

# **Attribution and Plagiarism Prevention**

Attribution refers to proper credit to material in your writing that is borrowed from another source, such as ideas, data, images, and language. Attribution involves identifying authorship of source material by citing, paraphrasing, quoting, and adhering to a citation style, all of which protect against plagiarism.

# **Our Approach at the Graduate Writing Center**

### We believe attribution is a tool for improving critical thinking and writing.

While responsible attribution ensures that a writer is giving credit where credit is due and helps prevent plagiarism, it also gives writers the tools to engage with scholarly voices, validate their own arguments and claims, and gain credibility and competency in their field.

#### We encourage early learning and practice.

We encourage students to ask the Graduate Writing Center for iThenticate reports on draft class papers, thesis proposals, and early drafts of thesis chapters. These reports and the GWC's multifaceted guidance help students learn how to take notes and attribute properly before the thesis submission stage.

#### We approach attribution holistically.

When we advise students at the GWC, rather than focusing on the results of an iThenticate report in isolation, we discuss concepts such as <u>citing</u>, <u>summarizing</u>, <u>paraphrasing</u>, <u>quoting</u>, <u>common knowledge</u> <u>and language</u>, <u>signal phrases</u>, <u>sentence flow</u>, and strategic use of source material. When reviewing iThenticate reports, we read critically—beyond the report results—with an eye for what does (and does not) need to be attributed and the best methods for obtaining clarity.

### iThenticate reports are not safety blankets.

An iThenticate report is generated when a paper is uploaded into a cloud-based software that compares the document's text against billions of other documents. It can be a useful guide, but a clean report does not indicate that a document is free of plagiarism or that all source material is properly attributed. iThenticate finds only exact or close text matches, and only about <u>two-thirds</u> of those. It does not identify the following concerns:

- Borrowed information that has been paraphrased or summarized but not attributed
- Direct quotations that are improperly cited
- Inaccurately transcribed direct quotes
- Information or direct quotes attributed to the wrong source
- Some improperly paraphrased (heavily patchwritten) material
- Language from sources outside of iThenticate's database, such as undigitized books
- Fabricated or falsified information

Furthermore, the highlighting in an iThenticate report is not always trustworthy or indicative of necessary revision. Reports should be analyzed and flagged passages reviewed against the writer's original sources.



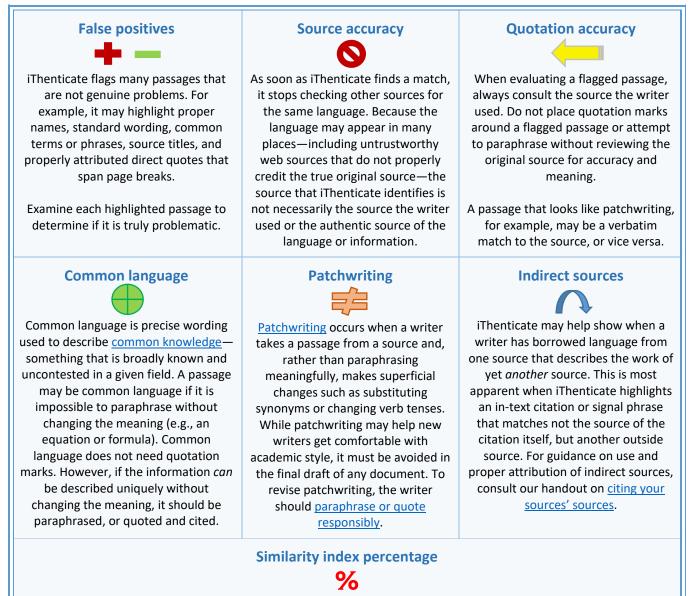




# **Understanding an iThenticate Report**

iThenticate (a <u>Turnitin</u> product) color-codes strings of 5 words or more in a document that do not appear between quotation marks and that match, or closely match, other sources in its vast database. Each highlighted passage corresponds—with a color and number—to a source listed at the end of the report.

Be aware of the following limitations and idiosyncrasies when reviewing an iThenticate report.



Because iThenticate's similarity index includes false positives and common language, we typically disregard this percentage when evaluating reports; it is seldom a useful indication of genuine concerns.

For more instruction on attribution concepts, plagiarism prevention, and iThenticate, see the Thesis Processing Office's <u>Citation Guides webpage</u> and the Graduate Writing Center's <u>iThenticate FAQ</u>.



From the Naval Postgraduate School's Graduate Writing Center and Thesis Processing Office, located in the Dudley Knox Library and online at <a href="https://nps.edu/web/gwc">https://nps.edu/web/gwc</a> and <a href="https://nps.edu/web/gwc"/>https://nps.edu/web/gwc

