How to address Plagiarism & Academic Dishonesty in Online Classes

Who Cheats?
About 75% of students surveyed admit to cheating at least once in college. This has held steady since 1963.

Online Cheaters?
There is little if any evidence that cheating is more common in online classes. But, with the base rate of cheating so high already, this isn’t great news.

Demographics and Cheating
- Men self-report cheating more than women
- Younger students are more likely to cheat than older students (and freshmen more than sophomores)
- Students who are struggling and the high achievers are most likely to cheat
- Students with higher workloads are more likely to cheat

External factors that...

Promote Cheating
Intrinsically motivated
Low self-efficacy
Can't do the work
Views teacher as incompetent/uncaring
Believes cheating is normal
Unclear about definition of academic dishonesty
Able to rationalize cheating
High stakes assessment
Performance-based assessment
Few/no formative assessments
Cheating is easy and getting caught unlikely

Promote Honesty
Extrinsically motivated
High self-efficacy
Views teacher as competent/caring
Cheating is not an accepted norm
Believes academic dishonesty is taken seriously
Understands cheating is not necessary
Low stakes assessment
Mastery-based assessment
Lots of formative assessments
Cheating is difficult or impossible and cheaters get caught

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Making Cheating Difficult or Impossible

**Homework**

- Consider the goal. Is it formative? for self-assessment? busy-work?
- Make it meaningful: practice for quizzes, exams, or projects.
- Be clear about whether it is collaborative or individual.
- Make sure you understand how online websites handle online homework.
- Ask for an honor pledge.

**Exams**

- Use open-book exams. Consider issues with cell phones and calculators, books, papers, internet resources, etc.
- Lower the pressure by making clear what the exam will cover and be like. Offer practice!
- Tell students that you are employing strategies that will make cheating difficult.
- Use a question bank to create multiple versions of an exam and reorder questions on various exams.
- Ask for an honor pledge.
- Require proctored exams?

**Addressing Plagiarism**

- Talk openly about what it is and how you will check for it. Make it clear that plagiarizers will be caught and sanctioned.
- Help students understand and guard against plagiarism with online tutorials.
- Assign papers on topics that can't be plagiarized - tie in current events, specific class topics, or unique perspectives.
- Give students some choice in the topic so they can find something that sparks their interest.
- Focus on the paper-writing process, not just the final product.
- Consider the use of honor pledges for essays.