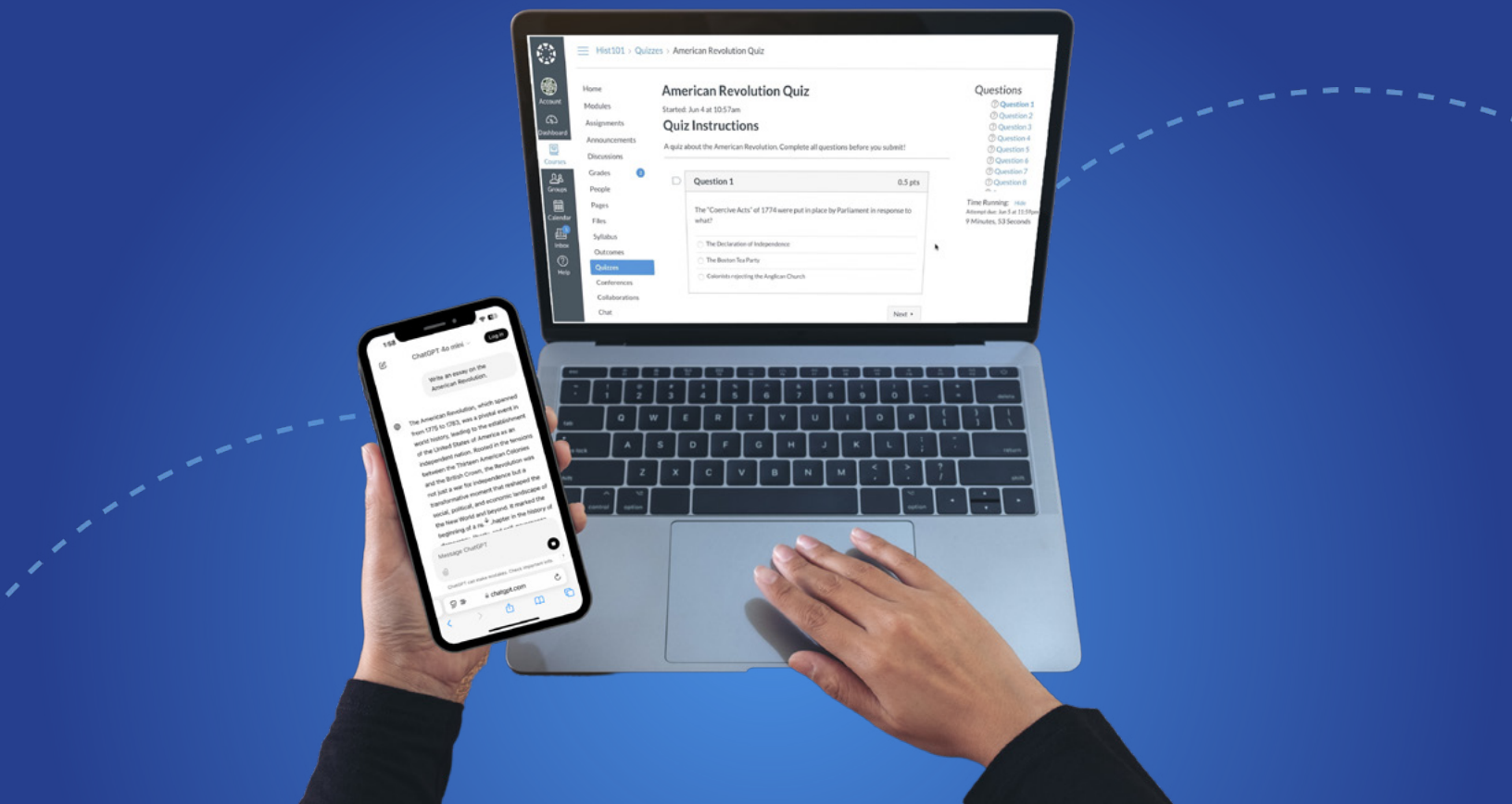
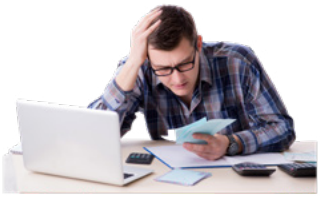
Honorlock®

Why Students REALLY Cheat



Would you consider cheating in these scenarios? Be honest.



