



VANDERBILT
UNIVERSITY®

English Language Center

The ELC's Guide to the Culture and Language
of Maintaining Academic Integrity

Created by The Vanderbilt English Language Center

2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How Can This Resource Support You?.....	3
What Is Academic Integrity?	3
What Are Potential Issues Within Academic Integrity?	3
Can We Discuss Plagiarizing?	5
How Can We Avoid Plagiarizing?.....	6
Interactive Plagiarism Quiz: Is This Plagiarizing?	9
Frequently Used Academic Integrity Terms	10

HOW CAN THIS RESOURCE SUPPORT YOU?

Welcome to the English Language Center's Guide to the Culture and Language of Maintaining Academic Integrity. This resource gives a brief overview of what academic integrity means within the context of Vanderbilt University including the different types of possible academic integrity violations. This resource also includes an interactive practice on recognizing instances of plagiarism and tips and advice on how to avoid making these types of mistakes in your own writing. The resource concludes with a list of frequently used academic integrity terms, all defined within their use at Vanderbilt.

WHAT IS ACADEMIC INTEGRITY?

Academic Integrity:

Academic Integrity is behaving honorably, fairly, respectfully, and responsibly within an academic community.

Universities establish codes, or formal agreements, with students to ensure that they understand and follow expectations around academic integrity on campus. Universities also often have honor councils and offices that focus on ensuring that the campus community follows these academic codes. On occasion, students may violate an academic code, and the university has established systems to address these types of violations. Understanding expectations around academic integrity can be challenging for new students, especially students coming from academic environments where academic integrity has different cultural or practical interpretations. Even within the U.S., different institutions or schools within the same institution may see aspects of academic integrity differently. Such potential differences are why it is important to take the time to fully understand Vanderbilt's academic code.

WHAT ARE POTENTIAL ISSUES WITHIN ACADEMIC INTEGRITY?

Understanding academic integrity expectations can be challenging because there are different types of possible violations. While some violation types may seem obvious, others may surprise you. Students generally do not set out to violate an academic code but do so unknowingly because they do not fully understand an expectation. Unfortunately, violating an academic code unknowingly typically does not allow for the violation to be dismissed. So, let's take a moment and look at the different types of academic integrity violations more closely.

The main types of academic integrity violations include giving or receiving unauthorized aid, unauthorized collaboration, using an unauthorized outside source, and falsifying class records or the results of a study or research, or intentionally trying to deceive.

Unauthorized Aid

Unauthorized aid means getting assistance with a course assignment or other course task, such as help from a classmate or online resources, after being told the assignment must be done with no help.

Examples:

1. Susie is working on a computer science assignment, but quickly realizes that the code is harder than she thought, and she is struggling to complete it. She decides to ask a classmate who has already completed their assignment if she could look at their code to use as a reference. The classmate stresses the importance of not copying their code, because the professor specifically said they were not to get help from any other sources. Susie still uses her classmate's code to complete her own and then turns in her assignment.

Since the professor specified that they were not to receive any help on the assignment, Susie committed a violation of unauthorized aid by looking at a classmate's finished code instead of completing it on her own.

2. Takuhiro has an exam next week but realizes as he begins to study that there is too much to review in such a short amount of time. He remembers that one of his friends took the same course last semester, so his friend provides him with his old exams for Takuhiro to prepare for his own.

Takuhiro received unauthorized aid on his exam by studying the test answers from previous semesters. This is considered an academic integrity violation. You should never review any outside materials that have not been approved by your professor.

Over-collaboration

Closely related to unauthorized aid, this type of academic integrity violation is working with other people on a course assignment or other course task without permission or when told to work alone.

This type of violation can occur easily because the rules for collaborating with classmates can vary between schools, departments, and assignments. It is wise to always confirm with your professors if collaboration with others is allowed for every task that you are assigned. Assuming collaboration is permitted based on previously similar assignments where it was allowed could potentially be problematic: Always ask.

Example:

A group of data science students are all taking the same course together. Their professor gives them an assignment and tells them to work on it individually. Given the difficulty of the assignment, the group decides to work together to come up with the answers. Every student turns in an identical assignment, with only a few minor differences.

Since the professor specified that they were not to receive help on the assignment, the whole group committed an over-collaboration violation by working on the assignment together.

Falsifying Results of a Study

Changing or omitting research materials, data, or results so that the research is not accurately represented.

Example:

Jin has been collecting data for a study that he plans to publish at the end of the semester. He only has two weeks left before he needs to turn in his results to his professor, but after looking at what he's collected, he realizes that the results don't align with his hypothesis. Instead of starting the study over, he decides to just change the results slightly, so they better support his hypothesis and turns the results in to his professor.

Is this an academic integrity violation? Yes. He purposely changed the results of his study by adjusting the results of the data. You should always give yourself enough time to conduct a study so that if something goes wrong, you can start over if you need to.

