Citing the Work & Ideas of Others

Anytime you use the ideas or work of other people you need to give them credit by citing them and referencing their work. Ideas and work covers a broad range of things such as (1) experimental findings; (2) summaries or conclusions of experimental findings; (3) ideas, explanations or theories proposed by others; (4) questionnaires, special stimulus sets, or computer software that was developed by others; etc. For example, if you used CogLab to conduct an experiment, you might say: “The experiment was conducted using CogLab software (Francis, Neath, MacKewn, & Goldthwaite, 2004).” In this instance you are giving Francis, Neath, MacKewn, and Goldthwaite credit for developing the software you used in your experiment; this is called a citation. When you cite someone’s work, you also need to provide a detailed reference to this work so others can find it if they are interested. This is done in a special section of the paper called a Reference section that includes a reference for all the work you cited throughout the paper.

To illustrate some of the ideas in citing others, consider the following paragraph that is taken from Crites, Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson (1995). This paragraph is describing a brain potential called the LPP that is larger to inconsistent stimuli (e.g., a liked stimulus that was proceeded by disliked stimuli) than to consistent stimuli (e.g., a liked stimulus that was proceeded by liked stimuli). Crites et al. (1995) showed that the brain potential was not affected when people were told to lie about how much they liked certain stimuli (e.g., say that they disliked a stimulus that they actually liked).

In this study, a distinction was made between the evaluative judgment (categorization) and the response components underlying an attitude. The participants' task was to categorize each stimulus in a six-stimulus sequence as either positive, neutral, or negative and to either report accurately or misreport the valence of certain evaluatively inconsistent stimuli. As Cacioppo et al. (1993, 1994) found, the LPP evoked by evaluatively inconsistent stimuli was larger than the LPP evoked by evaluatively consistent stimuli. This study extends our earlier findings by showing that the amplitude of the LPP varies as a function of evaluative categorization rather than attitude reports. Instructions to misreport the valence of stimuli led to the instructed changes in attitude report, but these attitude-report instructions did not significantly change the amplitude or the scalp distribution of the LPP to these stimuli. (pp. 1003-1004)
There are two ways that you can cite someone:

1) You can summarize their findings, ideas, implications of their findings, etc. in your own words and give the credit for the idea. This is called paraphrasing. Here are two examples of doing this:

   Research reveals that the LPP is not affected by instructions to lie (Crites et al., 1995).

   Crites et al. (1995) showed that brain activity can be used to assess attitudes even when people do not accurately report their attitudes.

2) You can quote a person directly and use their own words. Here is an example of doing this:

   Crites et al. (1995) found that “instructions to misreport the valence of stimuli led to the instructed changes in attitude report, but these attitude-report instructions did not significantly change the amplitude or the scalp distribution of the LPP to these stimuli” (pp. 1003-1004).

   When you quote someone directly, you give the page number of the quotation and generally put their words in quotations marks – there are some circumstances when you do not do use quotation marks and you should look at the APA Publication Manual (2001) for the rules on when to use quotation marks.

   Except in very rare circumstances, it is always better to put things in your own words and not use direct quotes. Most scientists and writers could go their entire careers without every using a direct quote. **BECAUSE PARAPHRASING OR PUTTING SOMEONE’S IDEAS IN YOUR OWN WORDS IS ALMOST ALWAYS BETTER (99.9% OF THE TIME), DIRECT QUOTES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN THIS COURSE. YOU WILL LOSE POINTS ON YOUR ASSIGNMENTS IF YOU USE DIRECT QUOTES.**

A few notes on plagiarism.

If you use someone’s ideas or words and do not give them credit, this is plagiarism and it has severe penalties both for students and scientists. You should also know that it is plagiarism if you use someone’s words but do not credit for this. For example, if you used the following sentence in a paper, it would be plagiarism.
Instructions to misreport the valence of stimuli led to the instructed changes in attitude report but did not significantly change the amplitude or the brain response to these stimuli (Crites et al. 1995).

In this case you gave Crites et al. (1995) credit for the idea but not the words so this is plagiarism. Even though you changed their words a little (compare the above sentence to the preceding direct quote), it is still plagiarism.

References