MP Proposals
A Guide to Writing

NICOLETTE CAGLE PHD

DIRECTOR, NSOE COMMUNICATIONS STUDIO

Roadmap

- Anatomy of an MP Proposal

- Writing Tips

MP Proposal

- ✓ ≤ 10 pages, double-spaced
- ✓ Includes Cover Sheet
- ✓ Includes 8 sections

MASTER'S PROJECTS - PROPOSAL

The proposal should contain these six sections: (1) introduction, (2) statement of objectives, (3) materials and methods, (4) expected results, (5) format of report, (6) literature citations. A review of the relevant literature sufficient to support the topic of research is required. In addition, statements specifying credit, advisers and type of financial support should be included as outlined below. The proposal should not exceed 10 pages in length, double-spaced, including the cover page. The subheadings 3 through 9 below should be used to indicate clearly the sections of the proposal. (You may use additional subheadings if you wish.)

1. **The Cover Sheet.** The Cover Sheet. The cover sheet must give the title, author (or authors in the case of a group MP), MP advisor's name, date and degree, and allow space for the author/s to sign and space for the MP advisor's signature of approval. It should also include these questions:

   1. Does this proposed MP involve human subjects research? ___ Yes ____No
      a. If yes, has an approved IRB protocol been obtained? ___ Yes ____No
   2. Does this proposed MP involve the use of animals in research? ___ Yes ____No
      a. If yes, has an approved IACUC protocol been obtained? ___ Yes ____No
   3. Does this proposed MP involve signing a non-disclosure agreement? ___ Yes ____No
      a. If yes, does the advisor have a signed copy? ___ Yes ____No
      (*click here for a sample*)

2. **Title.** Give a tentative title to the project. Keep it succinct. Seven words or fewer are preferred.

3. **Introduction.** Describe the problem you will be working on and why it is important. Include a concise literature review to relate your problem to previous work and set the stage for the approach you will take. Briefly describe the significance of your work.

4. **Objective.** State specifically the hypothesis you will test, the research objectives you will fulfill or the question you will answer with your MP work.

5. **Methods.** Describe the methods and materials to be used in the project, including research approach and methods of data collection and data analysis.

6. **Expected Results.** Identify the expected results of the project and the kinds of information that will be

Navigation sidebar:

masters
- master of environmental management (mem) - on-campus
- master of environmental management (del-mem) - online
- master of forestry
- master of environmental policy (imep - china)
- concurrent degree programs
- cooperative college (3-2) program
- mem/mf student advising
  - course advising for fall 2016
  - course advising for spring 2017
  - master's projects
    - client-centered group master's projects
    - potential solo master's projects topics
    - exemplary master's projects
  - quantitative courses
  - diagnostic exams
  - enrollment forms
  - registration information

MP Proposal

Guidelines:

- ✓ ≤ 10 pages, double-spaced
- ✓ Includes Cover Sheet
- ✓ Includes 8 sections

Content:

I. Introduction
II. Objectives
III. Methods
IV. Expected Results
V. Form of Final Report
VI. Citations
VII. Support Needed
VIII. Faculty Involvement

Recommendations for Writing

- ➢ Write early & often

- ➢ Don't need to write sections in order of occurrence

Objectives

➢ What question(s) will you answer with your MP?

➢ Clear, concise, & concrete

➢ Consider using SMART Objectives

SMART Objectives

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Time-bound

Not Specific: Conduct research
Specific: Formulate plans for research on topic X

Not Measurable: Formulate plans for research on topic X
Measurable: Formulate plans for research on topic X and submit grant application to X Research Council.

Not Time-bound: Formulate plans for research on topic X and submit grant application to X Research Council
Time-bound: Formulate plans for research on topic X and submit grant application to X Research Council by 1 June 2009.

