THE USE OF SOURCES*

A writer’s facts, ideas, and phraseology should be regarded as his/her property. Any person who uses a writer’s ideas or phraseology without giving due credit is guilty of plagiarism.

Information may be put into a paper without a footnote or some kind of documentation only if it meets all of the following conditions:

- It may be found in several books on the subject.
- It is written entirely in the words of the student.
- It is not paraphrased from any particular source.
- It therefore belongs to common knowledge.

Generally, if a student writes while looking at a source or while looking at notes taken from a source, a footnote should be given. (It is important, thus, when taking notes from an article or book to indicate clearly the source of the information, and whether the information as taken down is a quotation, a paraphrase, or simply one’s own distillation of or thoughts on the material.)

Whenever any idea is taken from a specific source, even when the student writes the idea entirely in his/her own words, there must be a footnote giving credit to the author responsible for the idea. Of course, methods of documentation vary and it is possible to cite in the text itself rather than in a footnote. The point is that the student should give credit when credit is due and that he/she should give the credit in a manner specified by the instructor.

The student is entirely responsible for knowing and following the principles of paraphrasing. The student should never retain a sentence pattern and substitute synonyms for the original words. He/she should never retain the original words and alter the sentence pattern. In other words, paraphrasing means alteration of sentence pattern and changing the words.

Any direct quotation should be footnoted (or documented in an acceptable fashion). Even when a student uses only one unusual or key word from a passage, that word should be quoted. If a brief phrase that is common is used as it occurs in the source, the words should be in quotation marks. The source of every quotation should be given in a footnote or in the prescribed manner.

A student who uses a secondary source (and this includes the editor’s introduction to a primary text) must remember that the very act of consulting such a source should be considered as a pledge that the student will use the material according to the principles stated above.

*This is a slightly adapted form of The Use of Sources in Writing Research Papers in the Emory University College of Arts and Sciences (1964-65).