

# Cheating & Dishonesty



**Y**our child stayed up late watching television. When you ask about homework, your child says, “Don’t worry. I’ll take care of it.” Then you find out that “taking care of it” is copying a friend’s paper.

This is not an isolated example. Today, surveys show that nearly all students have cheated at one time or another. Why does there seem to be such an epidemic of cheating? What can you do to prevent it? What should you do if your child is caught cheating?

Inside find facts to help you deal with the tough issues of cheating and dishonesty.

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## WHAT is cheating?

**O**ne good definition is that cheating occurs any time a student tries to pass off another person’s work as their own. That means that *all* of the following should be considered cheating:

- **Copying homework** from another student.
- **Receiving any kind of help on a test**—hidden answer sheets, copying answers from others or giving help to another student.
- **Plagiarism**—copying work word for word or using information without giving the source.
- **Handing in a project** that was actually done by a parent or another family member.
- **Buying a paper** and handing it in.

## WHO cheats?

**C**heating isn’t confined to any one group of students. An alarming percentage of students admit that they have cheated at some time. Even high-achieving students say they have cheated in school.

## Technology has made it even easier to cheat.

Some common concerns include:

- **Copying and pasting information** from online sources without crediting the source. Suggest typing the information in your child’s own words rather than using the copy-and-paste feature. Then your child should list the source before closing the website.
- **Using online resources to download** essays and papers. Have your child steer clear of sites that offer these.
- **Texting, chatting or sending photos** of test answers to classmates. To avoid temptation, your child should put away devices during tests. If the test is on a computer, your child should close any chat features.



## WHY do students cheat?

The simple answer seems to be “because they can.” Children who have admitted to cheating usually say they thought they could get away with cheating because they’d seen so many other students doing it. In fact, nearly all of the students who admit to cheating said they weren’t caught.

Other reasons kids cheat include:

- They feel pressure from parents to get good grades.
- They didn’t think it was wrong.
- They were trying to get into a good college and were worried about how a bad grade could affect their future.



## What can you do to prevent your child from cheating?

- **Think about the messages you’re sending to your child.**

Do you insist that your child get all A’s? Or do you focus on hard work and progress over grades?

- **Emphasize *doing your best*, not *being the best*.**

Children need to know that hard work pays off—that you love them for who they are, not what they do—and that if they’ve done their best, that’s good enough for you.

- **Explain to your child that cheating is wrong—and risky..**

Even if your child doesn’t get caught, cheating is wrong because it’s dishonest. And usually, students who get caught cheating on an exam earn zero points. You might try averaging out a zero on one test with three other tests that averaged 94 points. One zero changes that student’s average to 70%—just passing in most grading systems. It is better to leave an answer blank or to get an answer wrong than it is to take the risk of cheating.

- **See if your school has an honor code.**

Make sure you and your child know the punishment for cheating. Support teachers and administrators when they enforce the consequences.

## My child was caught cheating. What should I do?

The most important thing is what *not* to do. When teachers catch students cheating, many parents will go to any lengths to get the decision overturned. Some parents angrily deny their children would ever lie or cheat. In some cases, these parents are worried that their child will have to report the punishment on a college application and may not get into a selective college. In others, parents simply refuse to believe that their child could have cheated.

The best approach is not to make excuses for your child. And don’t listen when your child says that “everybody” cheats. Even if that’s true, you can say, “But our family isn’t ‘everybody.’” Let your child suffer the consequences of cheating. It may be one of the most important lessons your child learns this year.

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