Scenario 1

You need a 91% on the final just to pass the class. Anything less means delaying graduation and paying to retake the course, which you can't afford. Meanwhile, your classmates are cheating, and the instructor ignores it.



Scenario 2

An elective you're aren't interested in requires a long essay. Would you use ChatGPT to "help" write it so you can focus on studying for finals in your career-related courses—especially since you can make a few edits and AI detection won't catch it?

Unfortunately, many studies suggest that students are likely to cheat in these scenarios.

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Part 1:
When cheating becomes a culture



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Do a lot of people cheat in college?

Between 50-80% of college students cheat at some point (Cantiello & Geschke, 2024; Janke et al., 2021; MacLeod & Eaton, 2020). These estimates vary—some studies say a bit less than 50%, others say more than 80%—but either way, cheating is common. And since people usually underreport negative behaviors like cheating, the real numbers are probably higher (Newton, 2024).

But strong values and unwavering moral compasses should steer students toward honesty and integrity, right? **Not exactly.**

Especially when students know their peers are cheating and the instructor doesn't do anything about it.

Why wouldn't faculty address cheating?

Well, imagine you're a faculty member who just caught a student cheating on an exam. You gathered evidence, filled out mountains of paperwork, and followed all the academic misconduct reporting procedures... **but nothing happens.**

So, you just spent a ton of time following the processes and probably feel unsupported—two of the many reasons faculty stop reporting academic dishonesty (MacLeod & Eaton, 2020; Staats et al., 2009).

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A cheating culture emerges

When students assume everyone's cheating and that faculty and the institution don't care and/or won't do anything about it, a "cheating culture" emerges (Tolman, 2017).

But the thing about cheating is that the more it happens, the more it happens—and each time it happens, students see it as a less serious offense (Shu et al., 2011).

So, what can you do? Slap an academic integrity policy on your website? Send occasional mass emails to students to tell them that cheating is wrong? These can help if they're part of larger efforts; otherwise, you're wasting your time.

What about proctored exams? They deter and reduce cheating and help instructors prove it, but proctoring companies don't decide or enforce the consequences. That's up to the institution. But it starts with faculty, who face significant challenges—policies, processes, and ethical considerations—to address cheating.

Bottom line: Technology can be a powerful tool against cheating, but it's only part of the equation. You need the right people, strategies, and processes to make it work.

> "Faculty and administrators need to focus their attention on **creating a culture that discourages cheating** as much as they do on acquiring and implementing technological resources to catch cheating students."
>
> (Malesky, 2022, p. 18)

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Cheating is a systemic and systematic issue

The reality is that cheating is rarely an isolated incident or the result of a few "bad apples." And it isn't just your students' fault; faculty practices and institution-wide issues, policies, and procedures all reinforce dishonest behavior.

Getting to the root of the culture of cheating takes a deeper understanding of why students cheat—beyond wanting good grades and because they can—and addressing the widespread challenges faced by faculty and the institution. In addition to the people, policies, processes, and technologies, you need buy-in and commitment from all involved, especially students.

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Part 2:
Why do students cheat?



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According to McCabe (2016), Simkin & McLeod (2010), and just about every study exploring this topic, there are a few common (and very predictable) reasons for student cheating, like pressure to earn good grades, lack of preparedness, and simply because the opportunity was there with little risk of getting caught. **Overall, there are no surprises here.**

Personality, values, morals, attitudes, and emotions?

Some studies suggest that morals, values, and personality traits influence cheating, but a closer look at the data shows little direct impact. While these traits impact students' intentions to cheat, they don't really reduce cheating behaviors (Ababneh et al., 2022; Johnson-Clements et al., 2024; Kasler et al., 2023).

