

What is Plagiarism?

Exercise developed by Dr. Charlotte Bronson, Plant Pathology, Iowa State U.

Key

1. Currently, the biological significance of lesion mimicry in plants is not known, although suggestions have been made that they may represent defects in the plants' recognition of, or response to, pathogens.

Almost everyone agrees that this is plagiarism because the wording is almost identical to that of Johal et al. and, in addition, there is no citation to give credit for the ideas.

2. Currently, the biological significance of lesion mimicry in plants is not known, although suggestions have been made that they may represent defects in the plants' recognition of, or response to, pathogens (Johal et al. 1995).

Almost everyone agrees this is plagiarism because, even though the citation gives proper credit for the ideas, the wording is almost identical to that of Johal et al.

3. Currently, "the biological significance of lesion mimicry in plants is not known, although suggestions have been made that they may represent defects in the plants' recognition of, or response to, pathogens" (Johal et al. 1995).

Almost everyone agrees that this is not plagiarism. However, it is an improper quotation because the words in quotes are not identical to what Johal et al. wrote. Another point worth discussing is that quotes should only be used when the wording of the original author is so important that the information can not be conveyed in the writer's own words. Quotations should not be used as a substitute for understanding!

4. The biological significance of lesion mimicry in plants is not currently known, although some researchers believe that they may represent defects in the ability of plants to recognize or respond to pathogens.

Almost everyone agrees this is plagiarism because there is no citation to give credit for the ideas. Most readers also recognize that the wording is only a slight modification of that of Johal et al.

5. The biological significance of lesion mimicry in plants is currently not known, although some researchers believe that they may represent defects in the ability of plants to recognize or respond to pathogens (Johal et al. 1995).

About 90 percent of faculty and 50 percent of graduate students consider this plagiarism, because, although a citation gives credit for the ideas, the wording is only a slight modification of that of Johal et al. This example is worth discussing at length because of the disagreement between students and faculty on whether it is plagiarism. Many students consider acceptable the rearrangement and substitution of words to make a sentence their own. Note that it was not necessary to understand what Johal et al. wrote in order to write example 5.

6. Lesion mimicry in plants has been proposed to be due to mutations in genes controlling the ability of plants to detect and respond to pathogens.

Unless this information is already common knowledge, this sentence is plagiarism because no credit is given for the ideas.

7. Lesion mimicry in plants has been proposed to be due to mutations in genes controlling the ability of plants to detect and respond to pathogens (Johal et al. 1995). *This is not plagiarism. Note that, to write examples 6, 7 and 8, the writer had to first genuinely understand what Johal et al. had written.*

8. Disease-like lesions in plants may be due to mutations in genes controlling the ability of plants to defend themselves against pathogens (Johal et al. 1995). *This is not plagiarism.*

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