

Turnitin.com Possible Scenarios

Turnitin.com is a tool that can help you find passages within papers that may be plagiarized. Text within a submitted paper is compared to text within other existing documents. If a match is found, it is highlighted. Turnitin doesn't examine citation correctness. **It only "matches" text.** Because of this, matched text passages must be examined carefully to find out if a passage has been correctly cited, poorly cited, or plagiarized. Below are three possible scenarios that you may encounter.

Scenario One

A student a paper and you received a report showing a match for the following passage:

At the end of the 20th century many businesses believed that e-business and e-commerce would be beneficial additions to their regular operations. It was critical for companies to take advantages of available technology and add ".com" to their names. Today, according to authors of *The Death of "e" and the Birth of the Real New Economy* doing business electronically is the only way to stay alive and competitive. It is a necessity to get involved in the digital economy. Therefore, "e" is disappearing from our vocabulary because conducting business electronically is a normal, every-day activity.

Upon clicking on the comparison link, you find that the text is found in an on-line article, entitled The Death of "e" and the Birth of the Real New Economy. Is this plagiarism or a false positive? Why?

Scenario Two

A student submitted a paper and you received a report showing a match for the entire document. In addition, the student has placed no citations in article. Upon clicking on the comparison link, you find that the text is found verbatim in an on-line article on CNNs web site. Is this plagiarism or a false positive? Why?

Scenario Three

You have asked your students to submit their papers during the middle of the semester to "check" for accidental plagiarism. At the end of the semester they re-submit their finished papers. Several papers are returned as completely matched. Is this plagiarism or a false positive? Why? What can you do to make sure your conclusion is correct?

Further Thought (or What If?)

Do you consider the following examples as acceptable?

- A student writes a paper for his fall English 101 class and resubmits the exact paper in an English 112 class held the following spring.
- A student writes a paper for his Edtec 571 class and also submits the exact same paper to his Edtec 671 class during the same semester.

Turnitin.com Scenario Interpretations

Scenario One

Scenario One may be interpreted as an instance of poor citation instead of plagiarism. While the student makes an effort to attribute the proper source, the authors of *The Death of “e” and the Birth of the Real New Economy*, the citation itself is incorrectly done.

Scenario Two

Scenario Two may be interpreted as an instance of plagiarism. The student has “borrowed” an entire document from a web site and made no effort to cite the original authors within the body of the text or within a reference list.

Scenario Three

Scenario Three is an instance of a paper being submitted multiple times to Turnitin.com, which produces a false positive. The entire text is “matched” to a previous submission of the same document. In this case, the instructor may want to “exclude” the link to matched text and re-analyze. Excluding a source and then re-analyzing may uncover other, previously obscured text matches.

Further Thought (or What If?)

Various faculty have differing opinions on this type of activity. Based on your opinion and experience, you should let your students know what is not acceptable in your class.