Types of Objectives

- ➢ General Objectives:
  - Broad goals to be achieved
  - Often over-arch specific objectives

- ➢ Specific Objectives
  - Short-term and narrow focus
  - Can be broken down into logical steps or parts
  - Specify what, where, & for what purpose

Types of Objectives - Verbs

- Assess
- Identify
- Find
- Determine
- Compare

- Verify
- Calculate
- Describe
- Analyze
- Establish

Types of Objectives - Examples

➢ **General Objective**

To determine whether bird-window collision patterns are a product of inherent susceptibilities among taxonomic and functional groups.

➢ **Specific Objectives**

- To investigate patterns of taxonomy, residency & breeding status, guild, & synanthropy on bird-window collision frequency at three sites in NC's Research Triangle
- To disentangle relationships between relative abundance and collision frequency using a one-year case study

Objectives ➔ Questions

➢ **General Objective**

   To determine whether bird-window collision patterns are a product of inherent susceptibilities among taxonomic and functional groups.

➢ **Specific Questions**

- What are the patterns of taxonomy, residency & breeding status, guild, & synanthropy on bird-window collision frequency at three sites in NC's Research Triangle?

- What are the relationships between relative abundance and collision frequency as determined from a one-year case study?

Methods

➢ Allows others to replicate your work & findings

➢ Allows the reader to have faith in your results

➢ 1st person, past tense
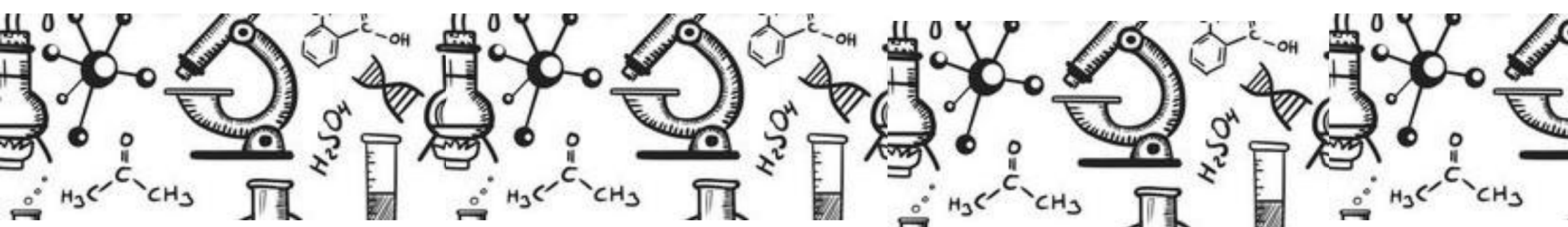
Methods: What to Include

Data Collection

➢ **How** you will collect your data
➢ Why you think your data collection **approach is best**
➢ **Limits and assumptions** of your data collection
➢ Subjects, materials, instruments, & procedures

Data Analysis

➢ **How** you will analyze your data
➢ Why you think your data analysis **approach is best**

Assumptions/Limitations

➢ **Limits and assumptions** of your analysis
➢ Ethical concerns

Methods: General Structure

- Overview of research design

- Pilot study description (if applicable)

- Study area description

- Subject description

- Research instrument description (if applicable)

- Procedure

- Analysis

- Ethical considerations

Methods: Overview of research design

E1: "This study uses a cross-sectional survey design to assess adjustment to retirement of a sample of retired male executives."

E2: "The park case study and supplemental historical analysis seek to determine the following:

• Using the MCDA approach, where should trees be planted to maximize environmental benefits and equity among city parks?

• Do playground, park and incinerator locations from the 1930s persist as parks? Are any of the species planted by the Olmsted Firm now classified as invasive?"

Methods: Study area description

Twenty-two study sites will be located in six preserves (Table 3.1) within the Illinois portion of the tallgrass prairie peninsula, including the United States' first national tallgrass prairie (Midewin) and the largest remnant prairie east of the Mississippi River (Goose Lake). **These sites will be located at a minimum of 1 km and a maximum of 135 km apart.** Sites will be approximately contained within Illinois's Grand Prairie natural division – **a geographic region with similar soil, topography, and biota** (Schwegman, 1973). Delineated by the farthest advance of the last glacial ice sheet to affect the state (McClain, 1997), this division was **previously dominated by black soil prairie**. Historically, **these prairies were maintained by periodic fire and grazing** (Robertson et al., 1997), with disturbances, such as bison wallows and mammal burrows, increasing plant species richness and heterogeneity (Matlack et al., 2001; Gibson, 1989).

