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## Common Excuses for Plagiarism

Here are some common reasons students give for plagiarism and some arguments on why plagiarism is still not a good idea.

### “I’m too busy.”

Maybe you think you have too many credits or are working too many hours to be able to complete your assignments. However, it is your responsibility to make sure you have scheduled adequate time to complete all your assignments.

If you discover that you do not have enough time to complete an assignment, it is far better to either discuss your situation with your instructor or TA, than to commit plagiarism.

The worst that you can happen to you is that you could fail a class and have to retake it. While failing a class is embarrassing and retaking it is inconvenient, it is not as bad as being found guilty of Academic Dishonesty and **receiving sanctions**.

### “My work isn’t good enough.”

Maybe you feel that the quality of your work is so poor that you could never pass the class or that you cannot state the concept as well as the original. But, faculty do not expect your work to be 100% perfect. The purpose of any assignment is for you to learn and practice new skills. If you do like a particular passage, you can include in your paper as a quote, but your paper should contain your own original contributions.

If you feel your skills are especially weak, it is far better you discuss your concerns with your instructor or locate a writing center. Your instructor may be able to point you to resources that can help you improve your grade.

Remember, it is always better to fail honestly than to be found guilty of Academic Dishonesty.

### “I need to cheat in order to have a high G.P.A.”

Some students honestly feel that the only way to a high G.P.A. is through cheating, but that simply is not true. Students have achieved high G.P.A.'s without cheating, and, in fact, a Penn State Pulse survey and other studies have shown that **cheaters tend to have lower G.P.A.'s than non-cheaters.**

Ask yourself this – would you want to be treated by a doctor who passed his or her courses only because of cheating?

## “I didn’t know it was plagiarism.”

It is **your responsibility** as a Penn State student to know what constitutes plagiarism. That’s what this Web page is all about.

If you find that you are in a situation where you are not sure if your work could be construed as plagiarism, ask your instructor or look for examples of what not to do. Some are provided in the **avoiding cut and paste plagiarism page**, and, your department or college may have examples of plagiarism related specifically to that field.

## “They’ll never find out.”

Just because “they” are faculty and TA’s doesn’t mean they are not paying attention. Many faculty are aware of on-line “paper mill” Web sites and have also seen enough other assignments to know if something looks “too familiar” or “doesn’t seem right.” In addition, educators are developing and using technologies which can look for similar phrases across papers.

## “I meant to include citations, but I forgot/ran out of time.”

Get into the habit of inserting citations, even in your rough drafts. If you are familiar with using index card for references, that is one way you can keep track of your references – other methods are equally successful. If you don’t know which citation to use, put in some question marks in the draft and track it down later.

If you need access to citation guidelines, you can access the **Penn State Library Citation Styles**. There are many citation styles, so you should ask your instructor which one is appropriate if he or she has not indicated one already.

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