

50 Ways to Jumpstart Academic Integrity Discussions in Your Class

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Introduction

Classroom discussion is one of the most effective deterrents to academic dishonesty. There is no substitute for faculty members engaging students in dialogues about the importance of integrity in their academic, personal, and professional lives. Such discussions encourage students to reflect upon their own values and actions, and to be active partners in promoting a culture of integrity both in and outside the classroom.

You might be thinking, who has the time? It's hard enough as it is to cram all of the necessary discipline-specific content into one semester! Or you might be thinking, why me? Why my course? College students have already developed their ethics by now and I can't change them. And they should have already learned about plagiarism in English 101, right?

To have more wide-reaching impact on student learning, integrity dialogues need to take place more often and in more classes. Having students actively grapple with ethical issues is the best way to reinforce the idea that integrity is an important part of their lives. This isn't a new idea. Socrates knew that engaging students in dialogues was the best way to teach abstract ideals like integrity. Of course, he didn't have a syllabus full of material to cover in one semester! So our goal in this session is to address how *discussing integrity more often is both worthwhile and doable* in all classes.

This handout offers 50 ways to prompt conversations about academic integrity in your classroom. We hope to give you enough ideas that it's easy to integrate integrity discussions into your course. Some items on the list can be done in as little as five minutes. Some items provide classroom activity ideas that you can adapt to fit within the time you have available. Choose one, two, or ten items from the list. Or use the items to generate your own ideas for how to discuss integrity in the classroom. The important thing is to engage our students in dialogue frequently enough that academic integrity stays on their radar.

Together, we can all create a culture of integrity that promotes student learning and ethical behavior.

50 Classroom Activity Ideas

What is academic integrity? Why does it matter?

- 1) Ask students to write down their initial reactions to this question: When you think of academic integrity, what are the first three (or four) things that come to mind? Use students' responses to highlight that academic integrity is more than a list of "don'ts" (or "dos and don'ts"), but is an important university value.
- 2) Engage students in a dialogue about why academic integrity matters. This discussion can work well in stand-alone format *and* across multiple class meetings. Some ideas include:
 - Break students into small groups. Have each group address why academic integrity matters to a particular stakeholder group (e.g., self, peers, professors, the university, alumni, employers, society). Discuss with the larger group.
 - Discuss the value of a university degree and what it represents. Encourage students to think beyond the degree as only a credential, but as an indicator of a well-educated person.
 - Assign students to write a "top 10" list for why academic integrity matters. Then, in small groups, have the students compare their responses and put together the top 10 reasons the group believes are most important.

- Discuss what it means to be a member of a scholarly community. This could include what it means to create knowledge and why issues of trust, responsibility, and integrity are essential to that process.
- 3) Stage a debate on an issue such as “academic integrity only matters if you get caught.” Divide students into three teams: pro, con, and evaluators. The evaluator team’s role is to assess the soundness of the arguments.
 - 4) Discuss academic integrity in relation to society’s focus on “getting ahead at all costs.”
 - 5) Give students 2-3-4 scenarios of academic dishonesty. Have students put themselves in the place of the offending student(s) and ask them to come up with other ways to resolve the situation that would NOT result in integrity violations.
 - 6) Present this scenario: your roommate turned in a paper downloaded from a free essay site. Ask your students, how would you describe this person’s character? How would you describe this person’s capabilities? What kind of employee do you think this person will be when she/he enters the professional workplace?
 - 7) Discuss the importance of codes of conduct. Have students develop a code of conduct for your course.
 - 8) Discuss this quotation: “Rather fail with honor than succeed by fraud.” --Sophocles. Ask your students: How can you reconcile this position with your own needs to earn a certain GPA to get into graduate school?
 - 9) Distribute a list of quotations about academic integrity, such as (from CAI website):
 - “Every time I’ve done something that doesn’t feel right, it’s ended up not being right.”
--Mario Cuomo
 - “To know what is right and not do it is the worst cowardice.” --Confucius
 - “My grandfather once told me that there are two kinds of people: those who work and those who take the credit. He told me to try to be in the first group; there was less competition there.” --Indira Gandhi
 - “What is right is often forgotten by what is convenient.” --Bodie Thoene
 Ask students which quotes most resonate with them and why. For the next class, ask each student to bring three additional quotations that closely represent their own views on integrity. Discuss.
 - 10) Use case studies to highlight particular aspects of academic integrity you wish to emphasize. Case studies of all shapes and sizes are available, or write your own. For example, use a recent news story about a professional ethical violation (there are plenty to choose from) to make connections between personal, academic, and professional integrity.

