# **Interpreting the Similarity Index**



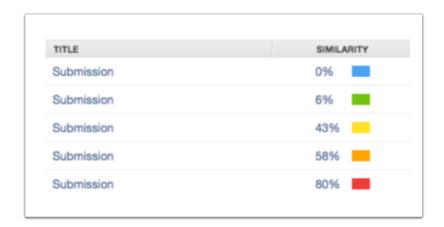
This article explains how an instructor can use the Turnitin Similarity Index Score to determine a paper's originality.

Turnitin's similarity index matches content from a student submission to material that appears on the web and in the Turnitin database.

It is not a plagiarism detector itself, but can be reviewed by an instructor to determine if there is an originality concern.

## **Turnitin Similarity Colour Coding**

Turnitin will automatically review a student submission against the similarity index, providing a similarity index score. The score will be color-coded according to the percent of text in the paper that is found to be similar to other sources.



Not all text identified as similar is an originality concern. Instructor interpretation will determine if the highlighted material is a "false flag" or a genuine originality concern.

| False Flags   | Originality Concerns  |
|---|---|
| <ul> <li>Quoted material (setting dependent)</li> <li>Improperly formatted quoted material</li> <li>Bibliographies</li> <li>Formulas</li> <li>Assignment instructions</li> <li>Assignments in which the answers are intended to be the same across students (maths, etc)</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>Material copied from a website</li> <li>Exact or similar responses from another student</li> <li>Paraphrasing that is too similar to the original</li> <li>Text that matches submissions to the Turnitin database</li> </ul> |

| False Flags   | Originality Concerns |
|---|----------------------|
| <ul> <li>Extremely common phrasing (According<br/>to [author name],)</li> </ul> |                      |

## **Example 1: Instructions + Similar Responses**

Here, the similarity index recognizes the instructions as other students have submitted the same assignment. Additionally, the responses will be relatively similar from student to student.



### **Example 2: Improperly Formatted Quoted Material**

In this example, the quotation marks are facing the wrong direction, resulting in this quoted material flagged by Turnitin in the Similarity Index.

George yells at Beneatha and exclaims, "Because this is stupid! I don't go out with you to discuss the nature of "quiet desperation" or to hear all about your thoughts--because the world will go on thinking what it thinks regardless-" (Hansberry 96-97). George isn't the type of man to

### **Example 3: Improper Paraphrasing**

In this case, a student has insufficiently paraphrased material. This results in sporadic highlighting from the same source. An instructor can determine to what extent this is considered plagiarism or consider revision as an option.

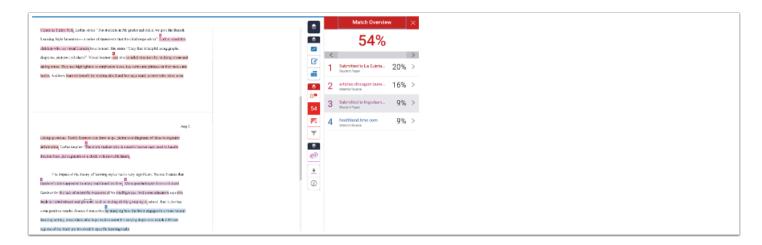
release. As a result of Jackie paving the way for African American MLB players, african americans were drafted into the MLB and given equal opportunities as their white counterparts to some extent. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, made the federal government offer its immense power to all people of the American Society. The act didn't reach all of the goals of the civil rights activists only some. It took judicial precedent and legislative action to guarantee civil rights for African Americans. Although the movement has left its everlasting mark on the



Allowing for multiple submissions can help students see highlighted similar material and allow them to revise and resubmit.

### **Example 4: Plagiarism**

This is an example in which Turnitin is useful for identifying plagiarism, as large sections of text are highlighted as similar to other sources. Further indicating plagiarism, the only nonhighlighted sections of text are quoted material.





For more details on the use of Turnitin and the Similarity Index, for staff and students, visit Turnitin documentation available at:

Turnitin Support