You are working on a homework assignment and are pressed for time. You find the information you need on the Internet so you copy and paste a few sentences onto your homework. Is this plagiarism?

Yes, even if it is just a few sentences directly copying and pasting from the internet is stealing ideas. To avoid academic misconduct in this situation, you need to use quotes and cite the information.
According to The Ohio State University at Lima Student Guidelines:

“Plagiarism is the act of using the ideas and/or the expressions of another and representing them as your own. It is a kind of cheating, and thus a form of academic misconduct.”
Plagiarism is using someone else’s
- words,
- data,
- information,
- ideas,
- images,
without crediting the original source.

Basically, if you didn’t come up with it yourself (and it’s not common knowledge), you must cite it!
So, then, what is considered “common knowledge”? 

There is not one clear definition of what constitutes as common knowledge.

What can be defined as common knowledge is:
   The information is widely available in different sources and easy to locate.
   Expect that most people would know the information.

Keep your audience (your classmates) in mind. If most of them would not know it then cite the information.

This doesn’t need cited: Barack Obama is the 44th president of the United States.

This does need to be cited: In one study, students who attended class had an average of 2.7 on a 4.0 scale versus an average of 1.7 for those who did not regularly attend (MSU).

When in doubt always cite!

Definition of “common knowledge” taken from the SCSUSM Library webpage.  

While researching a subject on the Internet, you come across an interesting and relevant Wikipedia article. The article doesn’t name an author, so you don’t cite the ideas that you take from it. You think that, if there is no author, the information is considered common knowledge.

Is this plagiarism?

**Yes.** *It does not matter if a source gives credit to an individual as an author or if it does not. The question you need to ask yourself is, “Am I leaving the impression that the words or ideas I’ve written are mine, when actually they came from somewhere else?”*

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*If so, you are plagiarizing.*
As you prepare to write an assignment by doing some preliminary research, you find some academic articles online and read them for inspiration. You sit down to write the assignment a few days later and find yourself confused as to whether the ideas you’re writing about are yours or from something you read the other day. You decide not to cite them. Is this academic misconduct?

It depends. If, in fact, you did come across the ideas in something you read, you’ll have a hard time explaining yourself to a committee of academic misconduct. In these situations, you always want to play it safe; try again to find the articles. That way, you can err on the side of caution, and you don’t have to worry about any potential trouble later on.
“So how do I avoid that situation?”

It’s important to keep track of your research.

- As you do your research and find information, keep track of citation information on a note card and/or in a Word document.

- Be sure to record where and how you found your information so that you can find it easily in the future!
You’d like to use a chart to illustrate one of your paper’s arguments. You find a suitable example and include it in your paper, but you don’t cite it. Is this plagiarism?

Yes, it is. Even though you are not using another author’s words, you are still using his or her idea. If you copy and paste a chart, photo, or graph into your paper, you are committing non-literary theft, which is still plagiarism.
You and your friend continue to discuss a piece of literature after class. You are then working on an assignment for that class a few days later and you decide to use a few of the ideas generated in that discussion with your friend. You can’t seem to remember where the ideas originated (from you or your friend), so you just don’t cite. Is this academic theft?

Technically, yes. If you can, talk to your friend and see if either of you can remember from whom the idea originated.
You’ve heard somewhere that you only have to cite your sources when you’re handing in a **formal paper**. When turning in homework or shorter assignments (1-2 pages in length), you don’t need to include a Works Cited or Reference page. Is this true?

*The short answer is no.* Unless your professor tells you differently, always properly document your sources. Your professors may not require formal MLA or APA documentation, but unless you are certain, **always play it safe**.
You have just emailed your term paper to your professor and you realize that you did not include your Works Cited page. You could email it to him or her quickly but you decide not to because you used plenty of in-text citations. Is this academic misconduct?

It depends. Some professors may consider this to be plagiarism because there is no Works Cited page. To play it safe you should quickly email your professor the Works Cited page and explain that you forgot it with the first email.
You’re not really sure about how to cite correctly using MLA so you just sort of wing it by including the information that you feel to be important. Could this be considered plagiarism?

Possibly. If the citation information (whether correct or not) clearly gives credit to the author, then, no, it is not plagiarism. However, if it is not clear then, yes, it is. Remember, the point of citing sources is to give credit to the author(s), so, if you are not clearly doing that, then it can be considered plagiarism. If you need help using MLA, APA, or Chicago you can visit the Writing Center for help.
"What happens if I don't cite?"

According to OSU’s Code of Student Conduct, plagiarism is considered academic misconduct and is not tolerated!

“Whenever a member of the faculty suspects a case of academic misconduct in a class, he or she is required to report it to the Associate Dean and to have it sent to the Committee On Academic Misconduct in Columbus (COAM) . . . . Faculty are not allowed to issue sanctions for any academic misconduct they might suspect.”

So, if you plagiarize material, your professor has no choice—he or she must turn you in!