What is the university’s policy? What are the professor’s course policies?

- 11) Have a student member of your Academic Integrity Board come to your class to talk about your school’s policy and why academic integrity matters.
- 12) Instruct students to read the academic integrity policy before coming to class. Possible assignments:
 - Give them a brief quiz. Have students self-correct. Discuss.
 - Ask students to write down three things they learned (or some other reflective assignment in relation to reading the policy).
 - Provide a scenario of a policy violation. Ask students to write down what penalty should be rendered and why. In the next class, share some of the outcomes.
- 13) Share anonymous reflections from a student who was sanctioned by the AI Board.
- 14) Ask students to discuss plagiarism and the AI Policy specifically as it applies to your class.

- 15) Discuss when collaboration is and is not OK for your course. (See more detailed ideas below in collaboration section.)
- 16) Involve students in discussion of “why” a particular behavior is or is not OK. Here’s one example: After you leave this class, you may be asked about the content of this exam by a friend who has the same class later today.
 - Do you think this conversation might have an effect on your friend’s education?
 - Do you think it might affect your fellow students *in this class*? How?
 - How would you handle this situation?
 - Here’s what I believe.....

Why is integrity important in the workplace?

- 17) Assign students to find and read three newspaper articles about ethical lapses in the workplace. Tell them to be prepared to start class discussion.
- 18) Draw upon examples of integrity and breaches of integrity from current events, television programs, movies, etc., particularly examples related to the subject matter of your course. Use these scenarios in class to jumpstart discussion. This is an easy way to discuss both academic and professional integrity in the context of your class.
- 19) Assign a case about an ethical issue facing an entry-level employee.
- 20) Give students a current ethical issue in your profession to debate. Divide students into three teams: pro, con, and evaluators. The role of the evaluators is to assess the arguments made by each side.
- 21) Discuss a high-profile case of plagiarism.
- 22) Discuss the growing importance of teams in the workplace. Engage students in discussion about team members pulling their own weight (and not) and making valuable contributions (and not). Then, have your students develop a list of guidelines that will be used to govern/grade each team member’s participation in group projects in your class. Tell students that they will be responsible for holding each other accountable to those guidelines.
- 23) Give students this scenario: You are the head of your department at work. One of your employees, Tim, called in sick today. Later that night, you saw Tim at the xyz concert (he didn’t see you). You are planning to talk with Tim when he returns to work. Write down the points you want to discuss with him. *Now pretend you are Tim.* You know the boss saw you at the concert. Should you do anything? If so, what? Be specific.

Doesn’t everyone cheat in some way to get ahead? *No. Discuss taking responsibility for your actions.*

- 24) Give students this scenario: Your just took a test worth 20% of your grade. After taking the test, you overheard three students bragging about cheating and how well they had done on the test. Write an anonymous letter telling each of them what you think.
- 25) Ask students why they believe students cheat. Write down the students’ list of reasons on the blackboard or overhead, then have students prioritize the reasons. Ask them if any reasons are acceptable to excuse cheating.

Next class, distribute the list of common reasons/excuses for academic dishonesty that your students developed. Break students into teams of two and assign each team two or more of the excuses. Have each team a) evaluate the excuses and b) develop alternatives to acting dishonestly.
- 26) Give students this scenario: It’s two days before your paper is due and you haven’t started. What are some honest ways to resolve your predicament?
- 27) Present this scenario: A student earned a final course grade of C. After course grades were turned in, the student complained that the professor had “given” this grade, and asked for extra credit to improve the grade to a B- because “I need a B average to keep my

scholarship.” If you were the professor, how would you respond? Next class, distribute the students’ written responses and discuss.

- 28) Have students break into small groups and discuss some scenarios related to classroom misconduct that are not specifically related to the “work” in the course. Some examples:

- Signing an attendance sheet for a friend.
- Lying about being ill to ask for a make-up exam on a later date.
- Lying about a sick relative to get an extension on a paper.
- Saying that your friend’s mother died to justify turning in an assignment late.

Have students generate additional examples and discuss each item on the list. With the entire class, discuss how gaining unfair advantage IS related to the work (or some other discussion prompt).