Using an Outside Source

Definition: Using any materials on an assignment or test that was not created by yourself or received in class.

Example:

Henry decided to start on a writing assignment the night before it was due because he had picked a topic that he thought he knew well. But after doing some light research, he realized that there was a lot more work that was needed to complete the assignment and was struggling to complete it. He decided to use ChatGPT just to help him structure the assignment. After skimming the response from ChatGPT, Henry decided it sounded similar enough to the way he writes that no one would notice he did not actually write it. After making a few minor formatting adjustments, he submits his assignment.

Is this considered an academic integrity violation? Yes. ChatGPT wrote the outline for him, but he put his name on it and turned it in as his own work. AI should only be used to help you structure your ideas, not write them entirely for you.

CAN WE DISCUSS PLAGIARIZING?

Another type of academic integrity violation is plagiarism. Plagiarism is not sharing, or properly citing, that you used someone else's ideas or work as part of your own work. Plagiarism receives special attention in this guide because its definition and interpretation can be culturally based. This means that a student may come from a cultural background that views how we use the ideas or

works of others in our own work quite differently than how it is interpreted in the U.S. For example, in some cultures, students are expected to absorb the works of others and to learn from that experience. When those students are then asked to write about, discuss or present a topic, it can be assumed that they are putting together ideas and even words from someone else. The students are viewed as novices on the topic, so they are not expected to form original ideas just yet. This means that students can write about or discuss a topic without citing other sources, and it is understood that the information is not original to the student.

However, in the U.S., using the words or ideas of others is viewed differently. For instance, while students in the U.S. are also expected to read and learn from the works of experts, they are expected to express these borrowed ideas in their own words. This means, when students are asked to write about what they have read, they must make it very clear what is their own words and ideas and what is someone else's words and ideas, and they must also indicate the source of any borrowed information, also called *citing a source*.

Various methods and citation styles are used to cite a source and help students differentiate their writing and ideas from those of others. Common citation styles include APA, MLA, and Chicago; however, there are several other styles, and their use can vary between professional fields and journals, academic majors, and even professors' preferences. You should always check with a journal prior to an article submission or your professor about their expectations if you are unclear which citation style you need to use. The Vanderbilt University Library is an excellent resource when it comes to understanding citation styles and accessing the most up-to-date editions of the various citation manuals.

HOW CAN WE AVOID PLAGIARIZING?

The truth is that many students already understand how plagiarism is viewed within the U.S. context, including expectations specific to Vanderbilt. In fact, plagiarism violations are often not intentional. The challenge tends to be that while students know rules exist on using others' ideas or words in their own work, they sometimes struggle with how to do so properly or even effectively. Even if you plagiarize accidentally, it is still considered plagiarism, so it is better to be safe than sorry when using an outside resource in your own work. So, let's look at strategies for incorporating others' ideas into our work and how to use these methods effectively.

To begin with, do you understand the difference between **quotations, paraphrasing, and summarizing**?

- **Quotations** are identical to the original language, using a specific and very limited part of the source. A quotation matches the source document word for word, is set between quotation marks, and must give credit to the original author through a proper citation.
- **Paraphrasing** involves putting a passage from the source document into your own words. This change also includes altering the sentence structure of the original, but the intent and tone of the original author must remain the same. A paraphrase must also cite the original source. Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original

passage, taking a somewhat wider range of the original material and reducing its length slightly.

- **Summarizing** involves putting only the main points of the original material into your own words, and not borrowing the finer details of the original material in your work. Once again, it is also necessary to alter the sentence structure, maintain the original author's tone, and cite the original source when summarizing someone else's ideas. Summaries are significantly shorter than the original and provide a broad overview of the source material.

Now that you know their differences, you must decide when to use one type over the other.

- **Direct quoting** is better to use in the following cases: when an author is saying something very specific that cannot be paraphrased without changing the meaning, when you're analyzing the meaning of a specific phrase, or when you want to be more concise.
- **Paraphrasing** is better to use when you want to emphasize the specific ideas in a resource that are most related to your needs rather than the exact language the source used. It also lets you simplify complex material by using language that is more understandable to your reader, and as a student, paraphrasing shows your professors that you understand the source material.
- **Summarizing** is better to use when you need to provide a brief overview of a larger text. Summaries let you shorten the resource material to highlight particular points or omit unrelated/unimportant points.

Before we look at some examples related to the use of source materials, let's go over some final key points. Most importantly, when borrowing others' ideas, you should be using your own words as much as possible, through summarizing or paraphrasing, depending on the level of detail you need. In the U.S. context, using your own words to share the ideas of others shows that you truly understand the subject matter and ideas being expressed by your sources. Often when students are unable to put others' ideas into their own words, it is because they do not understand the cited material enough. Other times, students have not fully developed the skills or confidence to summarize or paraphrase well. Paraphrasing is an important skill in academic communication, and the ELC's academic writing classes and 1-to-1 consultations can help you support this type of skill development.

