Avoiding Plagiarism: Paraphrasing Practice

November 10, 2014
Kaplan University Writing Center
Paraphrasing Practice

Consider this passage from Jack Schofield's article "Spambusters" that appeared in The Guardian on June 26, 2003:

"It's time to stop spam. The percentage of spam has grown from 7 percent of all email in 2001 to 45 percent now, and in another year or two, it could be high enough to make email unusable. Perhaps we can never stop spam completely, but we must stem the flood before it's too late" (Schofield, 2003, p. 1).
We must stop spam. The percentage of spam has grown from 7 percent of all email in 2001 to 45 percent now, and in another year or two, it could be high enough to make email unusable. Perhaps we can't completely stop spam, but we must stem the flood before it's too late.

A. This is plagiarism because the sentence structure and wording are almost identical to the original, and no credit is given to Schofield, the original author.

B. This is not plagiarism. It is an acceptable paraphrase of the original, and since it is not word-for-word identical to the original, no credit needs to be given to the original author.
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Paraphrasing Practice: Version 2

We must stop spam. The percentage of spam has grown from 7 percent of all email in 2001 to 45 percent now, and in another year or two, it could be high enough to make email unusable. Perhaps we can't completely stop spam, but we must stem the flood before it's too late. (Schofield, 2003, p. 1)

A. This is plagiarism. Even though credit is given to the author, the sentence structure and wording are too close to the original. Without quotation marks, the assumption is that it is a paraphrase, and should therefore be in the writer's own words, and this is not.

B. This is not plagiarism. It is an acceptable paraphrase of the original, and it gives credit to the original author.
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A. While the amount of credit given to the author has certainly increased, this is still plagiarism because the text continues to borrow too much from the original wording and structure.

B. This is not plagiarism. It contains quotes and acceptable paraphrasing, all credited to the original author.
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Paraphrasing Practice: Version 4

Everyone with email knows how irritating spam is, and it's only going to get worse. As Schofield (2003) points out, "7 percent of all email in 2001" (p.1) was spam, but now that has grown to 45 percent. He adds that at this rate, email will be overtaken and cease to be usable. We must act now if we want to still have functioning email in a few years.

A. This is plagiarism. It does not contain enough quotes from the original author. Further, it contains new information that is not attributed to any source

B. This is not plagiarism because Schofield's quotation and a later paraphrase of his ideas are properly cited. Further, the first sentence can be considered "common knowledge." The fact that spam is irritating is widely known.
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Plagiarism and APA Resources in the Kaplan University Writing Center

- Basic Citation Guidelines
- What Is Plagiarism (podcast)
- Avoiding Plagiarism (transcript with link to interactive video)
- Common Citations in APA Format
- Plagiarism Information Page (PIP)