When appropriate, authors have an ethical responsibility to report evidence that runs contrary to their point of view. In addition, evidence that we use in support of our position must be methodologically sound. When citing supporting studies that suffer from methodological, statistical, or other types of shortcomings, such flaws must be pointed out to the reader.
21. Authors have an ethical obligation to report all aspects of the study that may impact the independent replicability of their research.

22. Researchers have an ethical responsibility to report the results of their studies according to their a priori plans. Any post hoc manipulations that may alter the results initially obtained, such as the elimination of outliers or the use of alternative statistical techniques, must be clearly described along with an acceptable rationale for using such techniques.
23. Authorship determination should be discussed prior to commencing a research collaboration and should be based on established guidelines, such as those of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors.
24. Only those individuals who have made substantive contributions to a project merit authorship in a paper.
25. Faculty-student collaborations should follow the same criteria to establish authorship. Mentors must exercise great care to neither award authorship to students whose contributions do not merit it, nor to deny authorship and due credit to the work of students.
26. Academic or professional ghost authorship in the sciences is ethically unacceptable.
27. Authors must become aware of possible conflicts of interest in their own research and to make every effort to disclose those situations (e.g., stock ownership, consulting agreements to the sponsoring organization) that may pose actual or potential conflicts of interest.”