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# Synonym Spinners and Paper Mills

**It's a New World Out There**

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*“To a worm in horseradish, the world is horseradish.” ~ Yiddish proverb*

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# My Objectives Today

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- Awareness

To introduce faculty to **online paraphrasing tools** and **contract cheating websites**.

To demonstrate how the tools can be used and how detection is avoided.

- Detection

To delineate different ways in which faculty **may identify use** of these tools in students' submissions.

- Deterrence

To suggest that **authentic assessment, in-class writing, and self-reflection** are among the best assignment types to encourage original written work ... *and detect unoriginal work.*

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# Academic Misconduct

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- Defined:
    - Behavior that leads to the **misrepresentation of scholarly work** (International Center for Academic Integrity)
      - Is “any activity that tends to undermine the academic integrity of the institution” and may involve “human, hard-copy, or electronic resources” (The Code at IU)
  - Common Types of Misconduct:
    - Cheating
      - Use of **unauthorized assistance, materials, information or study aids** in any form or in any academic exercise (The Code at IU)
      - Test Cheating
    - Plagiarism
      - Presenting someone else’s work as one’s own; ideas or materials must be fully acknowledged, unless “**common knowledge**” (The Code at IU)
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# Academic Misconduct

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- Test Cheating & Plagiarism

- Is central to our understanding of academic misconduct, as reflected in:
    - Scholarly work by authors, such as Bowers (1964) and McCabe & colleagues (1990 & beyond)
    - Institutional conduct codes framed and/or interpreted in context of test cheating and plagiarism
  - Is flagrant misconduct
  - Is easy to detect.
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Flagrant Misconduct is Easy.

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# Flagrant misconduct is easy to detect.

## Test Cheating

### Test Cheating



**Mr. Bean pilot (1990), Act 1: "The Cheat."**

Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Ot\\_vJLJ86M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ot_vJLJ86M)

### Test Cheating. Facilitating?



Source: **Fastweb** - <https://www.fastweb.com/student-news/articles/could-copying-homework-lead-to-a-course-failure-these-test-results-prove-the-answer-is-yes>

# Flagrant misconduct is easy to detect.

## Plagiarism detected by Turn It In.

### “Copy & Paste” Plagiarism

Gipp (2014)

remembered for his role in the wars led against France by a series of coalitions, the so-called Napoleonic Wars. He established hegemony over most of continental Europe and sought to spread the ideals of the French Revolution, while consolidating an imperial monarchy which restored aspects of the deposed Ancien Régime. Due to his success in these wars, often against numerically superior enemies, he is generally regarded as one of the greatest military commanders of all time, and his campaigns are studied at military academies worldwide.[1]

Napoleon was born at Ajaccio in Corsica to parents of noble Italian ancestry. He trained as an artillery officer in mainland France. He rose to prominence under the French First Republic and led successful campaigns against the First and Second Coalitions arrayed against France. He led a successful invasion of the Italian peninsula.

In 1799, he staged a coup d'état and installed himself as First Consul; five years later the French Senate proclaimed him emperor, following a plebiscite in his favour. In the first decade of the 19th century, the French Empire under Napoleon engaged in a series of conflicts—the Napoleonic Wars—that involved every major European power.[1] After a streak of victories, France secured a dominant position in continental Europe, and Napoleon maintained the French sphere of influence through the formation of extensive alliances and the appointment of friends and family members to rule other European countries as French client states.

The Peninsular War and 1812 French invasion of Russia marked turning points in Napoleon's

Source: [https://moodle.org/plugins/plagiarism\\_turnitin](https://moodle.org/plugins/plagiarism_turnitin)

### “Shake & Paste” Plagiarism

Gipp (2014)

Anorexia nervosa is a distorted body image that overestimates personal body fatness and an eating disorder affecting mainly girls or women, although boys or men can also suffer from it. It usually starts in the teenage years. It is estimated that about one out of every 100 adolescent girls has the disorder. Caucasians are more often affected than people of other racial backgrounds, and anorexia is more common in middle and upper socioeconomic groups. The overwhelming desire to become thin drives people with anorexia nervosa to refuse to eat even when they are hungry. Although adults often describe people with anorexia as “model students” their personal lives are usually marred by low self-esteem, social isolation and unhappiness. Anorexia nervosa cannot be self-diagnosed.

We can characterise the people with this disease by their body because their weight is maintained at least 15 per cent below that expected for a person's height. It is self-induced weight loss caused by avoiding fattening foods and may involve taking

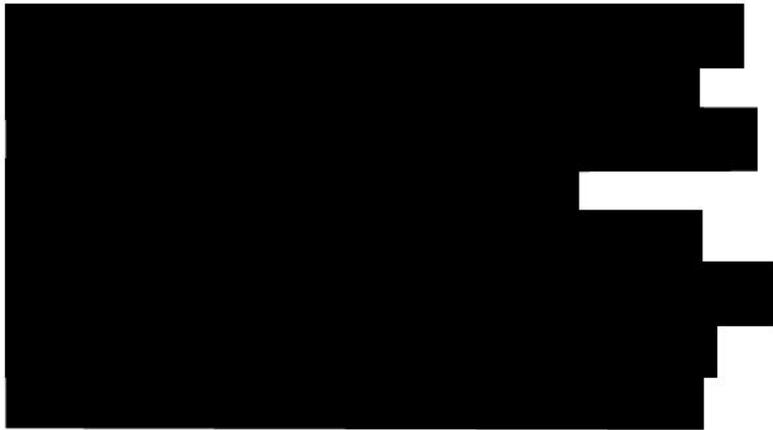
Source: <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/internal-departments/the-college-of-learning-and-teaching-colt/learning-and-teaching-technologies/turnitin---detecting-plagiarism/turnitin-originality-report/>

# Flagrant misconduct is easy **X** to de**X**ct.

Turn It In detects copies, not plagiarism.

