

## Responding to Plagiarism

Discovering plagiarism can be extremely frustrating, and it can be tempting to write off all plagiarism as an unambiguous offense. But for established scholars and students alike, responding to, building on, and manipulating sources is a complex skill set, one that varies widely across disciplines and cultures. Effective source use requires explicit instruction and practice, and demands ongoing reflection. Thus, rather than punishing plagiarism after the fact, use academic integrity as an opportunity for learning: a way to invite students into the discipline by teaching them how to respond to others who have come before so as to meet your discourse community's expectations.

There are, of course, cases where plagiarism is more flagrant, as in a paper purchased online. The more you **scaffold** your assignments, however, the harder (and less necessary) it becomes to pass off another's text as one's own. Additionally, the more you share the responsibility with your students for avoiding plagiarism—in your assignment design, explicit instruction on using resources, and facilitation of students' intrinsic motivation—the less likely plagiarism will be in your classroom. Most importantly, fostering students' **metacognition** about their use of sources will go a long way toward deterring plagiarism.

### Some ways to teach academic integrity and discourage plagiarism:

- Discuss citation as a way of showing your audience the conversation you're joining.
- Consider comparing academic citation with citation in other discourse communities (i.e., citation in conversation with peers or in musical lyrics).
- Share Mark Gaipa's illustrations from "Breaking into the Conversation: How Students Can Acquire Authority for their Writing" and ask students to write about or illustrate their own relationships to their sources.
- Provide model texts that respond to sources variously, including via summary, paraphrase, and citation without in-text explication. Ask students to identify these modes, and explain why the author used their sources as they did.
- Select a passage from a text, asking students to summarize, paraphrase, and agree/disagree with a central idea. Ask them, "if you were citing this in an essay for this class, how and where would you deploy it?"
- **Scaffold** assignments so that you witness the evolution of students' thinking from annotated bibliography, paper proposal, reflective writing, or draft to final product, and so that students have fewer reasons to plagiarize, having already done so much preparatory work.
- Develop assignments tailored to your particular course in ways that make it harder to find preexisting material online.

## References

- Adler-Kassner, Linda, Chris Anson, and Rebecca Moore Howard. "Framing Plagiarism." *Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism: Teaching Writing in the Digital Age*, edited by Caroline Eisner and Martha Vicinus. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008, pp. 231-246.
- Council of Writing Program Administrators. "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices." 2005. Digital.
- Gaipa, Mark. "Breaking into the Conversation: How Students Can Acquire Authority for their Writing." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2004.

## See also

Metacognition  
Scaffolding Student Learning