


See: Using this Book

Welcome! You will be using this book to learn more about the scholarly dialogue, your position within it, and how to avoid embarrassing mistakes. This book contains three chapters. Each chapter contains some information and an activity.

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- Each section has an activity to complete, so pay attention to these:



Ch. 1: You & Your "Voice"

When you first start researching early in your academic life, you might not think you have your own "position" or "voice." You might think research is not for you--that there is a right way to "sound" academic, and that your voice doesn't sound right.

It is important for you to know that by choosing to attend a university, you have become a member of this academic institution, and in that willingness to be here, you have also joined the larger **academic conversation**. Being here makes you a participant in the **scholarly dialogue**, and it is important to develop your identity as a writer in this "conversation." Your identity as an academic writer might not happen overnight, but as you write more papers and do more research, this identity will take form. Paying attention to the process as it happens will develop your skills and make you feel confident as a contributor to the academic conversation. **This is finding your voice!**



As you read texts, watch videos, explore academic material, and listen to lectures, you will gravitate toward an idea or aspect of a topic that interests you. By weighing various pieces of information in your mind, you are consciously or unconsciously making decisions about what direction your work will take. Your mind naturally finds what you think is important and starts to sift out the bits you like, while the parts that don't fit fade away. As you practice your research skills, you will learn how to *hear* or *see your inner voice* during this sorting process, and you will learn to express these ideas and thoughts in your work (your outer voice).

You may not think you have much of a "voice" developed, that your work doesn't sound like you--but it does! Just like you have a written signature of your name that identifies you, *your writing has a unique sound*. Your PowerPoint presentations look like yours! The way you represent your thoughts and ideas on paper, on the computer, in the classroom, all have identifying characteristics that reflect you. Your thoughts and ideas are specific to your experiences, your prior knowledge, and your understanding of the information around you. You can't help but be **YOU** all the time, even when you don't necessarily know what that means, and that is why it is important to be very careful when you are expressing your thoughts and ideas.

"Happiness isn't being cheerful all the time
... It's being interested in things -- finding
out more about something, learning how to
appreciate something better, incorporating
something new that fits in with what you
already have."
--John Sharp, psychiatrist at Harvard Medical
School

The research process can be tricky, but with experience, you will become more comfortable with your voice. Along the way, you will learn what things interest you most, and sometimes, these interests can develop into long term research projects. This is how the written academic conversation develops. You, the student, become interested in a particular area along the way, you get introduced to the work of others, and eventually, you contribute to this discussion (in your classroom, or with everyone in a more public format). Sometimes these academic research interests can lead you to your career.



Activity #1: Want to see what your voice looks like? Try a couple of the tools below to have your written voice analyzed.

- [Text Content Analysis Tool](#) by UsingEnglish.com (Paste in a block of text from something you have already written. An email or a paragraph from a paper would work well. Then, scroll down to see the "Text Statistics" about your writing.)
- [Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count](#) by LIWC Inc. (Similar to the item above. Paste in a block of text from something you have already written. An email or a paragraph from a paper would work well. CAUTION: This site keeps a copy of the text you enter.)
- [Personality Analytics](#) by Wolfram|Alpha (Analyze your Facebook profile, including your status updates. CAUTION: This site needs you to log in through Facebook to work, and will collect your personal information.)

Ch. 2: Borrowing & Sharing

Borrowing the ideas of others in the academic conversation is typically done to support your voice and your position on a topic. Borrowing is acceptable in many disciplines and industries, including academia, and each industry comes with its own process of how to handle it. For example, the music industry has a process for borrowing and sharing material, and how content you create can be mixed with existing content to produce new, interesting work. Even if you don't feel it yet, the research process is creative just like this!



Activity #2: Listen to the music in the linked video clips below. Think about what they have in common and how that might be possible.



The first clip is the original song by Brenda Russell. In the second clip, the Bingo Players speed up the chorus and sample it to create the entirety of their song. This sample is then used in the third clip by Flo Rida, who uses the sped-up chorus to enhance the chorus in his own song. But they don't use the original song without giving credit. Both the second and third artists attribute the original in the liner notes of their albums, as well as pay royalty fees to use Brenda Russell's original work. This is how musicians borrow and share each other's work: by enhancing their new works with existing lyrics and beats from other musicians. Not only does Brenda Russell get credit, but she also gains renewed visibility in mainstream music. Read how Brenda feels about it in this [Billboard article](#).

If you have your own "voice" to express, why borrow the work of others? Your thoughts do matter in the greater scholarly dialogue, and **they gain credibility when framed in the context of the existing academic conversation.** It's not that your ideas don't matter--they matter **MORE** because you demonstrate how your thoughts have been inspired by the work of others.

Borrowing and sharing information is what the academic conversation is all about. Rarely does one have a completely original idea to express. Usually, **the studies, texts, and videos you encounter on a topic have themselves been strengthened by borrowing the work of others.** Integrating the ideas of others into your work is an important, but delicate process. Doing this shows the academic community that you have done your homework--that you have a right to be involved in the conversation because you have done enough background work to understand what has come before you. Borrowing the work of others to strengthen your own is a crucial aspect of the scholarly dialogue, but this process is only successful when you show respect by giving credit to the originator of the words or ideas that you are using.



