



Self-Plagiarism/Reuse in NPS Theses and Dissertations

Self-plagiarism (also known as text-recycling or reuse), as defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [Office of Research Integrity](#), “occurs when authors reuse their own previously written work or data in a ‘new’ written product without letting the reader know that this material has appeared elsewhere.”

Each publisher has slightly different standards regarding reuse. This handout contains current Thesis Processing Office guidance for incorporating your own previously published work into NPS theses, joint applied projects, capstone reports, and dissertations (referred to hereafter as “theses”).

Some NPS departments encourage their students to present or publish thesis chapters in other venues prior to thesis submission or publication. If you have written a paper that was previously published—or that is slated to be published—elsewhere, such as in an academic journal or conference proceedings, you *may* be permitted to reuse the paper in your thesis, if allowed by the previous paper’s publisher.



Though guidelines differ according to the publisher of the original work, many publishers allow you to reuse your previous work in your thesis, as long as credit is given to the original publisher with a disclaimer indicating prior publication, and/or a complete citation. See page 4 of this document for sample citation and disclaimer language.

Authorship of a work is generally agreed to be attributed to those persons who...

- substantially contributed to the experimental/study design, collected and analyzed the data, and performed the interpretation leading to the results/findings being presented,
- wrote or provided significant intellectual contributions to the manuscript,
- approved the version to be published, and/or
- provided laboratory access and/or funding.

** Note: Other contributors are typically listed in the Acknowledgements section of the paper (and where applicable, their work should be cited).*

Your previously published work must be appropriately cited and credited to the original publisher. It must be clear to readers (as well as to journal editors and peer reviewers) that specific parts of a work have been previously published or reported elsewhere.

Publishers frequently offer guidance on what constitutes “previous work,” including presentations, conference proceedings, and theses. *Specific journal or publisher guidance should be consulted.*

Some NPS departments also support **stapling**—combining several previously published papers to form a large portion of a thesis or dissertation. While stapling is acceptable at the department’s discretion, the thesis must contain proper citations and disclaimer language for previously published material, and must follow Thesis Processing Office formatting and style guidelines (see the following FAQ for more guidance). *Importantly, the thesis abstract, introduction, and conclusion must still be unique to the thesis.*

For more information, see sample guidance from [Elsevier](#), [IEEE](#), and [Council of Science Editors](#).

From the Naval Postgraduate School’s Graduate Writing Center and Thesis Processing Office, located in the Dudley Knox Library and online at <https://nps.edu/web/gwc> and <https://nps.edu/web/thesisprocessing>.
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This worksheet is not legal advice. Direct reprint questions to the University Librarian or Office of Counsel.



Self-Plagiarism FAQs

Frequently asked questions concerning self-plagiarism appear in the following table. This table provides general guidance only; always check with the original publisher for reuse rules and compliance obligations.

Question	Guidance
In my thesis, can I reuse a previously published paper (or portions of a paper) I wrote for an academic journal or conference?	<p>Yes, but it depends. Check the journal’s/conference proceedings’ policy on reuse. Many allow duplicate publication and/or partial reuse for theses and dissertations, but some do not.</p> <p>If reuse is permitted, include the original journal article or conference paper as a reference in your thesis and cite it when its material is incorporated into your thesis text. This extends professional courtesy to the publisher, recognition for the journal/conference (and for you), and a relatively transparent path for future researchers to follow.</p> <p>Some journals/conference proceedings also require you to include disclaimer text at the beginning of a chapter or section in your thesis that contains its previously published material. Some journals have specific disclaimer language they want you to include; others leave the wording up to you. See page 4 of this document for sample disclaimer language to include in your thesis.</p>
If the previous publisher allows reuse, do I need to use quotation marks around language borrowed directly from my previously published article?	No, unless the publisher’s policy requires you to do so.
What if I co-authored a previously published paper? Can I still include that paper in my thesis?	Yes, with permission from all co-authors.
What if I have edited or revised a previously published paper? Can I still reuse the revised paper in my thesis?	Yes, but it depends. Check the publisher’s policy on reuse. Some allow this, but others do not. Some revisions—such as changing the citation style as required by your NPS department, or fixing errors—are generally considered permissible.
If I wrote a paper that has been accepted for publication by an academic journal or conference, but the paper has not yet been published , can I reuse the paper in my thesis?	Generally, treat forthcoming journal or conference papers as published conference papers (see above). Disclaimer language will need to indicate that the article is forthcoming or in press; provide the future date of publication and DOI if known. Check with the publisher to determine if the paper will be published before your thesis; theses are published two to three months after graduation.
If I submitted a paper to a journal or conference but do not know if/when it will be accepted , can I reuse the paper in my thesis?	<p>Yes. You may want to ask your advisor about placing your thesis on “hold” until the status of your submitted paper has been determined. Holds are requested on the Thesis Release and Approval Form.</p> <p>If the journal accepts your article after your thesis has been published, cite <i>your thesis</i> in the article. Communicate with the publisher to discuss author responsibilities, reuse, standard permissions language, and publication dates.</p>



