How to use third party results in your own thesis

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1 Plagiarism

To declare third party intellectual property, in particular texts written by others, proofs invented by others, or computer programs coded by others, as your own work is called plagiarism. This is considered to be fraud, consequently, your thesis will be graded with 5.0 ("fail"). Among others things, the following things are plagiarism:

- Declaring theses written by others as your own thesis.
- Using proofs, programs, or ideas of others without clearly stating that this is the work of others, that is, without giving a reference.
- Word by word appropriations of third party text passages without putting them in quotation marks.
- Providing theses or text passages to others in order to help them to commit plagiarism is plagiarism, too.

Word by word appropriations typically should be concise. It is not acceptable to quote a whole paragraph or even section in quotation marks from a book as an easy way to get an introduction etc. Small modifications, like exchanging some words, do not help here.

2 How to cite correctly

Scientific work bases on the work of other scientist. Therefore, you are allowed to and should use existing results and ideas. But it is important that you clearly mark the ideas of others. This is usually done by giving a reference.
• If you quote something literally, then you have to put the cited sentences in quotation marks. It shall be followed by a reference, usually an acronym in brackets that refers to the list of references at the end of your thesis.

• You have to provide the reference closely to the place where you use the result or quotation.

• If you use a result, theorem, or proof but you are not quoting it literally, you just give the reference but you do not use quotation marks.

• Your theses shall contain a list of references, usually at the end of your thesis. Please ask your advisor about the desired format of the list of references.

• You do not have to give references for things that are common knowledge: When you transform a matrix into Jordan normal form or claim that 3-SAT is NP-complete, you can do this without reference. But be careful, there is not strict rule. If in doubt, it is safe to provide a reference.

3 Programs from a third party

If you use code from a third party, then you have to mark this clearly in your program code and state this in your thesis, too. Use program code from others only if it is legal to do so.

When in doubt, always ask your advisor or supervisor!