On the other hand, there are times when you will need to quote directly when borrowing ideas from a different source. Just be sure to minimize how often you do quote directly as overquoting can reflect poorly on the quality of your work. Lastly, in addition to in-text citations or footnotes, whichever your citation style calls for, you should always include a works cited/bibliography at the end of your paper or presentation. This list includes all the sources that you used.

Given the numerous considerations for borrowing others' ideas in our work, it is understandable if you are still a bit confused. Or, perhaps, you are feeling good about it and would like to check your knowledge. Let's look at a few examples of original material misuse. In doing so, see if you can identify the problem in each example.

Example 1: What is the problem?

<p>“Student narratives confirm the importance of many of the factors frequently cited as key to promoting cultural variation in the classroom. These include the need to adapt to a classroom culture that is more informal, professors who ask questions and expect students to respond, and professors who can act as both experts and facilitators in class. International students appear to adapt better and achieve a quicker sense of belonging in discussion-filled classrooms characterized by a dynamic of constructive debate and disagreement, rather than in classrooms in which students listen, respectfully and silently, to a professor’s lecture. Interestingly enough, this discussion and debate style of teaching often contradicts much of their previous classroom socialization.”</p>	<p>“Student narratives confirm the importance of promoting cultural variation in the classroom.” This includes informal classroom culture where professors who ask questions and expect students to respond and professors who can act both as experts and facilitators in class. International students have a quicker sense of belonging in classroom with discussion than classes where students just listen silently to a professor's lecture. This interactive style of teaching often contradicts much of their previous classroom socialization.</p>
---	---

Adapted from: Glass, C. R., Wongtrirat, R., & Buus, S. (2015). International student engagement: Strategies for creating inclusive, connected, and purposeful campus environments. Virginia: Stylus Publishing, p. 20.

Remember that quotes should be word-for-word copies of the original text, but in this example, the quote was only partially quoted from the original source, possibly as an attempt to paraphrase. This example would not be a correct use of a quotation.

Example 2: What’s the problem?

<p>“Student narratives confirm the importance of many of the factors frequently cited as key to promoting cultural variation in the classroom. These include the need to adapt to a classroom culture that is more informal, professors who ask questions and expect students to respond, and professors who can act as both experts and facilitators in class. International students appear to adapt better and achieve a quicker sense of belonging in discussion-filled classrooms characterized by a dynamic of constructive debate and disagreement, rather than in classrooms in which students listen, respectfully and silently, to a professor’s lecture. Interestingly enough, this discussion and debate style of teaching often contradicts much of their previous classroom socialization.”</p>	<p>Students admire what they call cultural variation in classroom. This includes informal classroom culture where professors who ask questions and expect students to respond and professors who can act both as experts and facilitators in class. International students have a quicker sense of belonging in classroom with discussion than classes where students just listen silently to a professor's lecture. This interactive style of teaching often contradicts much of their previous classroom socialization.</p>
---	---

Adapted from: Glass, C. R., Wongtrirat, R., & Buus, S. (2015). International student engagement: Strategies for creating inclusive, connected, and purposeful campus environments. Virginia: Stylus Publishing, p. 20.

The issue with this word-to-word copying example is that there are no quotation marks being used so the reader will think this is your own original thought rather than the thought of the original author. You should only be copying word-for-word in a quotation with quotation marks.

Otherwise, you need to be restating the idea in your own words and following the other steps for paraphrasing closely.

Example 3: What is the problem?

<p>“Student narratives confirm the importance of many of the factors frequently cited as key to promoting cultural variation in the classroom. These include the need to adapt to a classroom culture that is more informal, professors who ask questions and expect students to respond, and professors who can act as both experts and facilitators in class. International students appear to adapt better and achieve a quicker sense of belonging in discussion-filled classrooms characterized by a dynamic of constructive debate and disagreement, rather than in classrooms in which students listen, respectfully and silently, to a professor’s lecture. Interestingly enough, this discussion and debate style of teaching often contradicts much of their previous classroom socialization.”</p>	<p>Students admire what they call cultural variation in classroom. This includes informal classroom culture where professors ask questions and expect students to respond and professors who can act both as experts and facilitators in class. International students have a quicker sense of belonging in classrooms with discussions than classes where students just listen silently to a professor’s lecture. This interactive style of teaching often contradicts much of their previous classroom socialization.</p>
---	--

Adapted from: Glass, C. R., Wongtrirat, R., & Buis, S. (2015). International student engagement: Strategies for creating inclusive, connected, and purposeful campus environments. Virginia: Stylus Publishing, p. 20.

This issue here is that the student’s wording and sentence structure are too similar to the wording of the original document. Instead, make sure to use your own words and change the sentence structure of the original when paraphrasing.

