

Strategies for preventing plagiarism with classroom assignments and practices that teach students to write responsibly:

1. Give non-generic instructions for meaningful writing assignments.

Don't assign generic papers that you yourself wouldn't want to write. Instead, offer narrowly focused writing assignments that engage both you and your students. Use new topics for each new class. Ask students to engage in writing or some aspects of writing that professionals in your field do. Read their work carefully at various stages of the composing process, letting students know that you are interested in their ideas.

2. Ask students to connect their work to their own personal experiences.

Ask student to create a knowledge inventory, a list of everything they know or think about a given topic, and where they learned what they know or how they derived the opinions they have. From this, students can generate early essays that help them structure their own initial thinking, as well as research leads. Starting with what students know and care about can help ensure that they are engaged in active learning.

3. Invite students to become primary researchers.

When students are invited to make real contributions to knowledge making in your field, they are less likely to plagiarize. Instead of simply collecting the ideas of other recognized scholars, students can may engage in primary research themselves, conducting surveys, interviewing authorities on their topics first-hand, collecting and archiving primary documents.

4. Require specific components in the paper, such as theoretical, professional, or disciplinary vocabulary learned in the course.

Your course is not generic. It is uniquely your own. Your writing assignments are less likely to be plagiarized if they fit into the unique context of your course. Assign specific assignments that invite students to DO something in writing with materials from your course. For example, "The paper must make use of two Internet sources, two printed book sources, two scholarly journal articles, one personal interview, and one personally conducted survey." Or, "You must make use of Elaine E. Whitaker's article "A Pedagogy to Address Plagiarism" and a theory from Robert A. Harris's [The Plagiarism Handbook](#). Likewise, consider unconventional writing assignments that begin with and evolve from class work, such as a discussion from a class ListServ or Chat. Such forums involve the whole class in thinking and knowledge-creation together, while offering additional practice to student writers.

5. Teach students to compile an annotated bibliography of sources.

An annotated bibliography encourages students to collect research early and to think about each source before incorporating it into a larger assignment. An annotated bibliography can help students learn to identify main ideas and to summarize arguments. Likewise, discussing sources in advance provides you and your students a chance to consider the relevance of each source, as you suggest additional or alternative sources based on your knowledge of a topic or the research practices in your specific discipline. Ask for just a few annotations at a time, so that you and your students don't get overwhelmed.

6. Emphasize the importance of writing processes, including multiple drafts.

Divide assignments into sections, then periodically respond to various parts: research question(s), list of relevant sources, thesis, abstract, outline, draft, revisions, and bibliography. Students should collect their process work in a writing portfolio, which shows growth and development over time. Make time for short in-class writing assignments for comparison. Ask for copies of sources cited in the paper.

7. Have short conferences with students to discuss their writing.

Ask students to tell you about their project at various stages of their writing process. What do they understand about their topics? What more do they need to know? What successes and difficulties are they having collecting relevant information? What point do they want to make in the paper? And what kinds of evidence will they use to support their claims? Students may write responses to questions like this, and then meet with you to discuss them.

8. Use peer groups to comment on drafts.

Sharing drafts of papers with classmates helps to make students accountable for their writing to someone other than you. Together with classmates, students can test their understanding of an assignment, discuss ways to develop ideas, revise their papers, and help one another learn to proofread and edit.

9. Invite oral reports and multi-media presentations on student papers.

Discussing a topic before an audience is difficult if students have not done the work themselves. Oral reports, including a questions and answer period, can help thwart plagiarism while providing students a real-world opportunity to share their work with peers. Do what professionals in your field do: stage a mini-conference, inviting outsiders to here panels of related papers from your class. Treat students like budding professionals, and they are more likely to writing responsibly. Ask students to construct a Web site with a small group of classmates, a place to share their work with a wider audience. A table or visual aid of some sort might accompany a paper and be used in a presentation to teach some important concept from it to the class.

10. Build meta-cognitive awareness through reflective writing about research strategies and writing processes.

Invite students to reflect on their work, especially at the end, but also during the composing process. Have them check in with you from time to time, with a research log or journal, describing what research they've completed, what gaps remain in their knowledge of a topic. In short, ask students to tell you about their researching and writing processes. Once a research assignment is complete, ask students to write a reflection about it: What did they learn as a result of researching and writing about their topics? What questions were they able to answer? What lingering questions remain? If they were to develop this research project further, what more would they need to learn? How else might they extend their work? Where else might they turn for information?