Ethical Use of Print and Online Sources in Academic Papers
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Because the essential function of a university is to develop and disseminate knowledge and because the creation of knowledge is a collective activity, members of a university community frequently write in response to the work of other writers. All of us — undergraduates, graduate students, and professors — acquaint ourselves with information and ideas by reading print and digital texts created by others, and we write in order to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and/or extend that body of knowledge.

The use of sources is an important academic skill. During your years at the university, you should become proficient in locating sources, evaluating them for relevance and credibility, integrating information and ideas from other texts into your own work, and citing sources using the conventions appropriate to your major discipline. Whenever you write a paper drawing upon outside sources, the ethical standards of the university require that you acknowledge any information, idea, or language that originates with another writer.

Quotation
If you copy material verbatim from any source, whether print or digital, you must (1) put quotation marks around the verbatim material and (2) provide a citation to its source. Be very careful to copy quoted material accurately.

Paraphrase
“Paraphrase” does not mean copying someone else’s sentences with a few changes in the wording. Instead, it means putting another writer’s ideas into your own words, crafting your own sentences, and using the ideas to advance your own line of thought. When you paraphrase, cite the source.

Citation
Style manuals such as those of the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Modern Language Association (MLA) offer extensive guidelines on using and citing quoted and paraphrased material. These and other style guidelines are available in any good writing handbook and at Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Plagiarism
Use of borrowed ideas, information, or language without appropriate citation is plagiarism. This is a serious academic offense. UNO faculty members do not accept plagiarized work. When plagiarism is egregious, faculty members are encouraged to give a grade of F for the course and to report the incident to the department chair, the dean, and the office of Academic and Student Affairs. Students who plagiarize more than once are subject to severe disciplinary action.

If you have a question about using or citing another writer’s work, DO NOT GUESS. Check with your instructor or a consultant at the UNO Writing Center. Bring a printout of the original source and your paper to the consultation.

Rev. April, 2010