(And trust us...plagiarism hearings are not pleasant. You could end up with a permanent mark on your record. You could even be expelled. So, please, pay attention to what you’re about to see. )
Is it academic misconduct to get help or use your book on a take-home quiz or test when the instructor has told you to not use any outside sources? You have been permitted to use outside sources before.

Yes, this would definitely be academic misconduct. Regardless of what was previously permitted you should always follow the explicit instructions for each individual task.
“How can I be sure to avoid plagiarism?”

- Do not take an essay from an online site or book. This is intentional plagiarism.
  - This may be tempting because it is easy to do, but you are likely to be caught. Plus, it defeats the purpose of an education.

AVOID THESE ACTIONS!
Then, be careful to cite each source carefully as you write the paper.

- Put quotation marks around text that you copy word-for-word from the original source.

- Be sure to provide an in-text citation for any information that you allude to or paraphrase!
"How do I paraphrase correctly?"

Good question. Let’s try with an MLA citation.

Is this a good example of paraphrased text?

Original Text:

“The rise of industry, the growth of cities, and the expansion of the population were the three great developments of late nineteenth century American history. As new, larger, steam-powered factories became a feature of the American landscape in the East, they transformed farm hands into industrial laborers, and provided jobs for a rising tide of immigrants. With industry came urbanization the growth of large cities (like Fall River, Massachusetts, where the Bordens lived) which became the centers of production as well as of commerce and trade.”

Paraphrased:

The increase of industry, the growth of cities, and the explosion of the population were three large factors of nineteenth century America. As steam-driven companies became more visible in the eastern part of the country, they changed farm hands into factory workers and provided jobs for the large wave of immigrants. With industry came the growth of large cities like Fall River where the Bordens lived which turned into centers of commerce and trade as well as production.
That was plagiarism!

Why?

1. The writer has only changed around a few words and phrases or reordered the sentences.

2. The writer has failed to cite a source for any of the ideas or facts.

If you do either of the above things, you are plagiarizing!

Information and examples from http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml
Let’s try again...

Original Text:

“The rise of industry, the growth of cities, and the expansion of the population were the three great developments of late nineteenth century American history. As new, larger, steam-powered factories became a feature of the American landscape in the East, they transformed farm hands into industrial laborers, and provided jobs for a rising tide of immigrants. With industry came urbanization the growth of large cities (like Fall River, Massachusetts, where the Bordens lived) which became the centers of production as well as of commerce and trade.”

Paraphrased:

Fall River, where the Borden family lived, was typical of northeastern industrial cities of the nineteenth century. Steam-powered production had shifted labor from agriculture to manufacturing, and as immigrants arrived in the US, they found work in these new factories. As a result, populations grew, and large urban areas arose. Fall River was one of these manufacturing and commercial centers (Williams 1).
What makes this an acceptable paraphrase?

1. It accurately relays the original information.
2. It uses the writer’s own words.
3. It lets the reader know the source of the original information.

Fall River, where the Borden family lived, was typical of northeastern industrial cities of the nineteenth century. Steam-powered production had shifted labor from agriculture to manufacturing, and as immigrants arrived in the US, they found work in these new factories. As a result, populations grew, and large urban areas arose. Fall River was one of these manufacturing and commercial centers (Williams 1).
In spite of the obvious importance of individual differences in human learning and memory, relatively few investigators incorporate any measure of intelligence, personality, or motivation into their studies. Instead, they prefer to relegate individual differences to the error term in their analysis of variance. (Eysenck, 1976, p. 75)

Despite the obvious importance of differences in individuals’ learning patterns and memories, few investigators include any measurements of intelligence, personality, or motivation in their studies. They instead try to attribute individual differences to inherent human error.
Plagiarism!

This is merely word substitution. The paraphrased text does not differ enough from the original. And, again, there’s no parenthetical citation after the paraphrase, so the author is essentially claiming the idea as his or her own.
In spite of the obvious importance of individual differences in human learning and memory, relatively few investigators incorporate any measure of intelligence, personality, or motivation into their studies. Instead, they prefer to relegate individual differences to the error term in their analysis of variance. (Eysenck, 1976, p. 75)

Many investigators disregard or ignore the somewhat obvious importance of variations in human memory. These differences are often dismissed as an inaccuracy in the experiment or investigation itself (Eysenck, 1976, p.75).
Success!

This paraphrase correctly gives credit to the original source using APA citation guidelines. It conveys the same idea as the original text, while differing enough that the author can claim it as his or her own words.
"Where Can I Find Additional Information?"

Visit the Writing Center! It’s stocked with important information about MLA, APA, and Chicago style citation guidelines, complete with consultants who can help you one-on-one!

Go to class! Your professors will be happy to answer any of your questions and address your concerns in class and during their office hours. And you’ll be glad that you figured it all out before it could cause any problems or further confusion!
Credit to the creators:

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