

PLAGIARISM ON CAMPUS

Resources to Help Detect, Prevent and Avoid Classroom Plagiarism for Teachers and Students



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Meet the Expert

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Plagiarism is not a new problem in academia, but it is a serious issue. According to a 2010 Texas Tech study, 68 percent of faculty participants reported observing students "paraphrasing or copying a few sentences of material from a written source without footnoting or referencing it in a paper" at least once during the previous three years. But what exactly is plagiarism and how can students and instructors recognize it when it occurs? Furthermore, why does it continue to be a problem? Because understanding plagiarism is the first step to avoiding it, the following guide examines the latest research and provides advice from experts who explore these questions. This guide also demonstrates the proper way to quote, paraphrase and cite from text sources and provides current resources that explain how to recognize plagiarism and prevent it.

Plagiarism is the act of presenting the words, ideas, images, sounds, or the creative expression of others as your own. Plagiarism is representing someone else's work as your own.

*California College of the Arts
Plagiarism Prevention and Awareness Guide*

Modern Plagiarism in College: Beyond Word-Theft

What is causing plagiarism on college campuses? Is it access to the Internet or pressure to excel? A 2011 survey by Pew Research Center discovered a majority of college presidents (55 percent) believed plagiarism in student papers had increase over the previous 10 years because of websites, blogs and social media sites on the Internet. In 2012, developers of Turnitin, one of the most popular sources for plagiarism-detecting software, found more than 50 percent of college papers contained plagiarized material from the Internet.

What Media Can Be Plagiarized?

Students are not only using multiple sources to plagiarize, but are also plagiarizing different forms of media, including:

Words.

Taking another person's words and using them as your own without quoting, citing or acknowledging their

is plagiarism. The words may come from Web pages, books, emails, articles or any other written work.

Ideas.

Using another writer's ideas, opinions or theories without crediting the original source is plagiarism. However, it's not necessary to attribute common knowledge, which refers to facts found in numerous places and known by many people.

Images.

Copying or relying too heavily on images belonging to another person is visual plagiarism. Images include artwork, photography, advertising and logos.

Sounds.

Using or closely imitating another person's sounds or music is plagiarism. The two most common examples are taking another author's musical idea (melody) or reusing a portion of a sound recording (sampling).



Copyright infringement.

While plagiarism is an ethical issue, copyright infringement is a legal construct. Copyright holders have the rights to any reproduction, distribution, creation of derivative works and public displays or performances of their materials.

Intentional versus Accidental Plagiarism

The foundation of academic culture is the practice of creative expression through words, images and other media. Unfortunately, along with creative expression comes the risk of plagiarism. Students plagiarize for many reasons, according to the Council of Writing Program Administrators, including poor time management, fear of failure, disregard for consequences and carelessness. Technology has made it possible for students to easily purchase assignments from paper mills and submit them as their own, while using the keyboard's copy and paste functions may inadvertently lead to incidents of accidental plagiarism.

What is Intentional Plagiarism?

Intentional plagiarism is when a student either knowingly takes credit for someone else's work by copying and pasting content into a paper without attribution or buys a paper written by someone else, usually from an online "paper mill." Instructors often detect incidents of intentional plagiarism when a student's writing is inconsistent in style, vocabulary and content, or when the instructor remembers having read the same words before.

What is Accidental Plagiarism?

Accidental plagiarism occurs when a student doesn't know how to properly attribute work belonging to others. As a result of improper quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing or citing, the work is unintentionally attributed to the student.

Whether plagiarism is intentional or accidental, once students submit their finished papers, they assume responsibility. Instructors take several factors into consideration when judging plagiarism to be intentional or accidental:

Is it a new student with little experience, or an upperclassman who should know better?

Did the student copy and paste word for word or merely do a poor job of paraphrasing?

How much of the paper was plagiarized?

Prevalent Forms of Plagiarism in College

A 2011 report by Turnitin looked at 128 “content matches” from the results of 33 million student papers during a one-year period. The company found high school and college students are copying from online sources including Wikipedia and Yahoo Answers at an alarming rate.