Methods: Describe subjects

We will recruit 29 subjects (17 male, 12 female) from two introductory psychology classes. They will be given a choice of extra course credit or $5.00 for their participation. Subjects selected will take Pettigrew's Category Width Scale on the first day of class and score among the top or bottom 10% for their sex in their respective classes. Selected subjects will be unaware of why they are being asked to participate. All subjects will be assigned to perform the same task. For the final data analysis, the 20 subjects with the fewest missed responses in the experimental tasks will be used.

Methods: Describe research instruments

A survey will be constructed and used that contains six simple yes or no questions dealing with honesty, cheating, stealing, and not getting caught (See appendix). A Monopoly gameboard will be used to demonstrate question one.

Methods: Describe procedure

Subjects will be told that the study investigates the relationship between personality traits and academic performance as indicated by an anagram task and an attentional task. Subjects will be informed that a practice anagram task will follow an attentional task, and then by the main anagram test (which won't be administered). **The intention of this misleading information about a second anagram test is to maintain state anxiety levels during the attentional task,** which last several minutes without interruption.

Methods: Analysis

I will use hierarchical agglomerative cluster analysis to identify groups of sites similar in snake species and abundances of those species. From these groups, **I will identify** assemblages of snakes in the study area. Cluster analyses, using PC-ORD 5.0 (McCune and Mefford, 1999), **will be performed** on the relativized snake species composition matrix. In this, **I will use group averaging**, a linkage method compatible with the use of Bray-Curtis distance matrices that preserves the properties of species-space (McCune and Grace, 2002), to join similar sites into groups. The number of groups ranged from one (a single group containing all 22 sites) to 21 (i.e., N-1).

Methods: Ethical Considerations

- State procedure for protection of animals and humans

- May include statement of confidentiality

Expected Results:

Level 1 (specific)

➢ What kinds of information will be produced?

➢ If you have hypotheses, how will you know if they are supported?

➢ If you have objectives, how will you know if they are met?

Expected Results:

Level 2 (general)

➢ How will your research make an original contribution to the field?

➢ How does it fill gaps in existing work (summarized from intro)?

➢ How might it extend understanding of a particular topic (summarized from intro)?

Other Elements of the Proposal:

- ➢ **Form** of the final report & **intended audience**

- ➢ Sources & amount of **support needed** (think: materials, $)

- ➢ Faculty **advisers and cooperators** (with affiliations)

Introduction

- ➢ Introduction to the introduction

- ➢ Literature review (AKA Background)

- ➢ Problem restatement

- ➢ Response restatement

Introduction to the Introduction

➢ Establish a research territory (context)

➢ Establish a niche (problem or significance)

➢ Occupy the niche (response)

Cayley 2013

Introduction: Establish Your Territory

➢ What (briefly) does the reader need to know?

➢ Basic information

➢ A quick refresher

➢ e.g., "Over the past two decades, research in this field has focused on…"

Cayley 2013

Introduction: Establish Your Niche

➢ Describe what isn't well-understood yet

➢ Explain what you want to understand or explore

➢ Explain *why it matters*

➢ *e.g.,* "Yet, [topic] is poorly understood. This lack of attention is significant because knowing [this about the topic] will provide this benefit [or not knowing will incur this cost]

Cayley 2013

Introduction: Occupy Your Niche

- ➢ What are you doing in your research?

- ➢ *e.g.,* "To address this problem, I have…"

Introduction: Occupy Your Niche

➢ What are you doing in your research?

➢ *e.g.,* "To address this problem, I have…"

➢ Very fast – 2 paragraphs maximum

Cayley 2013

Introduction: Occupy Your Niche

➢ What are you doing in your research?

➢ *e.g.,* "To address this problem, I have…"

"Instead of telling a story about the twists and turns of our research process, we need to tell the story about our research that the reader needs to hear."

