Today the subject of intellectual property is a controversial one. Technology and collaboration bring with them many questions: (1) If an innovative idea arises in a meeting of several people, and later, one person writes an article about that idea approaching it as though she created it herself, is this plagiarism? (2) If a person who overhears another describe an object with an especially appealing and fresh metaphor incorporates the metaphor into her next poem, is this plagiarism? (3) If a student copies a letter he finds on the Internet which is attributed to no particular author and uses it to get an A in his next classroom speech, has he plagiarized?

In spite of the difficulty of defining plagiarism in western culture, we can still say that plagiarism is essentially stealing what someone else has said or written and using it without giving that person or persons credit.

Paraphrasing is putting what someone else has said or written into one's own words and phrases and giving that person enough credit for the original concept or expression of the concept.

The following is a quotation from Hogins and Bryant's A Perceptual Approach to College English, page 10:

"Clearly the first and overriding obligation of the individual participant in a group discussion is to know his subject."

1. Changing only minor words in the quotation is plagiarism, intentional or not:

   Clearly the first or overriding obligation of an individual participant in the group discussion is to know the subject.

2. Changing only a sprinkling of words in this quotation but leaving the basic phrasing intact is plagiarism, intentional or not:

   Obviously the first and primary responsibility of the individual participant in a group discussion is to know his topic.

3. Changing the major portion of the quotation but leaving phrases or parts unchanged is plagiarism, intentional or not:

   The primary responsibility of the person taking part in a public discussion is to know his subject.

4. Omitting portions of the original but leaving the basic quotation the same is plagiarism, intentional or not:

   Clearly the first ( ) obligation of the ( ) participant in a group discussion is to know his subject.