Ch. 3: Avoiding Plagiarism & Giving Credit

! Activity #3: First, let's see what you already know about "plagiarism." Download the discussion guide (Plagiarism or Not), fill it out, and bring it to class.



Borrowing another person's words or ideas can become a problem if you don't give them credit. It is okay to borrow the ideas of others to support your own, but when you insert someone else's ideas into your writing, you don't sound like you. Readers will sense that it is not your voice anymore, either because it doesn't sound like yours, look like yours, or look like it belongs within the context of the rest of your work. Passing someone else's work off as your own is **dishonest and disrespectful**, and especially loathed in academia. Luckily, there are easy ways to avoid it.

As you encounter academic works (texts, recordings, etc.) at Sonoma State University, you

will see some form of credit listed throughout, or at the end of, the item you are reading and/or watching. **This often happens in the form of an in-text (or parenthetical) reference and a works cited page (or bibliography), which is a list of citations that document the sources you used.** This serves to acknowledge the person or people whose ideas you're drawing from. This is how

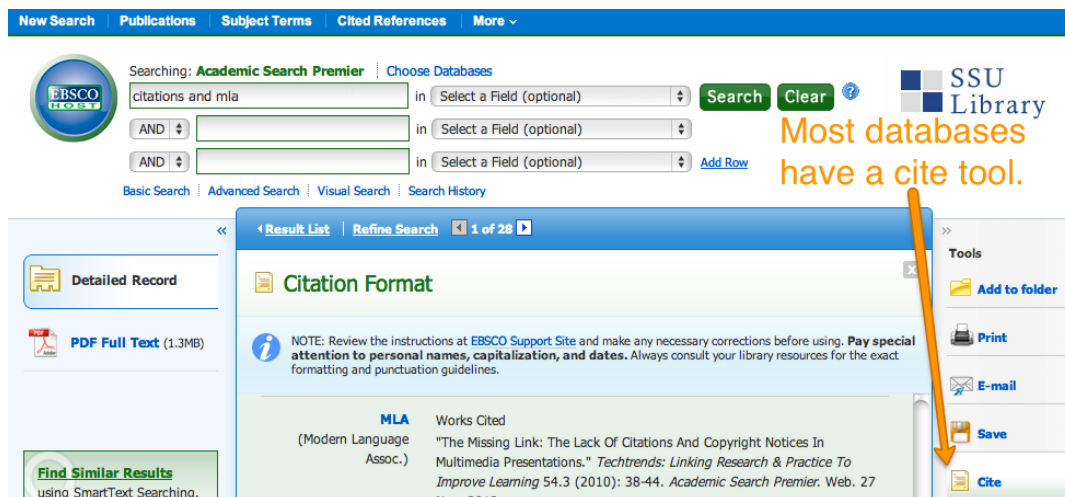
you avoid plagiarism. There are prescribed ways to credit all kinds of materials, and many resources that provide guidance. The consequences, even when not giving credit has been accidental, can be severe. If you are not sure how to credit something in your work, it is better to ask than to risk it and be sorry later.

Plagiarism "is the act of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for academic work by representing the work of another as one's own without the necessary and appropriate acknowledgment"
(SSU Academic Senate, 2011).

To properly give credit in your work, you should use some form of documentation to show where you have been. This gives your reader the chance to go back to your original sources in case they would like to read more on those ideas. In your in-text references and works cited, you should choose the documentation style most appropriate for the academic discipline in which you are working, or use the style requested by your professor. There is information about different documentation styles (such as MLA, APA and Turabian) [on the library website](#), as well as handy tools to help you cite correctly. A "cite" tool is available in many library

databases, as demonstrated in the picture on the right.

This picture shows how you can access the citation tool in our EBSCO databases. These tools can be helpful, but it is important to exercise caution when using them. You are, in many ways, smarter than the database, and while the



exported citations may appear to be accurate, it is important to remember that these are automatically generated by the "robots" within the database. You should use your "humanness" to decide if all parts needed for your citation are present and match the criteria requested by your discipline and/or instructor.

Documenting your sources ensures that you show respect to others, and it keeps you out of trouble. Punishment for plagiarism and cheating can be severe--in some people's lives, it has ruined their career! This is why it is important to keep detailed notes throughout your research process about where your information came from, so you don't run the risk of plagiarism at the end. Plagiarism might happen accidentally as a result of poor record keeping along the way, but the offense is taken seriously no matter how it occurred. You will always need to separate out YOUR voice from the voices of others in your work. If you have trouble remembering the source in which you found the information, retrace your steps. **More importantly, learn to recognize your own voice, and this will help you integrate the ideas of other people as distinct from your own.**



'Finding Your Voice & Avoiding Plagiarism' by Megan Kinney, Carrie McDade, and Felicia Palsson, is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#).