


Plagiarism
Beating the Cheats

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Mmmmm.....

I am very impressed by *Encarta*.
My son uses it to do his
homework, and he can answer
all the questions without having
to learn anything.

Verbatim quote, parent to David Johnson,
formerly Librarian, Sevenoaks School, 1993.


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What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the use of someone
else's words or ideas without due
attribution or acknowledgement,
an attempt to pass off those
words or ideas as one's own.


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WHY cite?

- Give credit where it's due
- Provide evidence of research
- Strengthen your arguments
- Build on what is known
- In turn, the writer will want, expect, & deserve recognition


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Why is plagiarism wrong?

- It is cheating, it is theft, it is fraud.
- “You didn’t learn the material. Your writing skills didn’t improve. Your grade is based on deception.” (Edlund)
- “Cheating takes away from everyone’s achievement. If you are working hard and doing your best, it’s not fair when somebody cheats” (Hess, quoted by Chidley, 1997).


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Why they cheat

- Ignorance
- Need to pass, need to achieve
- Laziness, bad time management
- Lack of understanding, lack of interest
- Everyone else does it (and seems to get away with it)
- The teacher won’t know
- The teacher does not care
- Culture


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The cheat sites and the paper mills

- Some are free and some for fee
- Many condemn plagiarism (?), many condone it
- Some display their essays, some fax or email
- Many link to other sites
- Some custom write essays
- Cost is no guarantee of quality


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Figuratively speaking (1)

- 1996: 28 pay-for sites on the internet (Hickman)
- 1998: 38 free essay sites / 72 pay-for sites (Hickman)
- 2000: 11000 sites (Sacchet)
- 2000: 400 *quality* sites (Senechal)


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Figuratively speaking (2)

- 1997: Schoolsucks.com claimed between 5000 and 6000 visits per day
- 1999: High Performance Papers : peak term-paper due time: 800 requests for custom written papers – 800 requests a day
- 80% to 87% U.S. students admit to cheating at least once (Kleiner & Lord; McCabe)
- 26% admit to plagiarising at least once (McCabe)


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Stone Soup




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Good news, bad news

- The good news : most of the essays on the free essay sites are mediocre.
- The bad news : you may not realise that mediocre students are plagiarizing mediocre essays.
- The worst of it : second language students may not recognize poor language, poor composition.

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Fortunately...

Students who cheat
tend to think that their teachers
are extremely stupid.

Black (1999)

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The tricks they get up to

- Copy a large section but reference/ quote just a small portion
- Build a pastiche from several sources
- Make up false citations/ references
 - Use an author available in the library
 - Invent an author/ source
 - Use a real web site
 - Reference a web site but not the web page
- Make up quotations/ misquote

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Some (more) of the giveaways

- Lack of citations; mix of references
- Lack of bibliography
- 'Interesting' references to page numbers
- Level of works cited
- Reference to items not included
- Failure to cite good evidence!
- Spelling (US/ UK etc)
- Non-sequiturs


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Research is **not** about finding out.

Research is about **finding evidence!**


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Finding evidence...

- Bibliography = witnesses!
- References = evidence!
- Check the evidence, check what the witnesses have to say!
 - Check what has been cited.
 - Check what has not been cited.
 - Check what should have been cited.


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Using evidence...

- Double-check the evidence!
- Cross-examine the witnesses!!
- No evidence = no case
 - = no research = no grade (?)


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The detective work

- Ask to see books, printouts, p/copies etc
- Check the sources cited
- Internet search for essay title, quotations, keywords
- Check school (and local?) libraries
- Check online resources available to students
- Check the cheat sites
- Use a search site/ use a search service


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Eureka!

It need not all be lifted
– it's enough that some
(a significant proportion?)
is discovered to be stolen property...


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The tip of the iceberg

- The searchable web
- The rest of the web (the invisible web)
- The rest of the internet
- *All other sources of information*
- If it's not there, even the most powerful search engine won't find it...


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You won't catch them all

- The invisible web
- The invisible network
- Translations
- Obscure publications
- Unpublished materials
- The thrill of the chase


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When all is revealed!

- Give (the ignorant) a chance to make amends (?)
- Be SURE of your facts.
- Follow policy.


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Deterrent measures

- **SHOW YOU ARE SERIOUS!**
- School ethos, policy
- Explanation & instruction
- Restrict sources / demand hard-copies
- Systematic, random checks
- Make work interesting, make work personal, use Essential Questions
- Make work fresh, don't rehash
- Habit – citation from the start
- Live feedback/ the process skills

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The research evidence

It works!

- Pursuing an active anti-plagiarism policy reduces plagiarism.
- Use of cheat-resistant assignments and alternative assessment reduces plagiarism.

Gajadhar, McGregor, et al.


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Plagiarism
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- Evidence
- Citations
- Bibliography
- **Follow them up!**

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