From the Naval Postgraduate School’s Graduate Writing Center and Thesis Processing Office, located in the Dudley Knox Library and online at <https://nps.edu/web/gwc> and <https://nps.edu/web/thesisprocessing>.
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Question	Guidance
Can I reuse an abstract I published for a previous paper or conference presentation as my thesis abstract?	No. While you may borrow thesis chapter text from a previously published article at the discretion of the publisher, the abstract for your thesis must be unique. The thesis is a different, more comprehensive work than an article or conference presentation. As such, the thesis abstract should more comprehensively cover your topic.
Can I “staple” several of my previously published papers together to form my thesis?	Yes, if permitted by your department, and per your department’s specifications. Citation and disclaimer language guidelines still apply. Generally, you must be the lead author for all articles you wish to staple (check with your department). Additional requirements include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thesis must be formatted in the NPS thesis template and must follow all formatting and style guidelines. • The thesis must contain a unique introduction, conclusion, and reference list. • You must write a unique abstract.
In my thesis, can I reuse a previously published government document or report I authored or co-authored?	Treat all government documents as traditional outside sources; cite, <u>paraphrase, and quote</u> appropriately.
In my thesis, can I reuse something I wrote and informally published on the internet , such as a blog post or webpage content?	Treat all informally published or web content as a traditional outside source; cite, <u>paraphrase, and quote</u> appropriately.
In my thesis, can I reuse a previously published NPS technical report I authored or co-authored?	Treat all technical reports as traditional outside sources; cite, <u>paraphrase, and quote</u> appropriately.
What if I wrote a technical report for a different organization ? Can I include that report in my thesis?	Treat all reports as traditional outside sources; cite, <u>paraphrase, and quote</u> appropriately.
In my thesis, can I reuse a class paper I wrote for an NPS class?	It depends. You will need the permission of your thesis advisor(s) and the instructor for whose class you wrote the original paper.
What can I do if my previous publisher does not allow reuse ?	You can still incorporate material from your previously published paper; simply treat the paper as any other outside source, citing, <u>paraphrasing, and quoting</u> the material appropriately.
Can I reuse text from my published thesis in another publication?	Yes, but it depends. First, find out if this is allowed by the new publication to which you are submitting. If it is allowed, cite your thesis in the new publication, as appropriate.
Can I reuse text from my unpublished thesis in another publication?	Yes, but it depends. First, find out if this is allowed by the publication to which you are submitting. If the new publication will be published before your thesis, follow the guidance above for reusing your previously published paper in your thesis.



Sample Reuse Instructions and Language

Many journals, conferences, and other publishers allow you to reuse your self-authored papers in a thesis or dissertation, as long as you have credited the original publisher. Though requirements vary by publisher, this credit can often be accomplished through simple citations and disclaimers.

This page has sample language you can use in your thesis to introduce your previously published sources.

IMPORTANT: Always check with your publisher first! Some publishers require specifically worded disclaimers; some publishers do not allow reuse at all.

1. If you have borrowed an entire section or chapter of your thesis from your previously published paper, you can include the following language at the beginning of the section/chapter or write something similar to it:



This [section/chapter] was previously published by [journal or publisher name] [citation].

2. If you have borrowed portions of your previously published paper but have inserted new sentences or paragraph material unique to your thesis, you can choose from the following language to include at the beginning of the section/chapter or write something similar to these:



Parts of this section were previously published by [journal or publisher name] [citation].

This section is adapted from [citation], previously published by [journal or publisher name].

3. **REMEMBER:** Some publishers may require additional or specific language. **IEEE**, for example, requires a copyright disclaimer the first time you incorporate your previously published IEEE article into your thesis—that is, the first time you use the above language to introduce borrowed chapter or section material. This disclaimer is best relegated to a footnote:



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