Cayley 2013

Introduction: Literature Review

- ➢ Provides context

- ➢ Synthesizes current knowledge on your question

- ➢ Demonstrates why your work is relevant

Introduction: Literature Review

➢ Usually general ➔ specific

➢ Organized by topic or focal area

➢ Articulate pattern in the literature

➢ Describe "unresolved" academic issues

General

More specific

Even more specific

Even more specific

Most specific
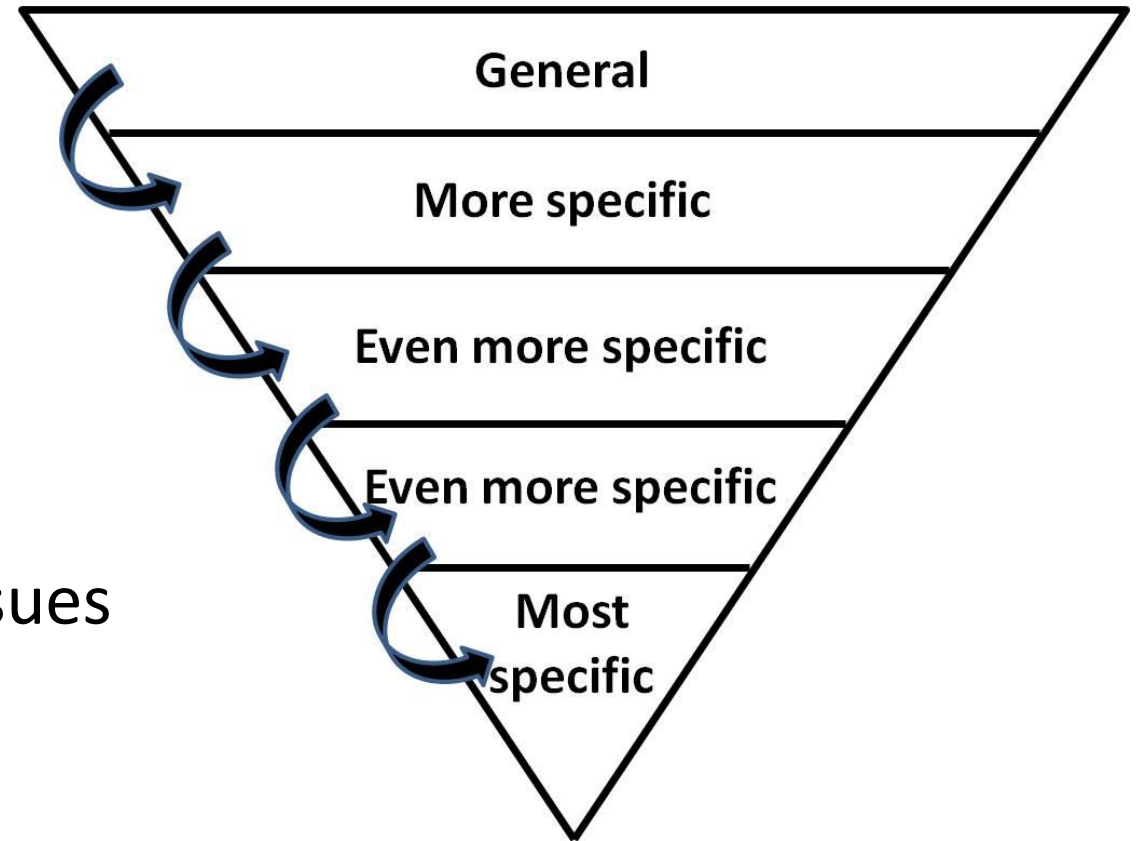
Introduction: Literature Review

- ➢ Identify key authors and journals

- ➢ Use computerized searches

- ➢ Scan table of contents from key journals

- ➢ Use reference lists from relevant articles, books, and book chapters

Introduction: Literature Review

➤ **Summarize key findings**

Significance

- ▪ What were the main findings?

- ▪ How do these findings relate to previous research?

- ▪ What conclusions do researchers draw based on their findings?