A main difference between high school plagiarism and college-level plagiarism in the study was the type of sources students used to get their information. Approximately 31 percent of high school content matches originated on social and content-sharing sites compared to 26 percent of college content matches. Where did college students find most of their text? They used content mills or copied from news sites.

In 2014, Turnitin published the white paper “Defining Plagiarism: The Plagiarism Spectrum” to provide insight into types of plagiarism. They based their findings on reports from nearly 900 secondary and higher education instructors. Some types of plagiarism detected were:



Direct plagiarism

Transcribing someone else’s work word for word without attribution or quotation marks.

Mosaic Plagiarism

Borrowing phrases from a source either without using quotation marks or by using sloppy paraphrasing, or Patchwriting, which often comes across as an attempt to follow the letter — but not the spirit of plagiarism rules. It happens when a writer swaps out synonyms while leaving another writer’s syntax and sentence structure largely intact. According to Poynter.org, “It is a form of intellectual dishonesty that indicates that the writer is not actually thinking for herself.”

Self-plagiarism

Submitting one’s own previous work or parts of previous works without permission from all of the professors involved.

The University of Pittsburgh’s undergraduate plagiarism policy (2008) makes further distinctions, listing the following as examples of plagiarism:

Copying large portions of text from another source without attribution

Mixing copied content from different sources

Combining paraphrased content from multiple sources

Reordering the elements of the source text without citation

Reproducing information that is not common knowledge without citation

Incorporating an idea heard in conversation without citation

Plagiarism Detection Tools

Plagiarism results in serious consequences, including disciplinary action. Students can take a proactive approach, checking their work for issues before submitting it their instructors. For their part, instructors can identify instances of plagiarism by checking student papers using one of the many websites and software programs available. Here are five online services that check text for plagiarism:



CheckForPlagiarism.net

This tool checks submitted documents against billions of books, articles, magazines, Internet sources and academic journals to identify everything from subtle to very serious plagiarism. Monthly subscriptions start at \$20 for students and \$85 for educators. The website only requires a Web browser and the installation of Adobe Flash Player, which is free, to work. Users submit documents online, and a plagiarism report is sent to the user’s mailbox after the review is complete.



Dupli Checker

This free site allows users to detect plagiarism in any document or file that is copy-pasted or uploaded. Within a few seconds, the site generates a report dissecting each sentence and displaying all of the source websites from where the content was copied. The site places limits on word counts and number of times per day a user can run a search.



PlagiarismChecker.com

Instructors can check student papers for plagiarism with Plagiarism Checker, one of the more basic plagiarism-detecting sites. The site is free, but instructors are limited to checking phrases rather than entire documents. After users type phrases (or paste from a computer file) into the search box, Plagiarism Checker will provide Google search results with a list of Web pages containing those phrases.



PlagiarismDetect.org

This site offers standard and premium services. Standard credits are \$.05 and premium credits are 25 cents, and they never expire. The standard version is designed for students and instructors who want a fast, cheap way to check text. The premium service uses SMART technology and multi-layered scanning for better accuracy. First, users upload text (doc, docx, odt or txt files) or paste it into the checking area. Then the system checks it for similarities against a private database and websites open for indexing. After one minute, users are redirected to the results section, where any areas that have been plagiarized appear. The plagiarized areas are hyperlinked to make it easy to check the source. Unlike most sites, Plagiarism Detect allows users to check both English and Spanish text.



Turnitin

This comprehensive online plagiarism checker for educators scans papers against an enormous database of thousands of journals, millions of archived papers and billions of webpages. But Turnitin offers additional services that distinguish it from the competition, such as peer review, course management and online grading. Many high schools and colleges have subscriptions to Turnitin. Instructors who need to pay for their own subscription are charged \$3 per student annually. Once instructors create an account, students can upload their final papers directly into Turnitin. Turnitin creates originality reports within two minutes of each submission, enabling the instructor to see which parts of the document are derivative.

