

Preventing and Detecting Plagiarism¹

Preventing Plagiarism

Many college students do not understand what constitutes plagiarism. Some do not know that there will be serious consequences if they are caught plagiarizing. As a faculty member you can alleviate most of these potential problems and provide a fair and supportive learning environment for your students by following these steps:

On the first day of class:

- * Specify exactly what constitutes plagiarism and what the consequences will be if they are caught. Include it on your syllabus.

- * Explain plagiarism from the context of fair use, copyright and academic integrity. Students will understand why plagiarism is unacceptable in the college community if you use this approach.

When creating an assignment:

- * Change class assignments each year. Previous students will not be able to share or sell completed assignments to the next year's students if you change the assignment.

- * Specify what types of research sources are acceptable. Possibly require that they use a variety of sources, some print and some online, to limit cut-and-paste plagiarism.

- * Require students to create an annotated bibliography or turn in copies of sources used when writing the paper.

When discussing an assignment with students:

- * Teach students to incorporate and attribute Web sites and online articles in their writing.

- * Encourage students to follow a process for writing. Ask for a thesis statement, an outline, a first draft and grade and comment on each. It is harder for a student to reconstruct these elements from a completed paper than to create their own work.

- * Be open about the existence of term-paper mills. Download a few papers, discuss their strengths and weaknesses as a class. Let your students know that you know what is out there – and that most of it will not meet your criteria for a good paper.

Use the librarians as a resource to prevent plagiarism:

- * Librarians are available to collaborate on assignments and assist in creating meaningful research experiences for your students.

- * Schedule a tailored research session with a librarian for your class. Students overcome fears associated with research in these workshops. Sessions focus on selecting appropriate sources, searching library databases and the Web, or evaluating information.

Additional reading from the CTL Library:

Davis, S. F., Drinan, P. F., & Bertram Gallant, T. (2009). *Cheating in school : what we know and what we can do*. Chichester, U.K.; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lieberg, C. S. (2008). *Teaching your first college class : a practical guide for new faculty and graduate student instructors*. Sterling, Va.: Stylus Pub: 153-160.

McKeachie, W. J., Svinicki, M. D., & Hofer, B. K. (2006). *McKeachie's teaching tips : strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin: 113-122.

¹ Unattributed. University of Texas at Austin. Retrieved January 20, 2010 from <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/faculty/plagiarism/preventing.html>