How do I increase originality?

An Originality Report might show a high similarity index for a number of reasons (see “What does this report mean?” on the Turnitin library guide). Depending on the reason, you may or may not be able to ‘fix’ the problem. Click the description (below) that best describes your situation to learn how to solve your problem.

Why do my quotations show as text matches even though I cited them?

You may have inserted a direct quote and cited the author in your work, without placing quotation marks (“...”) at the beginning and end of the quote. Turnitin will recognise and highlight this as matched text, which will increase the % similarity in your originality report. This is easy to fix! Insert quotation marks around any directly quoted material and make sure you have properly acknowledged the source. (Turnitin recognises double quotation marks, but not single ones). Turnitin will not always identify the actual source of matched information - it will indicate a matching source not necessarily the original source. To fix this you need to either find the quote and author in materials you have read, or find other evidence to cite instead.

I think I have over-used quotations

If you have used lots of quotations you might consider how you have used them. Have you explained further what each quotation means, and how it is relevant to your argument? If not, it’s difficult for your assessor to judge how well you understand the information. In many cases, the evidence you use is best written in your own words whilst acknowledging the original author. (For further advice on this, see point 4 below). Reserve quotations for times when specific language is used that can’t be expressed in a different way. For example: technical terms, a famous phrase, or a concise statement that if changed even slightly, would change its entire meaning.

My quotations show as text matches even though I have cited them correctly

If direct quotes are surrounded by double quotation marks (“...”) and the author is acknowledged, generally Turnitin will ignore this text (although this depends on the settings used by the lecturer). However, some Harvard referencing styles use single quotation marks (‘...’). Turnitin recognises these as text matches rather than quotations. This cannot be fixed at the moment. You just need to know that it can happen, and don’t panic if it does! Your lecturer should take this into account when assessing your work. Also consider whether all the quotations you have used are relevant. If you have a high percentage similarity mostly due to direct quotes, perhaps you are relying too heavily on quotations (see Point 2 above)

I have cited all sources, but my words are too similar to the original work

Some people cut and paste from original sources, then change some words to make the text appear different. This is NOT how to paraphrase, and not good practice. Most words will still match the original text and Turnitin will recognise this as a significant match. You need to develop effective reading and note-taking skills. Re-read the original work as a whole to identify the key arguments. Make brief notes about these in your own words and explain how they support your own argument (it doesn’t have to sound academic!). Now, using your notes, write sentences using more formal academic language and tone to express your thoughts. For further information on effective reading and note-taking visit: http://monash.edu/library/skills/resources/tutorials/academic-integrity/practical-skills/

I have lots of very small matches (5-8 words) adding up to a high similarity index
When creating the assignment, your lecturer is able to tell Turnitin to ignore small matches; if this setting is not enabled you might see a number of small text matches that are very general and not matched to specific sources. Small matches commonly occur when you use specific terms with long names (e.g. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations). Lots of minor text matching can also occur when large student cohorts enrolled in the same unit are provided with the resources to be used in an assignment. There are only so many ways to restate this information! In this scenario, the last work submitted through Turnitin may have many 1% matches with all other submitted work resulting in a high overall similarity index. You can't fix or change this, just understand that it can happen and don't panic when it does!

I have lots of matches to entries in the reference list

This problem relates to the way your assessor set up the Turnitin drop-box. There is an option to exclude bibliographies, however some academics may not choose this option or have accidentally switched this off. Turnitin also does not recognise every reference format, and might not identify the reference list. These matches can artificially increase your similarity index, and although you can't fix or change this situation, you can toggle the setting on/off on your originality report to understand how and why it happened. If you feel these matches are adversely affecting your originality percentage you should discuss this with your lecturer.

Turnitin is saying that I have plagiarised a dodgy website but I didn't use it!

Turnitin doesn't ever say that you plagiarised anything! It just identifies that your text is similar to that in another source. Turnitin compares your submitted text with the material from several locations including its repository, books and journals, and across the web. This can result in matches from any of these sources - including other students' assignments and dodgy websites. The fact that it matched your text to this website doesn’t imply that you used it - simply that your text matches it. The website could have plagiarised someone else's work!

The similarity index in my originality report is 0% - what have I done wrong?

It is possible to obtain a similarity of 0% through writing original work. A low similarity relates to the way your assessor set up the Turnitin drop-box. There are options to exclude bibliographies and small matches (5-8 words long) which can lead to a legitimate 0% similarity in your report. You haven't done anything wrong!

I can't access my Turnitin report - Turnitin isn't working

If you cannot seem to retrieve your originality report after submitting your assignment, this could relate to the way your assessor set up the Turnitin drop-box. There is an option to hide the originality report. It is worth contacting your lecturer to ask if this is the case. On the other hand, if you suspect that Turnitin is not functioning correctly, please contact eSolutions:

http://monash.edu/esolutions/contact/index.html

Select Log a job using Service Desk Online, IT Service request, Moodle/Learning Systems, Request now. Make sure you include a screenshot if possible, and leave a contact number.

I submitted the wrong document! What can I do?

If you have submitted the wrong document, we suggest that you contact your lecturer or tutor by email and ask them to delete the submission. A second submission (of the correct document) will take 24 hours to generate an originality report and you may not have enough time to view or download the report before the deadline.

I think I might have plagiarised and I need help.

The Monash Academic Integrity Tutorial module "Getting Help" has all the information you need.