

Ten Tips for Preventing Plagiarism in Your Courses

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1. If you will be requiring written assessment in your course, include a **statement on plagiarism in your syllabus**. Define the term and your course policies, point the student to other University policies that reinforce your course policies, and indicate that students found plagiarizing are subject to penalties. Here is the statement I use on my syllabus:

Department of English and Humanities Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own, including: direct quotation without both attribution and indication that the material is being directly quoted, e.g. quotation marks; paraphrase without attribution; paraphrase with or without attribution where the wording of the original remains substantially intact and is represented as the author's own; expression in one's own words, but without attribution, of ideas, arguments, lines of reasoning, facts, processes, or other products of the intellect where such material is learned from the work of another and is not part of the general fund of common knowledge. Plagiarism also includes auto-plagiarism, or re-submitting a paper a student has written for a previous class to a current class. Every submitted assignment must be original to this course, unless the student obtains special permission to extend/revise an old project.

Please review the *Student Code of Responsibilities and Conduct* published by Rogers State University for a full discussion of "Code of Academic Conduct" and plagiarism penalties. The RSU web site has links to the "Code." Students found intentionally plagiarizing are subject to strict penalties, which may include but are not limited to a grade of 0% on the assignment, an F in the course, disciplinary suspension from the University, and/or a notation of academic dishonesty in the student's record. Unintentional plagiarism will result in loss of points, required revision, and/or extra writing assignments over writing and ethics.

2. In your **syllabus**, also include a **statement on** which **citation style(s)** you will expect students to use in your course and which style guides they could refer to for assistance. What is expected in your field? Which style do you want them to use in papers written for your course?
3. Along with the paper, require students to hand in **copies of any sources** they cite in the paper, with evidence they quoted or paraphrased **highlighted**.
4. **Assign readings from citation style guides** (in print or online) that include **example documents** with correctly cited external sources, and **spend class time discussing** plagiarism and describing how to document sources. Build towards a graded writing assignment on plagiarism and citation style(s). This leads us to number 4...
5. **Include a graded writing assignment** to assess whether or not students understand plagiarism and understand the particular citation style you want them to use. An example of an assignment you could use is described in this article: "An Assignment that Prevents Plagiarism" found at <http://www.magnapubs.com/blog/teaching-and-learning/an-assignment-that-prevents-plagiarism/> .
6. Early on in your course, assign a **diagnostic, ungraded, in-class, timed writing** that students must do by hand (unless of course they have a plan through Disabilities Services that allows them extra

time or laptop use on timed writings). This will provide you with a baseline indication of each student's writing skill level and knowledge of course content, as well as a handwriting and "voice"/style sample that you can keep and use to compare to the student's other writing later in the semester if you suspect the student has plagiarized.

7. On **every writing assignment sheet, provide a reminder** to the student that plagiarism is cheating and that anyone caught plagiarizing will face penalties. List the specific penalties from your class policies, if you wish. Here is a statement that I include on every assignment sheet:

As it states in the syllabus, intentional plagiarism is grounds for failure of this (or any other) course and suspension from the University. Rules against plagiarism are meant to ensure that students are applying themselves freshly to every assignment, that they are completing their own assignments, and that they are respecting the intellectual property of others. In an environment where writers work closely with one another, it is important to understand the boundaries between collaboration and plagiarism. You are expected to present your own work, properly documented. Keep all of your preparatory work (drafts, notes, and prewriting) for each assignment.

8. Direct any students with worries about how to **prevent accidental plagiarism** to the **Writing Center** for assistance. We can talk to them about avoiding plagiarism and reinforce class policies and citation expectations. I include a reminder of the Writing Center location (BH 206) and phone number (918.343.7838) on all my writing assignment sheets.
9. When assigning large writing assignments, **require drafts** of the work due along the way, so you can catch issues with plagiarism early and so you can ensure that students are doing the work themselves and not buying a paper at the last minute. Requiring proposals, thesis drafts, reading lists, outlines, partial drafts, or full drafts before the final due date will also force students to start working on papers earlier and will reinforce that the University, as a whole, values the learning potential of the process of writing as highly as it values the written product.
10. Along the same lines, the **day that the paper is due**, consider requiring students to handwrite a **very brief summary** of their paper, present it to the class, and/or turn the summary in to you. If they didn't write the paper, they probably won't be able to complete a basic 3-4 sentence summary of it. A brief, reflective discussion of how students chose their topics, main point, and supporting details can make students aware of the knowledge they are building and can also serve as a bridge to the next unit or assignment.
11. Last, **follow through** with class policies on plagiarism. When students plagiarize, intentionally or unintentionally, take action.
12. BONUS: for tailored advice and tips on composing or revising writing assignments your particular course, contact Dr. Beam at sbeam@rsu.edu or x6865 to schedule a consultation. I know this is a long list to consider, so just ask me if you'd like suggestions for how to implement some or all of these suggestions in any specific course.