

CHEATING and how to avoid it*

A student guide to plagiarism, cheating, and intellectual property use
in the Mankato Area Public Schools, Mankato (MN)



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* Adapted *with permission* from Lakeview High School, Battle Creek, Michigan



Definition of Cheating:

Mankato Area Public Schools defines cheating as using someone else's words, work, test answers, and/or ideas and claiming them as your own.

Examples of cheating:

- Hiring someone to write a paper, buying a paper or project or downloading a paper from an online service
- Not properly citing the works, pictures, music, video or other forms of communication in your research projects.
- Rewording someone else's words (paraphrasing) and not giving them credit for the ideas you have built on; passing someone's ideas off as your own.
- Sharing files (e.g. an Excel worksheet) in a business class
- Copying math homework
- Letting your project partner do all the work and just putting your name on the final report or project
- Letting your mom or dad build your project
- Looking at another's test or sharing what is on a test with students in other sections of that class
- Turning in your brother's or sister's old project

Why you shouldn't cheat:

- People's words, work, and/or ideas are considered "intellectual property" – meaning the creator owns them. Some types of plagiarism not only violate school rules, but state and federal laws.
- You are not practicing skills you will need to know to succeed in college or the workplace: how to write, analyze, form conclusions or generate new ideas.
- Others will look at you as a "cheater" and your character and reputation will suffer.
- You will feel bad about yourself when you take credit for others' work.
- You will feel good about yourself when you meet the challenges of your school work.

How you get caught:

- **New technology** Teachers and media specialists can simply plug a phrase from your work into a search engine and find where in cyberspace you scammed an idea or paper.
- **Teachers talk** Teachers do talk to one another. Teachers find out from each other when students turn in work in one class that their friends have turned in for another teacher's class. You might check with your teachers to see if original work you have done for one class can also be used in other classes.
- **Teachers remember** Work that was turned in by a friend or relative years before can still be recognized by teachers if you try to turn it in again as your own. When teachers read a set of tests, lab reports, essays, or papers, they do not forget what other students have written. There is a fine line between collaboration and plagiarism – be aware of it.
- **Teachers know your writing** Teachers know how students write. It doesn't take much to recognize what was written by a particular student or what was written by someone else – say on a website.



Consequences of cheating:

The consequences for getting caught plagiarizing someone else’s words, work, and/or ideas will range from receiving no credit for the assignment until the work is yours to losing credit for the entire class. Check with your teacher and school handbook for more specific information.

How to avoid cheating:

- The best way to avoid cheating and plagiarism is to find ways to personalize your assignments. React in your writing about how your topic might personally affect YOU, your family, your school, or your community. An original conclusion which is supported by facts from other works properly cited is never cheating. Write in your own voice, not just in your own words
- Organize your work so that you don’t run into a last minute time crunch that keeps you from studying, writing, creating, revising, reflecting and making your work your own.
- Record where you found your supporting ideas while you do your research. It’s easier than doing research twice – once for finding the information and again for doing the bibliography.
- ALWAYS include a bibliography, list of resources, or acknowledgement whenever you use the work or ideas of others. If you can’t provide a citation, don’t use the source.
- Understand that using other’s work IS permissible and usually necessary to create well-supported arguments, conclusions and answers to questions. Giving credit to the source of this work keeps it from being plagiarism.
- Make as large a percentage of your work original as possible. Use direct quotes or paraphrasing only when what you find is written in such a way that it clarifies or make memorable the idea expressed.

Choosing when to give credit

Taken from the Purdue University’s Website: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html Used with permission.

Need to document:	No need to document:
When you are using or referring to somebody else’s words or ideas from a magazine, book, newspaper, song, TV program, movie, Web page, computer program, letter, advertisement, or any other medium	When you are writing your own experiences, your own observations, your own insights, your own thoughts, your own conclusions about a subject
When you use information gained through interviewing another person	When you are using "common knowledge*" — folklore, common sense observations, shared information within your field of study or cultural group
When you copy the exact words or a "unique phrase" from somewhere	When you are compiling generally accepted facts
When you reprint any diagrams, illustrations, charts, and pictures	When you are writing up your own experimental results
When you use ideas that others have given you in conversations or over email	* Material is probably common knowledge if . . . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You find the same information undocumented in at least five other sources ▪ You think it is information that your readers will already know ▪ You think a person could easily find the information with general reference sources



Making sure you are safe:

Taken from the Purdue University's Website: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html Used with permission.

	Action during the writing process	Appearance on the finished product
When researching, note-taking, and interviewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mark everything that is someone else's words with a big Q (for quote) or with big quotation marks ▪ Indicate in your notes which ideas are taken from sources (S) and which are your own insights (ME) ▪ Record all of the relevant documentation information in your notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proofread and check with your notes (or photocopies of sources) to make sure that anything taken from your notes is acknowledged in some combination of the ways listed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In-text citation ○ Footnotes ○ Bibliography ○ Quotation marks ○ Indirect quotations
When paraphrasing and summarizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First, write your paraphrase and summary without looking at the original text, so you rely only on your memory. ▪ Next, check your version with the original for content, accuracy, and mistakenly borrowed phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Begin your summary with a statement giving credit to the source: According to Jonathan Kozol, ... ▪ Put any unique words or phrases that you cannot change, or do not want to change, in quotation marks: ... <i>"savage inequalities" exist throughout our educational system (Kozol).</i>
When quoting directly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep the person's name near the quote in your notes, and in your paper ▪ Select those direct quotes that make the most impact in your paper -- too many direct quotes may lessen your credibility and interfere with your style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mention the person's name either at the beginning of the quote, in the middle, or at the end ▪ Put quotation marks around the text that you are quoting ▪ Indicate added phrases in brackets ([]) and omitted text with ellipses (. . .)
When quoting indirectly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep the person's name near the text in your notes, and in your paper ▪ Rewrite the key ideas using different words and sentence structures than the original text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mention the person's name either at the beginning of the information, or in the middle, or at that end ▪ Double check to make sure that your words and sentence structures are different than the original text



If you have any questions whether something you are doing may be cheating or plagiarism, talk to your parents, teacher, or media specialist.