

Part 1 DIRECTIONS: Read closely and color code: **main idea**(2-3 sentences that capture what the whole article is about), **best evidence** (think credible sources), **interesting word choices/figurative language** (think about what the writer intends), **counterclaim** (if applicable). **You should also leave comments in margins if it helps you to think about the text.** When finished, you will write your summary paragraph at the bottom of this doc.

[Link to audio](#)

Cheating in Online School? Some Students and Parents Say It's OK

Teachers are changing how they test to counter online cheating; ethicists fear a slippery slope

By [Julie Jargon](#)

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With high-school students across the country fresh off exams, many teachers will be eyeing their test answers carefully. Remote school has made certain kinds of cheating easier than ever, leading students who may never have considered cheating before the pandemic to google answers, text friends or peek at their notes.

The difficult situations students face this year raise a question: Is it ever OK to cheat? Should the normal rules apply in a year that has been anything but normal?

"I know a lot of kids who will FaceTime during tests and take them together, or kids who have a Google tab open during tests," said Lucie Flagg, a high-school senior in Wexford, Pa. "I think everyone knows it's probably not right, but it's also the easy way out. A lot of kids are just [done with remote learning and have no motivation](#) to put in the work this year."

She says that teachers have told students they are aware that cheating is happening and some have said they feel powerless to stop it. Some teachers have imposed time limits on tests, making it harder to cheat. Lucie said it's easier to have actually studied the material in those cases, because looking up answers in books or on Google takes too long. Other teachers, she said, have switched to open-notes tests.

Lucie said teachers at her school don't require students' cameras to be on during tests. Some schools do. Other districts are using sometimes-controversial tech to catch or prevent cheating, such as AI-powered online proctoring services and software that can lock down browsers. The principal at her school, North Allegheny Senior High School, declined to comment.

Educators and ethicists say cheating in high school is driven largely by the competitive nature of college admissions and the pressure parents place on children to get into top schools.

Colleen Morris, an English teacher at North Allegheny, changed the way she assesses students this fall in an effort to curb cheating. Ms. Morris said cheating was rampant well before the pandemic but was easier to manage. The usual deterrents—walking around the classroom during tests and handing out detentions—are now gone.

Ms. Morris decided this fall to switch from multiple-choice exams to written and oral tests. She uses Flipgrid, a video app for educators, in which she sends students a question about their reading assignment and gives them 15 minutes to record themselves answering it.

Still, nothing can totally prevent cheating. Just last week, she caught two students plagiarizing on a written test. She said they lifted text straight from SparkNotes, an online study guide that states on its website, “We’re here to help you learn, not to help you cheat.”

Ms. Morris said she is certain cheating in her classes would be more pervasive this year if she hadn’t changed her approach. Her school’s code of conduct covers cheating. The penalty is a zero on the assignment, plus detention—but detention isn’t an option anymore, since the school is fully remote.

“Usually the parents fight hard to get their students at least some points,” said Ms. Morris. “The parental pressure is really difficult.”

One mother in Southern California said that both of her teenage sons, who had never cheated in person, did so recently in remote school. She said that they attend a highly competitive school where many students go on to top universities and both were caught plagiarizing in different classes.

She said one son’s teacher gave him an F on the assignment, significantly affecting his overall grade in the class, and is upholding the school’s zero-tolerance policy for cheating despite her efforts to dispute the grade. “I don’t think the cheating was justified,” she said, “but I don’t think his college opportunities should be affected by one moment during such a challenging time.”

Some parents have told me that their children have had to “collaborate” with friends on assignments and tests because they feel it’s the only way they are learning much this year.

Jen Norton, of suburban Fort Worth, Texas, said the school year has been chaotic, with numerous teachers at her daughter’s school resigning. She said her daughter—a junior taking five Advanced Placement classes—has some great teachers but has one who only posts assignments online and doesn’t give any lectures.

“I told her that the teachers who are giving her their best deserve her respect and that she should give them everything she has, and that means not cheating,” she said. But she waived that advice for the seemingly less-engaged teacher.

“I said, ‘You give to her what she’s giving to you, and if that means googling an answer on a quiz, I’m fine with that, or if that means asking a friend something over text, I’m fine with that because she’s not giving you her best,’” Ms. Norton said. “I didn’t think I’d ever be OK with telling my kid to use her resources and google things, but that’s where I am right now.”

There is evidence that much younger students could also be cheating—or at least getting help from parents. Curriculum Associates, a provider of online curricula and assessments for more than eight million elementary and middle-school students nationwide, analyzed diagnostic assessment data and found remote students at all grade levels were scoring higher in reading than students in previous years. Some of the age groups also scored higher in math.

Kristen Huff, the company’s vice president of assessment and research, said she can only speculate about what’s behind the higher assessment scores. “We don’t want to call it cheating if they are getting additional support, because we don’t think the adults or older siblings who are helping intend to do something wrong,” she said.

Dr. Huff acknowledged that middle-school students could be using technology to inflate their scores, but said it’s also possible they are scoring better because they are more focused at home.

Ethicists fear that cheating won't suddenly stop once students return to in-person classrooms.

"The problem with saying cheating is acceptable here is it becomes an ethical slippery slope, where cheating on one exam may lead to cheating on other exams or in the workplace," said Steven Mintz, a professor emeritus at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo who [writes an ethics blog](#). "Cheating can become habitual. With kids, you're trying to develop good habits so they can apply them to later situations in life."

David DeCosse, director of campus ethics at Santa Clara University's Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, said it's important for adults to be moral exemplars. "It's on teachers and adults to set the standards here and to keep ethical expectations high no matter what sorts of regrettable educational models are being used," he said.

Ms. Morris, the high-school English teacher in Pennsylvania, agreed but said it's harder than ever to convince kids of why they shouldn't cheat.

"You stand up in the classroom and say integrity matters, but students can find examples all around them of people getting ahead by cutting corners and cheating," she said. "We're a voice in the wilderness."

DIRECTIONS: Now that you have read and thought about the article, write your summary below. It should consist of the articles 3-4 main points and should not contain 1st person pronouns (I, me, my) nor direct quotes from the text.

Continue for Part 2 DIRECTIONS:

WRITE A TWO PARAGRAPH REFLECTION

1. ANALYSIS: One paragraph that reflects on the writer's style

- Look back at your **green highlights**. What moves did you see the writer making to create meaning in this article?
- Make a claim, support it with text evidence, and then discuss that evidence specifically. Your paragraph should strive for at least two claims to discuss.

- Don't know what to analyze? Suggestions: tone, diction, structure, figurative language, quality of evidence
- Need help? See the AoW help doc and the tone & structure idea banks in Classroom.

2. **RESPONSE:** One paragraph that reflects the reader's thoughts on the topic of cheating. Tell me what you think/feel. Avoid critique of the article here.