INFORMATION ETHICS

Plagiarism at West Valley College

- West Valley College definition of plagiarism, from the college catalog:
  "Unauthorized use of expression of ideas from either published or unpublished work(s) as a student’s own work for a grade in a class. This also includes the violation of copyright laws, including copying of software packages."

- Possible consequences:
  - Given an oral or written notification/warning that further acts of this sort will result in additional disciplinary action.
  - Given a “0” or a failing grade (“F”) for the assignment in question.
  - Given a failing grade (“F”) or No Pass ("NP") for the course.
  - Referred to the CSSO for disciplinary action, which could include censure (a note on your record), cancellation of registration, suspension, or expulsion.

- Many instructors now use “Turnitin.com” – a software program that detects plagiarism.

What IS Plagiarism?

- Having a friend write a paper for you or using someone else’s paper as your own.
- Submitting one of your own papers or assignments for more than one class.
- Downloading or buying a term paper from the Web.
- Using someone else’s words or ideas without citing AND documenting them in your Works Cited.

What IS NOT Plagiarism?

- Your own ideas, words, and perspectives.
- “Common Knowledge”: Information that is well-known or can be easily found in general reference sources. You don’t have to cite common knowledge. Examples:
  - George Washington was the first President of the United States
  - June through November is hurricane season in the Gulf of Mexico

How to Avoid Plagiarism

- Use quotation marks when you want to use the exact wording from another source.
- If you paraphrase (putting someone else’s ideas into your own words), you still need to acknowledge and document the source.
- Always use the appropriate documentation - give credit where credit is due.

What is Copyright?

- The Copyright Act of 1976 protects a person’s original expressive idea once it is in a tangible form. Here are some examples of copyrighted material:
  - Text (even the contents of an email)
  - Artwork (sculpture, dance, graphic artwork)
  - Music, film, software, web sites

- Generally speaking, you must get permission before you copy, display, perform, modify or distribute someone else’s copyrighted work.