- ▪ What are the implications of the findings?

- ▪ What recommendations are made?

Paltridge n.d.

Introduction: Literature Review

➢ Summarize key methods

- ▪ What research designs have been used?

- ▪ What were the key variables? What data were collected?

- ▪ What were the sample selection procedures

- ▪ Were there reliability or validity issues?

Paltridge n.d.

Introduction: Literature Review

➢ Restate the problem (describe in more detail)

➢ Restate the response (describe in more detail)
- *e.g.,* "in this MP, I will…" or "given the centrality of x to this, this research intends to y"

Sign Posts

Literature Cited:

➢ Use proper citation style (e.g., APA, MLA, CSE)

➢ Err on the side of over-citing

Did I Plagiarize?

The Types and Severity of Plagiarism Violations

Did I Plagiarize?

Are you CONFIDENT that your ideas are your own OR that they are so obviously common knowledge (like the fact that the earth is round) that you didn't need to cite any sources? — **No** / **Yes**

Did you give credit to ALL original authors for any text you directly quoted? — **No** / **Yes**

Did you give credit to ALL original authors for any ideas you summarized or paraphrased, even if you completely changed the wording? — **No** / **Yes**

Did you give credit to ALL original artists for any images or graphics you used or referred to? — **No** / **Yes**

Are you CONFIDENT that you didn't distort or misinterpret an author's or artist's original meaning when you cited them? — **No** / **Yes**

Are you CONFIDENT that the organization and style of your work is your own creation and that you didn't mimic the style or layout of someone else? — **No** / **Yes**

Did you use a proper and recognized citation method OR did you include enough citation information that a reader could locate the original work on his/her own? — **No** / **Yes**

