

# Avoiding Plagiarism: Steps Authors Can Take by Harriet Hodgson



If you're a news junkie, you know topics and ideas can surface at the same time. This can create a problem for authors. While a writing idea is percolating in your mind, another author may have a similar idea. Your books may come out at the same time. Did one of you copy the other?

No matter what your writing genre may be, these steps will help you avoid the accusation of plagiarism. The steps seem simple, but when you add them together, they form a protective shield.

1. Develop a good working relationship with your publisher. This takes time, email contacts, and follow-up phone calls.

Keep your publisher apprised of your project and meet all writing deadlines. Cooperate with your editor because your shared goal is to develop that best possible product.

2. Give credit when credit is due. According to The Writer's Handbook website, you must place another author's words in quotation marks if you use them. Recently I contacted an author and asked to use his questionnaire in a workshop. He gave me email permission, and I noted the date of this permission on the questionnaire.

3. Understand common knowledge. You don't have to credit anyone else for common knowledge. I have a book in production now, and the editor asked me about a point I made. "It's common knowledge," I replied, and that took care of the problem. Specific fields, such as medicine, have their own common knowledge.

4. Take good notes and file them. The University of Wisconsin, in a website article, "Preventing Plagiarism When Writing," advises students to take effective notes, including all bibliographic information. Don't forget the page numbers. Before I start a book I make an outline that includes all the points, sub-points, references, authors' names, and page numbers.



5. Use reliable resources. I avoid websites that try to sell me stuff. When I find a source I might use, I check the author's credentials, the publisher's reputation, and read some reviews. Every book I write has an extensive bibliography. Years ago, I wrote a history of my city and used so many resources I kited the cost of the book. So the publisher chanted the heading to, "Selected Bibliography."

6. Learn to paraphrase. According to the same article from the University of Wisconsin website, "A paraphrase is a restatement in your own words of someone

else's ideas." When I paraphrase, I credit the source first, expand on the point, or take it in a different direction. This way, I am adding original content to the paraphrased point.



7. Show your work to a trustworthy person. In addition to your editor or publisher, this person could be a relative, teacher, church member, long-term friend, or colleague. Note the date of your sharing on the top of the manuscript. The time may come when this person may act as your witness and confirm that your work is original.

As you're writing, continue to follow these steps, and build your protective shield. You may need it some day.

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**Harriet Hodgson** has been a freelancer for 37 years, is the author of thousands of articles, and 35 books. Her latest releases are Happy Again! Your New and Meaningful Life After Loss, The Family Caregiver's Guide, Affirmations for Family Caregivers, and forthcoming A Journal for Family Caregivers. Visit her website and learn more about this busy author. [www.harriethodgson.com](http://www.harriethodgson.com)

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