

“Don’t compromise yourself, you’re all you’ve got.”

Janis Joplin

### What is cheating?

Simply stated, cheating is dishonest behaviour intended to gain academic advantage. Examples of cheating include but are not limited to:

- Looking at someone else’s test, getting information from someone else during a test, giving someone else information or allowing someone to copy from your test, or bringing a ‘cheat sheet’ into a test (even if you don’t use it!)
- Submitting something in a class that has already been submitted and graded in another class (sometimes referred to as recycling papers).
- Including facts, references, or data that you know to be false in a lab, essay, report, oral presentation, or other assignment.

### What is plagiarism exactly?

“Plagiarism means using another’s work without giving credit. You must put others’ words in quotation marks and cite your source(s), and you must give citations when using others’ ideas, even if those ideas are paraphrased in your own words.”<sup>2</sup>

### What is a “source?”

“The term ‘source’ includes published works (books, magazines, newspapers, websites, plays, movies, photos, paintings and textbooks) and unpublished sources (class lectures or notes, handouts, speeches, other students’ papers, or material from a research service).”<sup>3</sup>

**REMEMBER: If you are in doubt about whether a piece of information needs to be cited, cite it. It is better to err on the side of caution than to accidentally use work by someone else without giving proper credit.**

## Academic Integrity Resources for Students

Western Libraries. Provides information on how to correctly cite bibliographic references in various academic disciplines:

[www.lib.uwo.ca/help/cite\\_references.html](http://www.lib.uwo.ca/help/cite_references.html)

Western’s Writing Support Centre:

[www.sdc.uwo.ca./writing/](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca./writing/)

Nesbit – Johnson Writing Centre at Hamilton College. Includes information on how to properly cite sources, writing tips, and links to various discipline specific style guides (APA, Chicago, CBE, and MLA).

[www.hamilton.edu/writing/citations.html](http://www.hamilton.edu/writing/citations.html)

University of Alberta Libraries. This Website offers excellent online handouts for students on how to avoid plagiarism.:

[www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/plagiarism/handouts/index.cfm](http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/plagiarism/handouts/index.cfm)

University of Western Ontario’s Scholastic Offence Policy. Describes the University’s process for dealing with scholastic offences, including a list of sanctions:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf)

The Office of the Ombudsperson. Resources include a student guide on Cheating Plagiarism and Other Scholastic Offences:

[www.uwo.ca/ombuds/student/cheating.html](http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/student/cheating.html)

Office of the Ombudsperson  
WSS 3135

The University of Western Ontario  
London ON N6A 3K7

Phone: 519-661-3573 • Fax: 519-661-3924

Email: [ombuds@uwo.ca](mailto:ombuds@uwo.ca)

[www.uwo.ca/ombuds/](http://www.uwo.ca/ombuds/)



# Cheating, Plagiarism and Unauthorized Collaboration: What Students Need to Know





### **But what if I didn't mean to plagiarize?**

Unintentional plagiarism can be described as “careless paraphrasing or citing of source material such that improper or misleading credit is given” (Waltman qt. in Lathrop and Foss p. 163). Examples of unintentional plagiarism include forgetting to include quotation marks, citing a reference incorrectly because of poor note taking, or carelessly cutting and pasting information from the Internet. However, even if you didn't mean to plagiarize you have still violated the University's Scholastic Offence Policy.

**REMEMBER: Carelessness or ignorance of the University's scholastic offense policy is not a defense for plagiarism! Both intentional and unintentional plagiarism will result in an academic penalty.**

### **In my culture the rules about writing are different. I've never been taught how to “cite sources.” What should I do differently now that I'm studying in Canada?**

If you come from a culture where the definitions of plagiarism are different it is essential that you learn what is expected at a Canadian university. Fortunately, the University has many resources to help you do this. Read on for more information.

### **How do I avoid plagiarism?**

Learn the proper method for citing direct quotes, paraphrased material, electronic information and other 'sources' previously listed.