Yes!
If you couldn't answer "yes" to ALL of the questions to the right (even if you answered "yes" to all but one), then you are most likely in violation of plagiarism standards. Note that even the slightest of plagiarism infractions is serious. Even if you didn't mean to plagiarize or you weren't familiar with all plagiarism standards, you are held accountable. Lack of understanding or intent does not free you from serious penalty. However, not all plagiarism violations are treated with the same severity; some are certainly more severe than others. And repeated infractions, just like with the law, can cause harsher penalties. Follow the chart to the left and below to determine how you plagiarized and how serious it is.
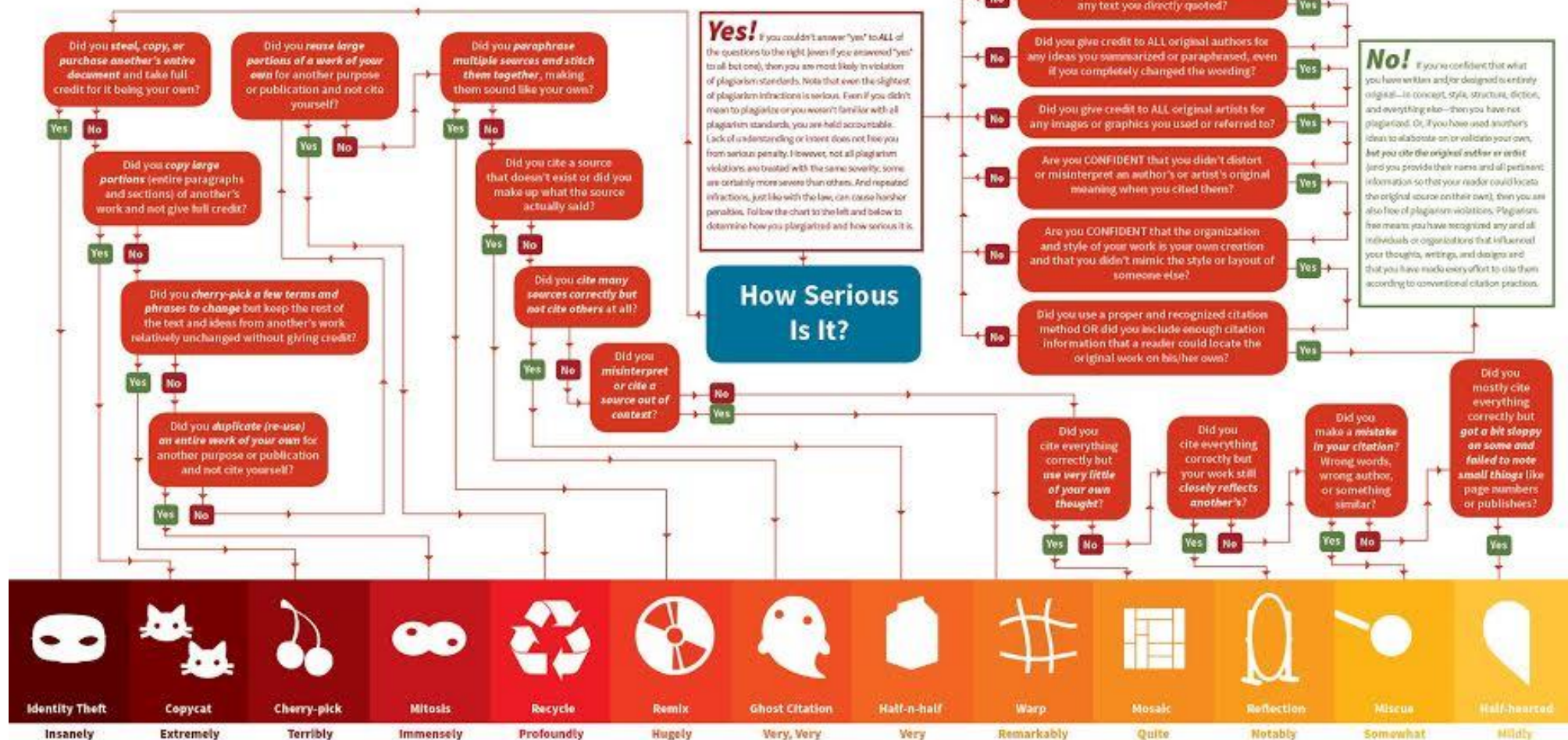
No!
If you're confident that what you have written and/or designed is entirely original—in concept, style, structure, diction, and everything else—then you have not plagiarized. Or, if you have used another's ideas to elaborate on or validate your own, *but you cite the original author or artist* (and you provide their name and all pertinent information so that your reader could locate the original source on their own), then you are also free of plagiarism violations. Plagiarism free means you have recognized any and all individuals or organizations that influenced your thoughts, writings, and designs and that you have made every effort to cite them according to conventional citation practices.

How Serious Is It?

Did you **steal, copy, or purchase another's entire document** and take full credit for it being your own? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you **copy large portions** (entire paragraphs and sections) of another's work and not give full credit? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you **cherry-pick a few terms and phrases to change** but keep the rest of the text and ideas from another's work relatively unchanged without giving credit? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you **duplicate (re-use) an entire work of your own** for another purpose or publication and not cite yourself? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you **reuse large portions of a work of your own** for another purpose or publication and not cite yourself? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you **paraphrase multiple sources and stitch them together**, making them sound like your own? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you cite a source that doesn't exist or did you make up what the source actually said? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you **cite many sources correctly but not cite others** at all? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you **misinterpret or cite a source out of context?** — **No** / **Yes**

Did you cite everything correctly but use very little of your own thought? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you cite everything correctly but your work still closely reflects another's? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you make a **mistake in your citation?** Wrong words, wrong author, or something similar? — **Yes** / **No**

Did you mostly cite everything correctly but got a bit sloppy on some and failed to note small things like page numbers or publishers? — **Yes**

Identity Theft	Copycat	Cherry-pick	Mitosis	Recycle	Remix	Ghost Citation	Half-n-half	Warp	Mosaic	Reflection	Miscue	Half-hearted
Insanely	Extremely	Terribly	Immensely	Profoundly	Hugely	Very, Very	Very	Remarkably	Quite	Notably	Somewhat	Mildly

Plagiarism Severity Meter: How Serious Is the Violation?

References: http://www.plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/types-of-plagiarism

Images

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