



Preventing Plagiarism

1. Discuss Plagiarism With Your Students

- a. Make students aware of plagiarism and the penalties for it.
- b. Include your academic honesty policy in your syllabus. Make the penalties clear.
- c. Require your students complete the tutorial “Plagiarism What It is and How To Avoid It,” found on the MC Libraries Web Page www.montgomerycollege.edu/library
- d. Be sure to tell students how you have handled plagiarism in the past.
- e. Center discussions on the topic of who is really being cheated when someone plagiarizes. Emphasize that by copying a paper they will lose the chance to acquire skills useful in the working world.
- f. Approach the issue as one of intellectual property. A discussion of the proper use and acknowledgement of another’s ideas is better than a mere “don’t plagiarize” statement.
- g. Inform students that plagiarizing will lower their self-respect because they can never be proud of a grade they got by cheating.
- h. Tell students that cheating is unfair to those who aren’t cheating.
- i. Talk about the proper way to document sources, including Web sources.

2. Let Students Know You are Familiar With the Electronic Information

- a. *Tell students you have access to plagiarism detection software.* At least two studies have indicated that mention of this fact alone is an excellent deterrent. As of this writing (Jan. 2003) IT is investigating purchase of detection software. I make no promises that it will be purchased. In the meantime, keep in mind that Google is excellent plagiarism detection software; it has outperformed many of the pay detection services.
- b. Inform them of your deep and all abiding knowledge of the Web, Full-Text Databases, Search Engines, and Term Paper Mills. If you don’t feel comfortable with this assertion, let the students know that you have access to a squad of trained attack librarians who have forgotten more about the Web than the students will ever know.
- c. Bring a paper taken from one of the free Paper Mills and critique it. Most of them are truly awful. It may be even more effective to use a smart classroom and demonstrate your skill at finding a truly awful essay. Make the critique a class project.

3. Guide the Research Process

N.B. These suggestions were gathered from faculty-authored sites on the Web.

- a. Have conferences with students regarding their progress.
- b. Familiarize yourself with a student's writing style, grammar and vocabulary
- c. Require that students turn in a research log, or personal reflection on the subject.
- d. Require that students turn in work throughout the semester that documents their progress on writing the paper.
 - Thesis statement/abstract
 - Written proposal for the paper
 - Working Bibliography
 - Rough Draft
 - Outlines
 - Require all drafts be turned in with the final paper**
 - Require copies of cited references**
 - Ask for an annotated bibliography with summaries of all references; the earlier you ask for this, the better. Check the final paper against the list of references.**

4. Tailor the Assignment to Make Plagiarism More Difficult

- a. Change the assignment every year or semester.
- b. Make the assignment very current.
- c. Avoid open-ended assignments. "Write a ten page paper on anything to do with this class." is asking for trouble.
- d. Tie the assignment to class notes.
- e. Assign research projects directly tied to class discussion, the text, or other readings.
- f. Make the assignment as specific as you can.
- g. Ask students to include a section in their research paper that evaluates their topic in light of class discussion
- h. Require a transcript of an interview or a survey.
- i. Require a personal experience component.
- j. Require an annotated bibliography—few paper mills include them.
- k. Assign papers less than 6 pp. in length. Most term paper mills will not have very short papers. However, students can find shorter papers on the Web easily.
- l. Require specific components in the paper.
 - Sources: require two journal articles, three books, one interview or other fiendish combinations of references. It will be impossible for a student to find a ready-made paper combining all of the required elements..
 - Require that at least some of the sources be published in the past year. This is a good method for preventing paper recycling.
 - Require the use of specific articles or books required by you. This counters wholesale copying from the Web or other sources.
 - Require at least one print resource
 - Determine how much, if any Web material you will accept as a source.

5. Possible Alternative Assignments

- a. Assign readings from popular and scholarly sources and have students compare.
- b. Have the student find information from a library full-text database and compare it with information found on the Web.
- c. Ask for a multimedia presentation rather than a term paper
- d. Require documentation of opposing viewpoints on an issue

6. Miscellaneous Tips

- a. Require a graded oral report on the paper in class.
- b. Include a question on the final exam that asks students to summarize the main points of their research paper.
- c. Require a letter of transmittal be submitted when students turn in the paper. The letter should reflect what the student learned, the difficulties he or she had writing it, problem areas, and the parts they are proudest of.

Sources

“Plagiarism and the Web” www.wiu.edu/users/mfbhl/wiu/plagiarism.htm

“Anti-Plagiarism Strategies” www.virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm

“Preventing Plagiarism” www.lemoyne.edu/library/plagiarism.htm

“Easy Steps to Combating Plagiarism” www.coastal.edu/library/easystep.htm

“The Instructors Guide to Internet Plagiarism” www.plagiarized.com/index.shtml

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