Additionally, be careful with artificial intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT. In some classes and departments at Vanderbilt, you are not allowed to use ChatGPT specifically for the reasons above. It is very easy to let AI write for you, but this may be considered plagiarism, and there are now new technologies that can check for plagiarism from ChatGPT (although these may not always be reliable). [See Vanderbilt University Academic Affairs Guidance for Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Tools.](#)

To prevent plagiarism in your writing, carefully read through each of your course syllabi in order to understand your professor’s expectations for writing and citing others’ work. Always, be sure to reach out to your professor or campus resources, like the ELC, if you are uncertain that you are incorporating others’ ideas into your work properly.

INTERACTIVE PLAGIARISM QUIZ: IS THIS PLAGIARIZING?

If you would like to take an interactive quiz to check your understanding of plagiarism, click this link [here](#). For an explanation of terms commonly used when discussing academic integrity at Vanderbilt, see below.

FREQUENTLY USED ACADEMIC INTEGRITY TERMS

1. **Academic Dishonesty** - Untruthful behavior in academic research, teaching, and learning.
2. **Academic Integrity** - Behaving honorably, fairly, respectfully, and responsibly within an academic community.
3. **Accountability** - Being prepared to explain your actions or have your actions be judged; accepting responsibility for your actions and any results of your actions.
4. **Adjudicate** - To make a formal judgment about a problem or disagreement.
5. **Adverse Decision** - Unfavorable judgement; a conclusion that was not wanted.
6. **Allegation/Alleged** - An unproven claim that someone has broken a rule or law or acted improperly.
7. **Appeal** - The process of trying to change an earlier decision made by a person of power.
8. **Community Creed** - A statement of values shared by a community (e.g., Vanderbilt is a community of students, faculty, and staff).
9. **Corrective Action** - Steps to fix a bad situation or improper behavior.
10. **Defer** – To postpone an action for a later time.
11. **Designed to Deceive** - Something made to purposefully deceive others; a planned action that misrepresents the truth.
12. **Disciplinary** - Having to do with a punishment for breaking a rule or behaving improperly.
13. **Disciplinary Action** – Steps taken against someone who has broken a rule or behaved improperly.
14. **Disciplinary Record** - A report that details a student's misdeed, such as breaking a rule or behaving improperly.
15. **Disorderly Conduct** - Behavior in which a person lacks control of themselves in public, such as being drunk, fighting, or causing damage in public places.
16. **Expulsion** - The process of being removed from school and no longer being able to be a student there.

17. **Falsification Of Records** - To deceive others by changing or adding false information in writing.
18. **Flagrancy** - When a situation or person's actions are seen as clearly wrong.
19. **Grievance** - Feeling upset or in disagreement with how you were treated.
20. **Hearing (N)** - A formal meeting to discuss a specific problem or situation that includes gathering and sharing information and opinions about what happened.
21. **Honor System/Honor Code** - An agreement to maintain standards of honesty and trust among a group of people, such as students within a university.
22. **Impropriety** - Actions that are seen as inappropriate or wrong.
23. **Investigative Report** - Information about an investigation recorded in an official document.
24. **Material Witnesses** - A person whose information may greatly impact an official decision.
25. **Misconduct** - Actions considered to be improper or wrong, especially as they relate to one's duties as a professional or student.
26. **Offense** - An action that breaks a rule or law.
27. **Outcome** - The conclusion of an investigation, such as guilty (responsible for an action) or not guilty (not responsible for an action).
28. **Plagiarism** - Not sharing that you used someone else's ideas or work as part of your own work.
29. **Plead (Guilty)** - To state whether you are guilty (responsible for an action) or not guilty (not responsible for an action) often in front of a court of law or other authority figures.
30. **Pledge** - An important commitment or agreement that is often shared in front of others.
31. **Premeditation** - Considering or carefully preparing to take action, usually involving a crime or something unacceptable.
32. **Presumptive Penalty** - The most common punishment for a specific offense (wrongdoing).
33. **(Disciplinary) Probation** – The loss of certain university benefits or freedoms because of bad behavior.

34. **Provisions** - To organize and give something to others; Requirements based on set rules or laws.
35. **Reporting** - The process of giving a description of or explaining something.
36. **Reprimand** - To criticize someone for bad or wrong behavior.
37. **Resolution** - The outcome of a situation decided by a group of people with authority.
38. **Testimony** - An official written or spoken statement that serves as proof when making a case about something.
39. **To Be Charged** - To be officially accused of being guilty of an offense.
40. **Unauthorized Aid** - Getting assistance with a course assignment, such as help from a classmate or online resources, after being told the assignment must be done with no help.
41. **Vindicate** - to confirm with evidence that a person said to be guilty is actually innocent.
42. **Violation** - The breaking of a rule, law, or formal agreement.