

How to Read Your Turnitin Report

Your Turnitin Report:

- Highlights the parts of your assignment that match with other documents that the text-matching software is able to access.
- Enables you to see at a glance what the balance between your own words and the words of others is in your assignment.
- Is a helpful tool for checking whether or not your referencing is thorough and correct.
- Can aid in the development of effective paraphrasing.
- Helps guard against the risk of plagiarism.

Text-matching and similarity:

Students often present to their tutors and lecturers, or here at the Writing Centre, concerned that their report is showing a “high percentage of *plagiarism*”. It is important to understand that the purpose of the report is to show what percentage of your assignment *matches* with other texts accessible to the programme. It does this by highlighting groups of words in your assignment that are the same as groups of words Turnitin finds in books, journal articles, and various other documents available on the web, including other students’ assignments, and producing an *Originality Report*. This report shows the percentage of similarity between your work and these other documents.

Similarity does not equal plagiarism. Matching words, phrases, or even whole sentences do not in and of themselves mean that you have plagiarised, even accidentally. After all, in any assignment that requires you to provide quotations, or even referenced paraphrasing, will result in some percentage of your text matching with the source(s) you are quoting, or providing a reference from.

So, most of your written assignments, and especially those which rely on a process of providing evidence drawn from other texts, will generate a report that includes some percentage of similarity. In fact, for many assignments, if there were no similarity percentage, it would mean that you had not completed

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the required research and selected the relevant kind of evidence to support your claims, arguments, findings or hypotheses.

What matters is that you make clear, for your reader, the difference between your words and ideas, and the words and ideas of other scholars. This means identifying quotations and paraphrased ideas using quotation marks/proper referencing for each and every piece of evidence drawn from your reading.

Key tips:

- Check your similarity percentage. Different disciplines call for different approaches to synthesising and presenting ideas. However, even in language-rich/text-based courses that require you to quote from the texts you are studying, it is important not to let the words of others overbalance your own argument, discussion or analysis.
- Check each source on your reference list. A part of your similarity percentage will be made up of these references. If sections of your reference list *do not* show a match, it might actually mean you have made a formatting error, or left some important information *out* of your referencing!
- Check each highlighted section in the main body of your assignment. If it is a direct quotation, ensure that you have formatted it correctly using quotation marks and that an in-text reference, or footnote (depending on the required referencing style for your assignment/course), including a page number.
- Check short phrases that are highlighted as matching with other sources. Often these are part of sentences where you have paraphrased another scholar's words. Even a few words from someone else's work presented without quotation marks puts you at risk of plagiarism so it is important that you take these highlighted sections seriously. Re-read the work you want to paraphrase, and find a way to put the idea into your own words. This can be difficult, but paraphrasing is a skill that develops over time and with practice. If you would like some help with paraphrasing, please visit staff at the Writing Centre for advice.