

DISCOURAGING PLAGIARISM: ADVICE FOR TEACHERS

The best strategy for discouraging student plagiarism is effective assignment design.

The information landscape has changed, and areas of ethics are fuzzier than ever. Our students may not have a clear understanding of what constitutes plagiarism. In addition to traditional paper projects, students face new issues when they produce multimedia. Issues get even thornier when students publish their work on the Web.

Here are some additional strategies instructors can use to discourage plagiarism and promote higher-quality research:

- Do not assign topical research ("Do a report on California")! Ask students to compare, analyze, invent, propose, etc.
- Encourage inquiry-driven research. Have students pose thoughtful questions based on their preliminary reading.
- Emphasize both writing and research as processes.
- Require in-process assessments. Ask students to submit preliminary thesis statements, drafts of bibliographies, and outlines and organizers at various points in the process to avoid research catastrophes as well as plagiarism. Your librarian can help with these assessments.
- Build peer and instructor reactions into formative assessments.
- Confer with students at key points in the process.
- Require students to keep a journal about their experience with the research and writing processes.
- Require students to submit all drafts and outlines along with the final project.
- Require students to incorporate specific, appropriate, high-quality resources of varying types in the project. (For example, "Use two primary sources from Gale's *Student Resource Center*," or, for

more advanced high-school students, "Use one scholarly journal.")

Create an assignment-specific rubric that would not highly value a generic or recycled paper.

Require students to attach a formal reflection piece, describing the research process, to their final project. Ask them to highlight what worked well and what were the greatest challenges, and to describe how they would change the process next time.

Ask students to submit first pages (or entire documents) for any [websites](#) or sources not easily accessed through the library.

Require an *annotated* bibliography. To simplify, you might ask students to annotate by noting the author's credentials and why the source was of particular value. Consider asking students to answer the following questions in their bibliographies:

1. How did you find this information?
Which database or search tool did you use?
2. Who is the author and why should you trust him or her?
3. Why is this particular document truly relevant to your thesis/research?