

**Guidelines for Dealing with Plagiarism**  
**English Department, Linn-Benton Community College**  
**May 2004**

**WHAT IS IT TO PLAGIARIZE?**

According to Webster's New World Dictionary, to plagiarize means "to take writings or ideas from another and pass them off as one's own." Word histories can also be revealing: to plagiarize comes from the Latin word *plagiarius*, which means "kidnapper." So plagiarism is stealing someone else's "baby" (or intellectual property) and lying to cover your theft. It is a serious offense at college; it is a much more serious if done by someone at work.

Not all plagiarism is intentional: deliberate theft or deceit. Some plagiarism results from forgetting or not knowing what plagiarism is.

Plagiarism, sometimes called "cheating" or "dishonesty," is not just the failure to give credit for an exact quotation. It is also the failure to mark all kinds of borrowings correctly.

**Plagiarism includes both intentional and unintentional acts:**

- Buying a paper on the internet and turning it in as yours -- This is obviously intentional.
- Copying sections of someone's original and putting them into your text without documentation as if you had written them.
- Copying a sentence or even an important, exact phrase of two words or more or a coined word (which or may not be copywritten) without the use of quotation marks and credit.
- Copying the structure of someone else's argument and merely "translating" key words to your style.
- Using someone else's results in your own words without giving him or her credit.
- Forgetting to document any borrowing when you are quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing, or importing and placing a graphic.

## HOW CAN INSTRUCTORS HELP STUDENTS AVOID PLAGIARISM?

1. On the first day of Class: Talk about plagiarism and intellectual honesty! Emphasize the seriousness of plagiarism.
2. Put a plagiarism statement on your syllabus. Here is some wording to consider, “Do your own work! Using someone else’s work as your own or using information or ideas without proper citations (plagiarism) can lead to your failing the assignment or the class. Plagiarism is subject to disciplinary action as described in Student Rights and Responsibilities. NOTE: Bibliographies (called “Works Cited” in MLA or References in APA) and in-text citations are required whenever you use outside sources, including the Internet.
3. Collect a writing sample from each student at the beginning of the term. Keep it as a plagiarism check.
4. Review the differences between summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting. Have your students practice summarizing, paraphrasing and quoting from your text. We assume students have these skills. This is often not the case. Also, remind students that they must cite the source for summaries and paraphrases as well as quotes.
5. Use a variety of evaluation tools to assess student performance. Making a research paper worth a huge percentage of the course grade creates stress and encourages academic dishonesty.
6. Make your assignments unique and detailed, rather than using topics that could be easily picked up off the Web. Even if you give students topic options, require a certain focus or organization to encourage original thinking. Remind students they are the thinkers and writers whose ideas are being supported by research.
7. Require a paper trail. Ask to approve students’ topics or outlines a few weeks before the paper is due. This also encourages students to get started earlier which improves the final product.
8. Preview students’ rough drafts. Require or give extra credit for having rough drafts checked at the Writing Desk.
9. If your text has a section on plagiarism, review it with your class. Review any research conventions common to the subject area.
10. Require low stress, informal writing assignments in and between classes (journals, responses) to encourage students to process and reflect on the course material. If you even glance at them and record them for completion, you will have a better idea of the students’ capabilities and problems.
11. Use conferences to work with individual students either in or out of class. Ask questions about their research. Discuss places in their drafts where the writing style changes.
12. Require students to turn in paper copies of any outside research used in the paper. Ask them to highlight and note material which is referenced in the paper.

## HOW CAN PLAGIARISM BE DETECTED?

### Clues to the Presence of Plagiarism:

- Content beyond the scope of the writer's experience, education or comprehension
- Professional-level writing, thinking.
- Professional-level style and sentence fluency
- Stylistic lurches - shifts in tone, fluency , style, word usage..
- Professional-level bibliography.
- Right topic, wrong assignment.

### Identifying Intentional Plagiarism

- Use *Google* and *Dogpile* text-string searches on suspicious passages from the paper.
- Conduct search in *EbscoHost* for phrases or bibliographic entries.

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF PLAGIARISM?

If the instructor suspects plagiarism, the instructor should follow these steps:

1. Photocopy the paper.
2. Talk to the student confidentially. Avoid making accusations. Merely show the evidence of a problem and ask the student to explain.

**Unintentional Plagiarism:** If the plagiarism is the result of unskilled writing or a misunderstandings about documentation, address the issue and require that the student revise the essay to correct the error as one would any other type of unacceptable writing.

**Intentional Plagiarism:** If the plagiarism is more blatant ( for example, the entire paper is plagiarized), more serious action is necessary.

1. Proof of plagiarism is essential. A strong suspicion is not adequate proof to go further. This is the point at which requiring paper copies of sources and steps leading to the paper will often defuse the issue.
2. Meet with the student; simply display the evidence of plagiarism and ask the student to explain the situation. Often the student will then admit the act.
3. Provide the department chair with a copy of the plagiarized document, a copy of the plagiarized source, and a description of your plan to handle the problem.
4. If the instructor determines the student has plagiarized the paper with the intent to deceive, the paper should be given an F grade.
5. The instructor should inform the student of the right to appeal the grade to the Dean of the Division.
6. If the appeal fails, the department chair will forward the plagiarized document to the Dean of Students' office where it will be kept on file in case of further offenses.
7. Instructors should attempt to be scrupulously fair and consistent in applying these policies.

