Is it plagiarism?

Ask students to read one or more of the following, think about it, and discuss with a partner or small group for 5-10 minutes. Then discuss with the entire class.

Is it plagiarism?

Example 1:

Based on her proposed topic and preliminary research, Terry outlined her research paper for her “Climate Change Impacts” course. She started filling in details by pasting bits of relevant text from Wikipedia and other sources. She included the original citations used by Wikipedia, and did some wordsmithing to put the sentences in her own words, but the overall structure of some paragraphs still paralleled the Wiki article.

Example 2:

Alex is working on a paper for his Environmental Studies class. He is struggling with getting started, so he asks for advice from a friend who took the same class last year. His friend gives him the paper he submitted for the assignment last year. Alex does not copy the entire paper, but he uses the same argument, main ideas, and sources that his friend used.

Example 3:

Greta has been gathering sources for the final paper for her Marine Policy course. She is proud of the number of sources she has found related to her topic and is eager to include all of them. She does not want to risk summarizing any source text for fear of losing the power of the original language. She includes sentences and paragraphs taken directly from various sources. She does not use quotation marks around the text from sources. She includes a citation for each source in her bibliography.

Answer to all examples is yes, it is plagiarism.

This activity was adapted from an activity created by Dr. Kate Huntington, UW Department of Earth & Space Sciences, who teaches ESS 418 “Geoscience Communication.”