Last semester I had a student turn in a final paper which consisted of 75 percent direct quotes with no citations. I used Turnitin to mark up the paper to return to the student for revisions. I am much more lenient when it comes to undergraduate students. I also refer them to the campus writing center.

Shelley Errington Nicholson

Preventing Plagiarism on Campus

Students can easily be tempted into plagiarizing written work, especially when they feel under pressure. There are many written resources (paper mills) online that make buying a paper a simple matter of entering a credit card number. Instructors should take a proactive approach by devising ways to prevent students from plagiarizing in the first place.

Top Tips for Teachers

Talk to students about plagiarism and your expectations. Take time to go over the proper way to cite resources (see below) and review potential pitfalls.

Make it clear when assigning the project that the students must keep copies of their references available should there be a suspicion of plagiarism.

Ask students to journal their writing process. Holding students accountable for how they developed and researched their topic will make them more apt to be honest.

Don't assign the same project each year. Otherwise, when students find out their friends have already taken your course with the same project, they may try to use the previous work as a source.

Break down larger projects into micro-assignments. Asking students to hand in an outline and rough draft makes it harder for them to plagiarize.

Require recent research sources. Doing so may stop students who are tempted to use paper mills because it is more challenging to find papers with sources that are recent enough for the assignment.

Have students submit their assignments to Turnitin before handing it in. In this way, you can use Turnitin as a teaching tool. Students will discover how easy it is to accidentally plagiarize.



How can instructors at the college level avoid plagiarism?

“I think it starts with being clear with students on what constitutes plagiarism. In many cases, it is improper citation versus an actual intent to plagiarize. I refer students to Purdue Owl’s online writing lab, which has instructions for APA and MLA. I include the link on all syllabi and show them the website on the first day of class. I also always include a sample final paper in my course materials. This gives students a starting point when thinking about a final paper and shows them proper formatting.”

Shelley Errington Nicholson

Proper Citation Can Help Avoid Plagiarism

It is important for students to cite sources properly in their writing. Not providing proper citation implies that the ideas and information in a paper are the student’s, even though they belong to another author. Different disciplines, professors and institutions may require a specific citation style (footnotes, endnotes or parenthetical citations). The three most commonly used style guides in academia are APA Style, Chicago Style and MLA Style.

Citation Resources

[American Psychological Association — APA Style](#)

[Chicago Manual of Style Online](#)

[Modern Language Association — MLA Style](#)

[Purdue Online Writing Lab — APA Style](#)

[Purdue Online Writing Lab — Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition](#)

[Purdue Online Writing Lab — MLA Formatting and Style Guide](#)

Common Citation Mistakes & Fixes

Below are some examples of common citation mistakes, using an excerpt from an actual book. Parts of this example are used in an online tutorial on plagiarism for students at University of Indiana Bloomington School of Education. Keep in mind that in an academic paper, the source must also be referenced using footnotes, endnotes or parenthetical citations, depending on the instructor’s guidelines.

Original Text

“Developing complex skills in the classroom involves the key ingredients identified in teaching pigeons to play ping-pong and to bowl. The key ingredients are: (1) inducing a response, (2) reinforcing subtle improvements

or refinements in the behavior, (3) providing for the transfer of stimulus control by gradually withdrawing the prompts or cues, and (4) scheduling reinforcements so that the ratio of reinforcements in responses gradually increases and natural reinforcers can maintain their behavior.”

