“Plagiarism is commercialized laziness. Although it can be taken as a compliment that the work is thought enough of to copy, it is also theft.” ~ T. W. Dittmer

**Why There is No Flattery in Plagiarism** by [Zeinab Alaya](https://zenscribbles.wordpress.com)n (zenscribbles.wordpress.com)

The basic idea behind the “plagiarism is flattery” argument is that plagiarists wouldn’t select to steal something they didn’t like. So, through the act of plagiarizing their work, even though most would agree it’s a dishonest and immoral act, it’s a bizarre compliment to the author, a way of saying they “like” the work and think it’s good.

However, there are three critical problems with this logic, each of which dull any compliment the original author might have taken from the misuse:

1. **Plagiarists Lack Skill:** First, plagiarists generally plagiarize because they lack the skill to create the work themselves. As such, they also generally lack the skill to distinguish good from mediocre works. They only know for certain which works are better than theirs.
2. **Plagiarists Rarely Read:** Plagiarists rarely thoroughly read and understand the materials they grab. Plagiarists usually try to avoid work and they often rely on other indicators, such as Google results and other links, to make their judgments on what to choose.
3. **Plagiarists Don’t Choose on Quality:** Plagiarists rarely try to choose the “best” work they can find. They try instead to find a work that will fill the need and one that they think they won’t be likely caught with.

Of the three points, the last is the most important, that plagiarists aren’t looking for the highest quality work they can find, just passable work that is better and easier to produce than their own. It’s the difference of a plagiarist saying, “I really like your work and wanted to be as skilled as you in people’s eyes” and “Your work was convenient, good enough to get the job done and still fool others into thinking it was mine.”

While a plagiarist certainly doesn’t want to choose something terrible, they don’t feel the need to choose something great either. For example, in school environments, teachers report that Wikipedia is the source most often plagiarized from, not more scholarly sources.

The reason is simple, WIkipedia is convenient, most often the first result in Google, and is widely thought (incorrectly) to be untraceable.

In short, works aren’t plagiarized because they are good, they are plagiarized because they are easy and there isn’t much flattery in being at the wrong place at the wrong time.