## Translation Plagiarism (?)

Gipp (2014)



[0% TIN Similarity Score]

## Paraphrase Plagiarism (?)

Gipp (2014)



[0% TIN Similarity Score]

# Flagrant misconduct is easy ~~to~~ detect.

- Flagrant misconduct is easy ... **in permissive environments.**
  - Scholarly work in academic misconduct points to culture, but glosses online environments (e.g., Lang, 2013; McCabe et al., 2012)
- Flagrant misconduct is easy .... **detection can be difficult.**
  - **Cheating** is intentional. It can occur through access to tools & resources that would be prohibited ... **if we knew more about them.**
  - **Plagiarism** is not merely naïve copies or poor writing. It can be intentionally guised. We could spot it ... **if we knew more about it.**
- Types of flagrant academic misconduct:
  1. Spinning – plagiarism via translation & paraphrasing
  2. Contract cheating – cheating via outsourcing student work

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# Spinning Demonstration

**Translation & Paraphrase**

**Plagiarism**

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# Can Faculty Detect Spinning? **No.**

- Computer Science Recommendations (Gipp, 2014; Lancaster & Clarke, 2012)
  - Translation Plagiarism
    - Extend anti-plagiarism to include back-translation
    - Use first language of students as a context
  - Paraphrase Plagiarism
    - Citation-based detection using citations and references to detect plagiarism
- My Recommendations
  - Language Arts
    - As a practical matter ... It is difficult to distinguish spinning & translation from **poor writing and L2 (ESL)**, especially for faculty not trained in the languages.
    - In large classes or classes assisted by graduate students, is there even capacity to pay attention?
  - Domain Expertise
    - Faculty are subject matter experts.
    - Leverage domain expertise to spot **unusual phrases** and **inappropriate synonyms**.

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# Contract Cheating Demonstration

**Ghost-writing &  
Outsourcing**

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# Can Faculty Detect Contract Cheating? **Yes!**

- Computer Science Recommendations (Lancaster & Clarke, 2012)
  - Use public sources to attribute institution, course, and student
    - Yet, contract cheating services are able to hide the student's identity & activity behind paywalls & transactions (Fisher, McLeod, Savage and Simkin, 2016)
    - Chegg recently eliminated user names, making all "anonymous," and has robot.txt that prevents indexing
- Controlled grading experiment (Dawson & Sutherland-Smith, 2018)
  - Faculty correctly identified
    - Student work 96% of the time ... *we know what our students' work looks like*
    - Contract cheating 62% of the time ... *we know what non-student work looks like*
  - Reasons given for identifying contract cheating:
    - Poor structure (essay)
    - Did not address key questions
    - Missing sections or requirements
    - Lack of course content (theory, concepts)

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What next?

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# Detection, Deterrence & Beyond

## Faculty Control

1. Google your assignments.
  - Submit any “answers” or responses found online to Turn It In for backward and forward detection.
  - Visit the top offenders (Chegg, CourseHero) because pages may not be indexed.
  - Don’t waste your time on take-down requests ... it may be ignored and assignments may return.
2. Ask your students what supplemental resources they use.
  - Only you know what resources students should use.
3. Spin key constructs & terms.
  - It helps with distinguishing writing problems from other issues.
  - In BUSE, knowledge is one of our learning outcomes, so use of constructs & terms is important for assessment.
4. Reflect on your assignments. Alter as necessary.
  - Authentic assessments – memos & business writing in BUSE.
  - Course content – demonstrate mastery through understanding, use, & application in BUSE.
  - Consider time – quick turn-around in marketplace.
  - Self-reflection & personal experience – could deter ... and can detect.
  - Scaffolding (Slade, 2017) – incremental assignments & assessments.
  - “Canned” or publisher materials (Fisher et al., 2016) – avoid using them.
    - Check your textbook materials at Chegg using a student account. Seriously, you won’t like what you see.
  - Quant, stats, math, analytics – use “individualized” or “algorithmic” assignments (Cheung & Brudvig, 2018)

# Detection, Deterrence & Beyond

## Programmatic & Institutional Control

### 1. Culture and context are important (McCabe et al., 2012)

- Spinning and contract cheating result from **intentional** acts.
- Misconduct occurs in permissive environments, and some environments induce cheating (Lang, 2013; Mazar, Amir & Ariely, 2008). Online is one of them.
- Some subjects & degree programs have higher incidence & prevalence of misconduct than others, e.g., the professions, including business.

### 2. Reframe academic misconduct.

#### Plagiarism

- Presenting someone else's work as one's own; ideas or materials must be fully acknowledged, unless "**common knowledge**" (The Code at IU)

#### Cheating

- Use of **unauthorized assistance, materials, information or study aids** in any form or in any academic exercise (The Code at IU)

### 3. Consider stop-gaps or hurdles in your degree programs.

- University of Sydney required **passing a proctored exam** in two-stage grading for a high-incident contract-cheating course in business. Over one-third of students failed the exam, thereby failing the class. (Pens for Hire)

### 4. Advocate for institutional responsibility.

- "Faculty as detective" is an antiquated & dated model.
- One institution has "originality unit" of 26 people. Faculty refer suspected cases for investigation by the unit. Unit also is responsible for locating assignments online and issuing take-down notices.

# Closing

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“You’ve never heard of me, but there’s a good chance that you’ve read some of my work. I’m a hired gun, a doctor of everything, an academic mercenary. My customers are your students. I promise you that. Somebody in your classroom uses a service that you can’t detect, that you can’t defend against, that you may not even know exists.” (Dante, 2010 CHE)

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