- 29) Observation exercise. Instruct students to keep an anonymous “getting ahead” journal for one week, in which they write down examples of dishonest things they notice people (including themselves) doing to get ahead. Encourage them to observe “getting ahead” behaviors during whatever television shows they watch that week, too. Ask students to pay particular attention to “white lies” and how they are used to get ahead. At the end of the week of observation, have students make a list of all dishonest behaviors they observed, as well as behaviors that COULD be perceived as dishonest. Discuss findings in class. (Requesting anonymous papers for this activity is an option, too).

What is plagiarism?

- 30) Ask students to write down the meaning of plagiarism in their own words, look up a published definition, and compare the two.
- 31) Announce the university’s Learning Center programs on academic integrity issues. Use that discussion to highlight a plagiarism issue(s) of your choice.
- 32) Devote a class period to academic integrity, offering samples of students’ problems and errors that you personally have encountered in your classes.
- 33) Assign students an online plagiarism test such as www.plagiarismtest.org or <http://education.indiana.edu/~frick/plagiarism>. Instruct them to take the test as many times as it takes to achieve a perfect score. In the next class, have students write down two learning points they found most valuable. Pick up those written comments. Discuss a few with the entire class.
- 34) Have students proofread a paper that has multiple examples of plagiarism. Next class, talk about what they found.
- 35) Show students a plagiarized paper. Ask, why might a student have turned in such a paper? What alternative actions could the student have taken?
- 36) Include questions about plagiarism on a quiz or exam.
- 37) Have students peer-edit each other’s work, focusing on plagiarism.
- 38) Have students debate the idea that “students should not be held responsible for plagiarism if they don’t understand it.” Use that debate to discuss unintentional plagiarism and why writers (including students) must be held accountable for plagiarism even when it may be unintentional. Engage students in a discussion about their responsibilities.

What am I doing wrong in my paper?

The ideas in this section are based on student writing problems we have encountered in our classes most often.

Paraphrasing

- 39) Have students write down, in their own words, why paraphrased ideas, not just direct quotes, must be cited.
- 40) Show examples of adequate and inadequate paraphrasing. Discuss.

- 41) Give students a passage to paraphrase. Have students trade papers, do peer reviews, and revise papers based on the peer feedback. Give group (vs. individual) feedback to the class, then have students rewrite again. Discuss key challenges students experienced trying to paraphrase.

Cut-and-Paste Problems

- 42) Discuss how “compiling” a paper is different from “writing” a paper. Have each person write down 3-5 disadvantages of submitting a compiled paper. Discuss.
- 43) In front of the class, illustrate how students sometimes “compile” papers by cutting and pasting selections from other sources and making superficial changes. Discuss.
- 44) Show multiple variations of the cut-and-paste problem to help students see how copying is wrong whether it’s one sentence, one paragraph, one page, or more. Have students rewrite selected passages using appropriate paraphrasing.

Paper Mills, Buying Papers, and Other Stealing

- 45) In front of the class, critique a paper from an online paper mill such as www.cheathouse.com or www.schoolsucks.com. This activity can serve multiple purposes such as teaching about plagiarism prevention and proper citation, clueing students in that you are aware of online paper mills, and demonstrating the low quality papers they are likely to get from such sites.
- 46) Present this scenario: your roommate reveals to you at midnight that she is downloading a paper from a free essay site because she is “freaking out” that her paper is due tomorrow and she’s not ready. Should you do anything? If not, why? If so, why and what?
- 47) Discuss this scenario: Your roommate is making money by writing papers for other people. What do you do?

What’s wrong with working together/collaborating on this assignment?

- 48) Present a scenario such as this one: Your roommate asks if you have finished your paper and you say yes. She asks you to e-mail her your paper to give her some ideas to start her paper. Discuss the following:
- How would you handle this situation? List at least three possibilities.
 - Discuss the implications of this situation for you? Your friend? Others?
 - What are various ways this situation could unfold? List several.
- 49) Present 1-2 scenarios of collaboration issues your students might face, such as:
- Lab report in a science class
 - A take-home test
 - A homework assignment that it’s OK to discuss, but must be WRITTEN individually
 - A group member not pulling her/his share, but taking credit

Ask students to develop possible ways to approach the situation and recommend a course of action. Discuss what is and is not OK for your course. Discuss how students must know (and ask!) what’s OK for EACH course.

- 50) Present a scenario such as this one: “Your roommate reviewed your paper and: Circled errors. Corrected errors. Rewrote a few sentences. Rewrote several large passages. Gave you ideas for how to better construct your argument.” Ask students which of these actions are OK or not. Have your students grapple with collaboration that is acceptable and collaboration that crosses the line. Be specific about what is and is not OK for your course.