### **Where can I get help with learning proper citation methods?**

First, read the course outline to find out what citation format the professor prefers; and invest in a style guide that explains how to cite references (or borrow one from the library). Also, check out the many resources on campus. Attend one of the workshops offered by Student Development Services on how to avoid plagiarism; make an appointment with a writing counselor at the Writing Support Centre, and review the centre's extensive list of online handouts on a variety of effective writing topics. For additional resources on how to avoid cheating and plagiarism please see the back of this brochure.



### **What is unauthorized collaboration?**

“Unauthorized collaboration means working with another or receiving assistance from someone (a classmate, friend, parent etc.) without the specific permission of the instructor on assignments that will be submitted for a grade. This rule applies to in-class or take-home tests, essays, labs, or homework assignments. Students may not collaborate without faculty authorization.”<sup>4</sup>

### **But what if my professor or T.A. says collaboration is O.K. Can I still get in trouble?**

Yes. It is up to you to know how much collaboration is too much. Also, what is acceptable in one class may not be acceptable in another. Make sure you understand what your professor's expectations are by reading the information on the course outline, and by following the professor's instructions for a particular assignment. If the course information does not say anything about collaboration, or you are unsure of what the limits are, ask! It is much easier to ask for help than to deal with the consequences of being accused of a scholastic offense.

### **What if I have a tutor who helps me with my assignments? Is that considered cheating?**

Students may receive the help of tutor, so long as the tutor only identifies errors or demonstrates sample problems that are not part of the assignment. The same rule applies to getting help with an essay. The person reviewing your work can give you feedback on your paper, grammar, or writing style, but they cannot re-write the paper for you. If the content of your paper looks significantly different than it would if you hadn't gotten help, this is an indication that you may have crossed the line into cheating. Again, if you are unsure about how much help is too much ask your instructor.

### **What about joining a study group on Facebook? If we're just talking about an assignment is that still considered “unauthorized collaboration”?**

It depends. While some online study groups may be fine, concerns may arise depending on the type of information that is discussed. The Student Success Centre through the LAMP and SOCS programs, offer study and review sessions for popular first year classes. Consider joining one of their programs: <http://success.uwo.ca/>. Finally, if you are unsure about what kind of behaviour is considered unauthorized collaboration ask your professor!



### **But I know lots of students who do assignments together, and who even share answers. Nothing's happened to them so why should I worry about it?**

Just because you know of other students who've broken the rules and haven't gotten caught doesn't mean that you won't. And more importantly, the fact that other people do it doesn't make it right. Students who rely on other people's knowledge and skills are less likely to reflect on and improve their own. Assignments are a tool for assessing students' strengths and weaknesses; it's not in your interest to deprive yourself of a true learning experience that will increase your ability to succeed in the future.

**REMEMBER: All work submitted for a grade should be completed by the student working alone. If collaboration is permitted, students must follow the rules set out by the instructor and the course outline.**

### **If I'm not afraid of getting caught why should I be concerned about any of this? Is cheating really that big a deal?**

It is in your interest to care about cheating because honesty is important in all areas of life, and is the foundation of ethical behaviour. If you can justify compromising your academic experience, what's to prevent this kind of attitude from affecting other areas of your life. In the words of Janis Joplin, “Don't compromise yourself, you're all you've got.”

<sup>1</sup> Truth in Education Project. University of Alberta. [www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/](http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/)

<sup>2</sup> Avoiding Plagiarism: Mastering the Art of Scholarship Student Judicial Affairs. University of California, Davis. October, 1999

<sup>3</sup> Avoiding Plagiarism: Mastering the Art of Scholarship. Student Judicial Affairs. University of California, Davis. October, 1999

<sup>4</sup> Unauthorized Collaboration: What Students Need To Know. Student Judicial Affairs. University of California, Davis. October, 1999