Source: Gredler, M. E. (2001). *Learning and instruction: Theory into practice* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

| | EXAMPLE | CORRECTED EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Verbatim Plagiarism: Student copies writer's text word for word.</p> | <p>Developing complex skills in the classroom involves the key ingredients identified in teaching pigeons to play ping-pong and to bowl.</p> | <p>According to Gredler (2001), “Developing complex skills in the classroom involves the key ingredients identified in teaching pigeons to play ping-pong and to bowl.”</p>    |
| <p>Mosaic Plagiarism: Combining multiple direct quotes from the writer without any attribution.</p> | <p>Developing complex skills in the classroom involves providing for the transfer of stimulus control.</p> | <p>In her book on developing classroom skills, Gredler identifies several ways in which “developing complex skills in the classroom” provides “for the transfer of stimulus control.”</p> |
| <p>Inadequate Paraphrasing: Student moves writer's words around and summarizes main ideas, but does not use quotes or give credit to the writer.</p> | <p>Inducing a response, scheduling reinforcement so that natural reinforcers can maintain their behavior, and providing for the transfer of stimulus control by slowly withdrawing cues, are the key ingredients identified to both teach pigeons to bowl and in developing complex classroom skills.</p> | <p>According to Gredler, the same factors apply to the development of complex skills in the classroom as to the development of skills in any setting. A response must be induced and then reinforced as it gets closer to the desired behavior. Reinforcers have to be scheduled carefully and cues withdrawn gradually so that the new behaviors can be transferred and maintained.</p> |
| <p>Uncited Paraphrase: Student doesn't give the writer credit even though the words are paraphrased.</p> | <p>The same factors apply to the development of classroom skills in the classroom as to the development of skills in any setting.</p> | <p>According to Gredler, the same factors apply to the development of complex skills in the classroom as to the development of skills in any setting.</p> |
| <p>Uncited Quotation The student uses quotes around the direct quotation but does not cite the source.</p> | <p>When it comes to skill development, “developing complex skills in the classroom involves the key ingredients identified in teaching pigeons to play ping-pong and to bowl.”</p> | <p>According to Gredler, when it comes to skill development, “developing complex skills in the classroom involves the key ingredients identified in teaching pigeons to play ping-pong and to bowl.”</p> |

The Consequences of Plagiarism in College

The established policies at colleges and universities outline the consequences of plagiarism. These policies are part of each school's student code of conduct. Depending on the severity of the offense, consequences can vary from being asked to redo a paper to being expelled. Although instructors tend to be more understanding in cases of accidental plagiarism, they are still required to set consequences. For example, students may need to attend a workshop or training that covers types of plagiarism and how to avoid them.

Short-term Consequences

Rewritten paper

The instructor may require a student to rewrite a paper if plagiarism is suspected.

Failed grade

The most lenient consequence is a failing grade on a paper.

Anti-plagiarism training seminar

These seminars are designed as a preventative measure against future instances of plagiarism.

Reprimand or verbal warning

The instructor or dean informs the student that another instance of suspected plagiarism may result in a written warning.

Formal written warning

The student receives a formal written disciplinary warning that another instance of suspected plagiarism may result in harsher disciplinary action.

Loss of credit

The student receives a failing course grade.

Long-term consequences

Temporary transcript notation

The student receives a temporary transcript notation until graduation.

Academic probation

Continued enrollment of a student on probation may be conditional upon adherence to the plagiarism policy. The student may be restricted from extracurricular activities.

Permanent transcript notation

The student receives a permanent transcript notation.

Suspension

The student is separated from the school for a stated period of time with specified conditions of reinstatement.

Indefinite suspension

The student is considered to no longer be matriculated in the school, although there are specified conditions for reinstatement.

Expulsion

The student is permanently removed from the school, including its facilities, programs, events and activities.



Plagiarism Case Study

In 2011, a Rutgers senior was accused of plagiarism via an email notification. She had written her final paper for a course on gay marriage laws before going home for Christmas break. The instructor emailed her to tell her plagiarism had been detected in her paper, and the violation was reported to the dean. Although she tried to prove her innocence through a written appeals process, the university administration board rejected her case. Her consequence? She received an "F" on the paper and failed the course.

What are consequences for plagiarism at your school?

"The faculty member contacts the dean of students and makes a recommendation. At a minimum, students fail the paper, and then consequences can range from failing the course to expulsion, depending on the severity and frequency of plagiarism.