Think of it like this: we may not intend to eat too much dessert over the holidays, but we still grab that extra slice of pie.

Neutral and disengaged attitudes are linked to academic misconduct because they make it easier for students to justify and disconnect from cheating (Lee et al., 2020; Sevnarayan & Maphoto, 2024). These attitudes are amplified in online environments, which create a sense of anonymity that reduces personal accountability and makes it easier for students to set their morals and values aside and justify dishonest behavior (Sevnarayan & Maphoto, 2024).

Test anxiety is linked to academic misconduct

The more anxious a student feels, the more likely they are to act unethically in academic settings (Eshet et al., 2024). If a student is anxious and expects a poor grade because they're unprepared, they're more likely to take risks like cheating compared to students who expect to perform well (Salgado et al., 2022).

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> “Clearly, cheating among college students is prevalent and it is even common among students who acknowledge that it is morally wrong. Morality does not seem to be a major influence on student decisions to cheat or not to cheat. **Peer disapproval of cheating and the behavior of peers are clearly much greater influences and may help explain the success of academic honor codes in reducing cheating.”**
>
> (McCabe, 1997, p. 444)

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Believing their peers are cheating

Students are more likely to cheat if they believe their peers cheat, especially when they witness it firsthand, which makes it seem like normal and acceptable behavior, and it can even lead them to justify it (Bath et al., 2014; O'Rourke et al., 2010; Tatum, 2017). Knowing that their peers are cheating is a stronger predictor of cheating than honor codes or moral values (O'Rourke et al., 2010). Peer influence also shapes students' views on cheating and acceptable behavior more than the rules set by instructors or the school (Forkuor et al., 2019).

Students following their peers isn't surprising, though, right? It isn't surprising, but its ripple effect makes academic misconduct almost certain in some situations, such as when potential academic dishonesty isn't addressed.

Thinking the instructor and institution don't care

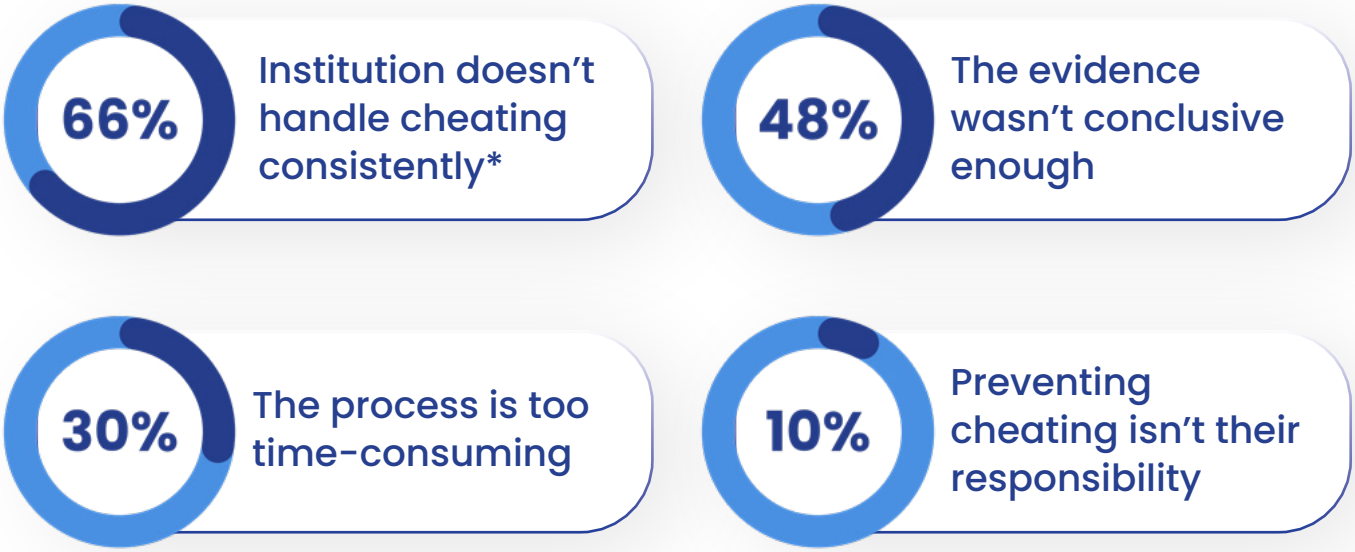
Students knowing their peers are cheating is one thing, but thinking their instructors don't care and won't do anything about it is another (Daumiller & Janke, 2020; Tatum & Schwartz, 2017; Tolman, 2017). But it's not just about getting away with it or following the crowd—it's a reflection of students' doubts that the institution and faculty even care that cheating is happening (Peterson, 2019). Why follow rules that aren't enforced?

