

# Keys to Making a Perfect Score on the Final Quiz (and other wisdom to help you get through college)

This final part of the final lesson on avoiding unintentional plagiarism may seem sort of silly, but it's not. It's dead serious. Furthermore, you probably won't make a perfect score on the quiz you've got to take for this lesson or on your research paper unless you master this content. In fact, this document may contain the most important information in this entire tutorial for how to avoid failing a course or being dismissed from college in utter humiliation – not to mention the explaining you've got to do to your parents, who aren't getting their tuition refunded after you committed the crime of unintentional plagiarism.

**Final Strategy for Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism: Take healthy risks, but keep them healthy.**

That's it. It's the key to good writing, and it's the key to avoiding plagiarism of all types, unintentional, intentional, and self-plagiarism (the latter of which you might get away with, but if you get caught, it's plagiarism and cheating all rolled up into one).

**What is healthy risk?** If you can't figure out why your college papers are getting, perhaps not F's, but not A's like you used to get in high school), it may be because you aren't taking healthy risks. You're saying accurate things, and you're organizing them logically and expressing them coherently, but you haven't said anything your professor hasn't read at least 172  $\frac{3}{4}$  times before, or you haven't said it in a way she hasn't read at least 172  $\frac{3}{4}$  times before – so you don't have any *healthy risk*. They don't give A+'s for that in college, though they might have in high school.

**Tips for taking *healthy risks*:** There is a difference between healthy risk and foolish risk, so keep it healthy in order to avoid unintentional plagiarism.

- It may be too late for this first tip, but keep it in mind for future reference. It is not healthy to take more courses than you can handle in one semester, and your future employer may ask for your GPA, but she or he will probably not ask how many courses you took each semester, so don't overdo it. Being exhausted is one of the first things that leads to unintentional plagiarism.
- Remember your mom nagging you about eating your vegetables and do it. Of course, you are an adult enjoying your first real taste of freedom, and the college

doesn't report to your mom about your intake of vegetables, but that cream-filled (and I use the word *cream* with some liberality, because as you and I both know, it's probably got more ingredients created in a lab than in a cow), chocolate-covered concoction you had for dinner last night may not kill you, but it's not going to help you think clearly and avoid unintentional plagiarism.

- Know yourself, and treat yourself with a healthy dose of kindness. If all your new best friends say that they do their best work under pressure, and you do too – but what you mean by that is that you set early deadlines and pretend that it's the last minute about 5 weeks before an assignment is due so that you have 5 weeks left to proof and revise, then don't pick this moment in your life to become a conformist. You keep setting early deadlines and give yourself plenty of time to catch those spots where you might have unintentional plagiarism.
- If you know yourself well, and you really *do* work best under time pressure, use college as a time to explore new possibilities and try setting early deadlines and maybe even ask friends to remind you that the paper is due tomorrow when you know it's not due for 5 weeks – because avoiding unintentional plagiarism requires a lot of attention to picky details, and you might run out of time for that when you started drafting the first and last version of the paper 5 hours, instead of 5 weeks, before it was due. It *might* really be how you work best – but it is NOT healthy, and I can almost guarantee that you are going to be the surprised criminal up on charges of unintentional plagiarism, which as we've tried to make clear, can have consequences just as disturbing as intentional, or even self-plagiarism.
- Sleep. Every night. For eight hours if possible, but certainly for more than five. This includes (in fact, it *especially* includes) the night before your big paper is due. You may have recently embraced the philosophy of post-modernism, and you may be a firm believer in relative truth, but this is one of those perplexing problems of the universe that is going to challenge your philosophy. It at least *seems* to be an absolute truth that the human body cannot function but so long without sleep, and those who commit unintentional plagiarism are often the individuals who have been testing the limits of this particular aspect of human physiology.
- Always read the fine print when you are working on documenting your sources. It is risky to skip by a piece of information (like the hyperlink to this document) because you're in a hurry, and some acts of unintentional plagiarism really do result from plain old carelessness, but the time you save is not worth this particular risk. The answer to the final question on the quiz is 32B.
- There are probably other tips I could add to help you take healthy risks, but I think you get the idea. Paying attention to picky details, which you may or may not really find interesting, will keep you out of a lot of trouble when it comes to unintentional plagiarism.