"I always err on the side of ignorance when it comes to assuming a student plagiarized. However, if I find students turn in similar work to one

student plagiarized. However, if I find students turn in similar work to one another, that is another conversation. That is not ignorance in citation practice – that is blatant plagiarism. Consequences there depend on the weight of the assignment. For example, a forum post online is worth less than a final paper. So the consequences would be more severe [for the final paper].”

Shelley Errington Nicholson

Plagiarism Resources for Students and Teachers



Students can protect themselves against unintentional plagiarism by taking a proactive approach. There are many free websites and subscription-based software services that allow students to check their work against a database of articles and reports. Students receive a plagiarism report with the results so they can make changes before turning in their paper. Likewise, educators can determine whether students have plagiarized work by uploading or copying and pasting content to the same websites. The following section includes links to plagiarism-detection websites as well as helpful resources for students and teachers.

Resources for Students

[5 Most Effective Methods for Avoiding Plagiarism](#)

An article from Grammarly about how students can prevent plagiarism. Grammarly is a grammar-checking tool that also identifies plagiarized content.

[Avoiding Plagiarism](#)

A resource by Purdue Online Writing Lab guide to help writers develop strategies for avoiding accidental plagiarism. The site includes a list of best practices and an example exercise.

[Harvard Guide to Using Sources](#)

A series of articles published by the Harvard College Writing Program designed to help students avoid plagiarism in academic writing.

[Plagiarism.org](#)

A free, comprehensive plagiarism resource sponsored by the makers of plagiarism-checking websites [Turnitin](#), [WriteCheck](#) and [iThenticate](#).

[Plagiarism Tutorial](#)

This short handbook by Duke University takes students through the concept of plagiarism step by step.

[Straight from Students: Smart Tips for Searching Online](#)

A chapter about smart online search tactics from the book *Connected Learners: A Step-By-Step Guide to Creating a Global Classroom*.

[UC Davis Office of Judicial Affairs](#)

Links to publications about not only plagiarism but also collaboration and integrity, including “Collaboration: When You Can and When You Can’t Work with Others” and “Why Integrity Matters.”

Resources for Teachers

[Anti-Plagiarism Strategies for Research Papers](#)

A document that includes advice and helpful tips for instructors who are concerned about plagiarism in higher education.

[Helping Students Avoid Plagiarism](#)

A faculty resource designed by University of Maryland University College to prevent plagiarism.

[The International Center for Academic Integrity](#)

An organization founded to combat cheating, plagiarism and academic dishonesty in higher education. Members receive benefits such as access to hundreds of printed and online plagiarism resources, networking opportunities, and an annual conference.

[International Journal for Educational Integrity](#)

Journal established in 2005 as a platform for research in the multidisciplinary field of academic integrity.

[Resources for Teachers: How to Detect Plagiarism](#)

A brief, well-linked guide to detecting plagiarism developed for instructors at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

[SafeAssign](#)

Tool from Blackboard.com that compares submitted assignments against a set of sources to prevent plagiarism as well as create opportunities to help students identify how to properly attribute resources rather than paraphrase.

[The School for Ethical Education](#)

Organization that teaches strategies and promotes programs that support ethics in education. The organization runs a contest open to high school and college students to create public service announcements for academic integrity.

[The Writer's Handbook: Avoiding Plagiarism](#)

The University of Wisconsin-Madison published this document to be used as a student handout for preventing plagiarism in academic writing.

announcements for academic integrity.

[Teaching and Learning with Technology](#)

Publication of Penn State University that features tools to recognize and avoid plagiarism.

[Turnitin Plagiarism Webcasts](#)

Webcasts and videos about plagiarism, including "Responding to Plagiarism: Lesson Plans and Strategies" and "The Plagiarism Spectrum." Webcasts are available in Turnitin's library.

[UC Davis Office of Judicial Affairs](#)

Plagiarism publications for faculty, including "Cr
a Climate of Academic Integrity: Tips to Prevent
Cheating" and "Responding to In-Progress Chea



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