

# Writing and Plagiarism

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## Originality and plagiarism

In *Doing Philosophy* we stress the importance of avoiding plagiarism. The following is an example of a Turnitin originality report. The report picks up runs of six or more words that are found both in the submitted essay and in at least one other document held in the Turnitin database. Sequences of words from different sources are given different numbers, and highlighted in different colours. In this particular example, the fact that 29 per cent of the essay is found in other documents (the similarity index) could suggest a substantial amount of plagiarism. But in fact the essay is entirely innocent. The most frequent matches consist in direct and acknowledged quotations from the set text for the module and a commentary on it, which happen to be in the database. The next most frequent are matches with other essays submitted at the same time, where the title of the essay and works referred to are the same, and both use common phrases which can hardly be avoided when writing about Kant. The one similarity with an external source again consists in a few harmless phrases which anyone might use. Indeed, in an essay on a topic such as this, it would be highly suspicious if there were no similarities with other internal or external documents.

Please go to [TurnitinUK Originality Report HTML document](#)

# Examples of dialogues

In *Doing Philosophy* we discuss other forms of assessment beyond essays. The following are examples of dialogue as a form for presenting philosophy.

The first dialogue by Simon Bracken is an excellent example of a student using the dialogue form to stimulate an in-depth debate about the interpretation and evaluation of Kant's philosophy. The idea of setting it in a courtroom not only forces the writer to think of possible responses to points made, and responses to those responses, but it happens to be particularly appropriate in Kant's case, since he himself uses the metaphor of a legal tribunal judging the claims of pure reason to metaphysical knowledge.

Please go to [Bracken essay document](#)

In the next dialogue Michael Downey cleverly picks up Kant's picturesque metaphor of the world of experience, or phenomena, as an island surrounded by fog banks over the sea, making it impossible to discern the world of things as they are in themselves, or noumena. He turns it into a desert island on which two seafaring philosophers have been stranded with only Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to read. This helps the writer to focus attention on what is actually written in the text, and how it should be interpreted.

Please go to [Downey essay document](#)

The final dialogue by Stephen Tankard is a brilliant piece of writing, in which he imagines two philosophy students (cleverly named Phil and Sophia) discussing Kant's text at a table in the foyer outside George MacDonald Ross's room in the Philosophy Department. This device has two particular advantages. One is that it is easier to write straightforwardly and naturally if you imagine how a fellow-student might express themselves in discussion, as contrasted with the more stilted language of published academic writing. The other advantage is that, instead of quoting George's course notes and providing a reference in a footnote, the writer can involve him directly in the discussion. Unfortunately, this particular dialogue did not gain a first-class mark, because there isn't enough of Stephen's own independent thinking in answer to the second, evaluative half of the question.

Please go to [Tankard Essay document](#)