

Information has Value: Part 1 – Information Ethics

Narrator: Welcome back to the Madison Research Essentials Toolkit.

[IMAGE of toolkit logo]

Narrator: In this section of the toolkit, we'll work on this General Education Information Literacy learning outcome: use information ethically and legally.

[Student learning outcome: Use information ethically and legally]

Narrator: Legally and ethically using information can be a bit of a grey area as the digital era pushes our understanding of what is new, what is borrowed, and what is stolen. There are a number of cultural, ethical, economic, legal and social issues that surround the use of information for your research. At times, all of these factors seem a bit like a balancing act.

[IMAGES of woman working on a laptop and gymnast on a balance beam]

Narrator: Let's examine the term ethics. Ethics are the moral principles that govern a person's or group's behavior. When someone else's work is used, it is ethical to give credit to the content's original creator.

[IMAGE of highway sign reading: Ethics]

Narrator: How one does so is through citing sources.

[IMAGE of list of references]

Narrator: Giving credit where credit is due is ethically the right thing to do. Consider a project that you work hard to complete. You invest a lot of time and effort into the final product. Now, consider someone else using that product without giving credit to you—the original creator.

[IMAGE of a man working at a dry erase board]

Narrator: Plagiarism is an infraction resulting from the unethical use of information, and it is considered cheating. An in-depth topic, please view the accompanying tutorial to learn more.

[IMAGE of blackboard with a hand writing "I will not copy again."]

Narrator: Ethical use of information is a big deal at the University because, in addition to teaching students, research is one of the mainstays of what universities do. Ethical research practice mandates that we play by the rules established for using information of all kinds.

[IMAGE of scientist working with a molecular model]

Narrator: While ethics help guide our moral compass, legally, we are also obliged to provide proper credit. We must consider not only who owns the content, but also the duration of their ownership and who has the right to legally use the content in certain circumstances.

[IMAGE of statute holding scales]

Narrator: Navigating ethical and legal use of information can be a complex issue; therefore, let's begin by discussing intellectual property.

[IMAGE of winding road]

Narrator: According to the World Intellectual Property Organization, intellectual property refers to 'creations of the mind including paintings, songs, scientific formulae, inventions, novels, plays, poems, plans, and drawings.'

[IMAGE of brain with gears]

Narrator: Anything you have written, drawn, invented, or created is your intellectual property and is protected by copyright. Copyright law also ensures that an individual's work is not used without their permission and/or without them receiving proper credit.

[IMAGE of architectural plans]

Narrator: There are certain circumstances where you can use copyrighted material and this is considered fair use. As with many topics regarding the legal aspect of copyright law, fair use is an in-depth topic. Please stay tuned and view the accompanying tutorial.

[IMAGE of paper with stay tuned written on it]

Narrator: As you study at JMU, the Honor Code will provide guidance on the ethical use of information within your classes. In college, if you borrow some else's ideas without acknowledging them, you are in violation of the Honor Code. These infractions are usually resolved through the Honor Council and professors.

[Screenshot of JMU Honor Code]

Narrator: As future writers, artists, and inventors, you will want to receive credit for your hard work and, in turn, need to extend the same credit to others. The following tutorials will help you use information legally and ethically.

[IMAGE of young woman looking through library shelves]

Narrator: If you have any question about using sources don't hesitate to ask. Visit the Ask Desk in the JMU Libraries or click on the Ask, Meet, Consult Us link on the JMU Libraries' webpage.
[Image of Ask, Meet, Consult Us link from JMU Libraries' webpage]