

Core Value #5

Writing has power and comes with ethical responsibilities.

Summary



Because writing is not only personal but also public and social, there are ethical concerns that we must take into account.

- The most obvious component of ethical writing is crediting others for their ideas through proper citation, which is also an act of sharing research with others.

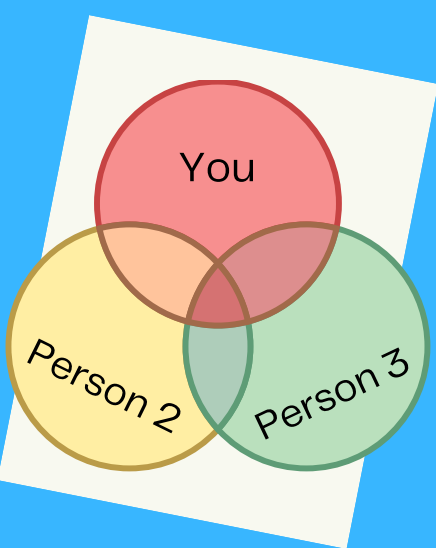
Ethical writing, however, is more than avoiding plagiarism: it also involves conscientiously reading other authors' texts so as to listen to them, understand their ideas and how they have arrived at their perspective, and accurately represent them in your own writing.

Real World Example



Core Value 5 is both about being aware of ethical and responsible use of source material. A reporter for a tabloid company like TMZ might see themselves as "just doing their job" by releasing salacious information about a celebrity to the public. But if they don't stop to consider the ramifications of releasing this potentially untrue, private, and/or socially damning information; they might cause incredible harm to that celebrity. This shows that information is something that needs to be used responsibly.

Further Explanation



The writing process requires critical and conscientious reading which allows you to understand the different perspectives involved in the public conversation surrounding an issue or topic.

There can be a variety of valid perspectives on an issue/topic. Ethical writing represents the complexity of an issue by respectfully acknowledging those multiple perspectives.

- In other words, ethical and responsible writing means that you don't treat every argument as: "I'm right, and they're wrong. End of story."

Avoid Manipulative Argumentation



Manipulative argumentation can take many forms, such as:

- If you only provide the benefits of something you're arguing for and only providing negatives for the opposing side.
- When you accidentally or intentionally misrepresent another author's viewpoint.

Both examples control the readers' access to the big picture and information that would allow them to make decisions for themselves.

- This is ethically wrong and misleading to the reader.
- It is essential to acknowledge others' perspectives and fully understand another author's viewpoint before incorporating it into your own writing.
- It is also essential to fully and accurately explain their point of view, rather than twisting it to fit your needs.

Some Ways to Demonstrate Your Understanding

- Recognizing that all writing, including your own, is shaped by its authors' experiences and background; therefore, no writing is purely objective or free of bias.
- Understanding that word/language choices have power and consequences.
- Understanding that arguments are never completely "proven" or beyond dispute (i.e., other reasonable people with different perspectives can find space for disagreement), and thus we need to qualify our claims appropriately.
- Using rhetorical appeals responsibly and avoid fallacious or manipulative argumentation in your writing.

Self Reflective Questions

- Why is fairly representing your sources important?
- How effectively have you represented them?
- How did you ensure that your writing engaged with the ideas of others without plagiarizing their words?
- What strategies have you learned that help you maintain academic integrity in your writing?
- What are the ethical responsibilities of publishing your work or ideas online?