

Scholastic Integrity

As a scientist, your career is grounded on your reputation. What subject matter you study, methodologies used, your theories and your findings, your choice of coauthors, how you advance the science—they all contribute to your standing in the scholastic universe. Scholarship becomes your life's work and it is imperative that your published work be above reproach.

In peer-reviewed scholarly work, the reader only gets the full impact of the work by the author's proper use of citations. Correct citations both to current or historical published scientists, as well as citations to the author's own previously published content is how integrity is maintained in your research and contributes to your reputation for original authorship. It also contributes to the integrity of the scholarship community at large.

Understanding self-plagiarism and its importance to your scientific reputation cannot be understated. It is a major pitfall in scholastic authorship. Ithenticate defines it as, "a type of plagiarism in which the writer republishes a work in its entirety or reuses portions of a previously written text while authoring a new work"—(iThenticate white paper available at; <http://www.ithenticate.com/hs-fs/hub/92785/file-5414624-pdf/media/ith-selfplagiarism-whitepaper.pdf>).

Make no mistake, self-plagiarism is an ethics issue. It is about ethical conduct and ethical practice because it impacts co-authors, violates copyright and jeopardizes the reputations of authors everywhere who conduct experiments, examine the findings and then write and publish original research.

Citations to any source (including your own) must be defined in your writing. If sentences or passages are taken as-is from previously published papers, they should appear in quotation marks or block quotes. Publishing work under the guise of being "new" or "original" that has been previously published, in part or full, is misleading and unethical. If your previous paper was written with coauthors, you are plagiarizing them in your new work. The same is true if you re-use portions of a previous publication. Additionally, you violate the copyright of the previously published work by using it again without citation and permissions.

The integrity of an author's published work should be respected and acknowledged and never used without attribution. Best practice is to cite to the original author(s), reword any passage that apply to your new paper, and use quotation marks around any portions that are verbatim.

Take notes from sources in a consistent style. Reword all notes you are taking from collective works -- this will instill confidence when you begin to write your paper that you are including only original text.

Change sentence construction when summarizing literature or methodologies. Direct the reader to a previous publication by including a "For more details, see Smith, et al." These are just a few of the many strategies you can use to avoid self-plagiarism.

The integrity of scholastic research is based on the integrity of your work. As Warren Buffet once said, "It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently." By utilizing those five minutes to accurately represent your work and the work of other scholars, you build your own scholastic reputation and you contribute to the lasting integrity of the science.