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More about why some faculty don't address cheating

A 2020 survey of over 400 faculty from 17 institutions offered some insight: Unless the behavior is blatantly obvious, some faculty won't report it because it's a time-consuming process, and they don't believe the institution will support them (MacLeod & Eaton, 2020).

Survey findings: faculty opinions* & reasons they don't report cheating:



And only 24% believed their institution's integrity policies were effective.

A survey by Staats et al. (2009) reinforced the reasons identified by MacLeod & Eaton and added a few more reasons that faculty believe contribute to non-reporting of academic dishonesty:

- Accusing students of cheating is stressful.
- Professors lack the courage to address cheating.
- They worry the situation could escalate if a student denies cheating.
- Students could take legal action.
- A reluctance to potentially damage the student's future.

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Students view cheating differently

We usually think of cheating as intentional behaviors like peeking at another student's test or using a cell phone to look up answers during an online exam. But that isn't always the case. Sometimes, what seems like intentional cheating may stem from a misunderstanding or different view of what cheating is. Other times, students know their behavior is unethical but not technically cheating, and they find it easier to justify in situations where they don't believe it's particularly harmful or deceptive (Waltzer & Dahl, 2023).

> **"People may not perceive their act as dishonest** (think of a poker player who gets a royal flush without letting out any signs of joy: Are they being dishonest or are they simply playing well?)."
>
> (Dahl & Waltzer, 2024, p. 17)

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Cheating or teamwork?

Many students don't consider group work on take-home tests cheating; they view it more as teamwork than dishonesty.

(Carpenter et al., 2010; Forkuor et al., 2019)



Students and faculty have different opinions on the severity of certain behaviors

For the most part, students and faculty have similar views on what counts as cheating, but they don't always see eye-to-eye on the severity of certain behaviors (Pautler et al., 2013). For example, both groups agree that taking a test for another student, using unauthorized notes, and intentional plagiarism are serious offenses. But when it comes to behaviors like signing in for another student, gathering test question banks from previous years, and unintentional plagiarism, faculty usually interpret these more severely than students do.

Unintentional plagiarism

A survey of graduate and undergraduate students found that 70% view Internet resources as public information that's free to use without citing (Larkin & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2015). Students may also unintentionally plagiarize because they're trying too hard to sound academic, which often happens to doctoral students (Fatemi & Saito, 2020).

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Students see some behavior as unethical but not cheating

Students recognize that some behaviors are unethical but not cheating. For example, 65.5% indicated that making up an excuse to delay an exam or paper is unethical but not cheating (Carpenter et al., 2010). More student opinions of cheating below.

	Cheating	Unethical (not cheating)	Neither
Copying answers during an exam	**96.4%**	2.3%	1.1%
Allowing others to look at your answers during exams	**73.3%**	23.3%	3.4%
Working in groups on online exams/quizzes	**39.8%**	29%	30.2%
Asking classmates about exam questions before taking it	26.7%	**45.6%**	26.6%
Claiming you submitted an assignment when you didn't	**61.1%**	33%	4.5%
Copying homework without instructor permission	**72.9%**	22.6%	3.9%
Copying past assignments	**52.3%**	31.1%	16%
Seeing cheating but not reporting it	9.2%	**59.6**	30.3%
Storing answers in a calculator	**74.5**	15.6%	9.8%

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Rationalizing cheating as what people do in the 'real world'

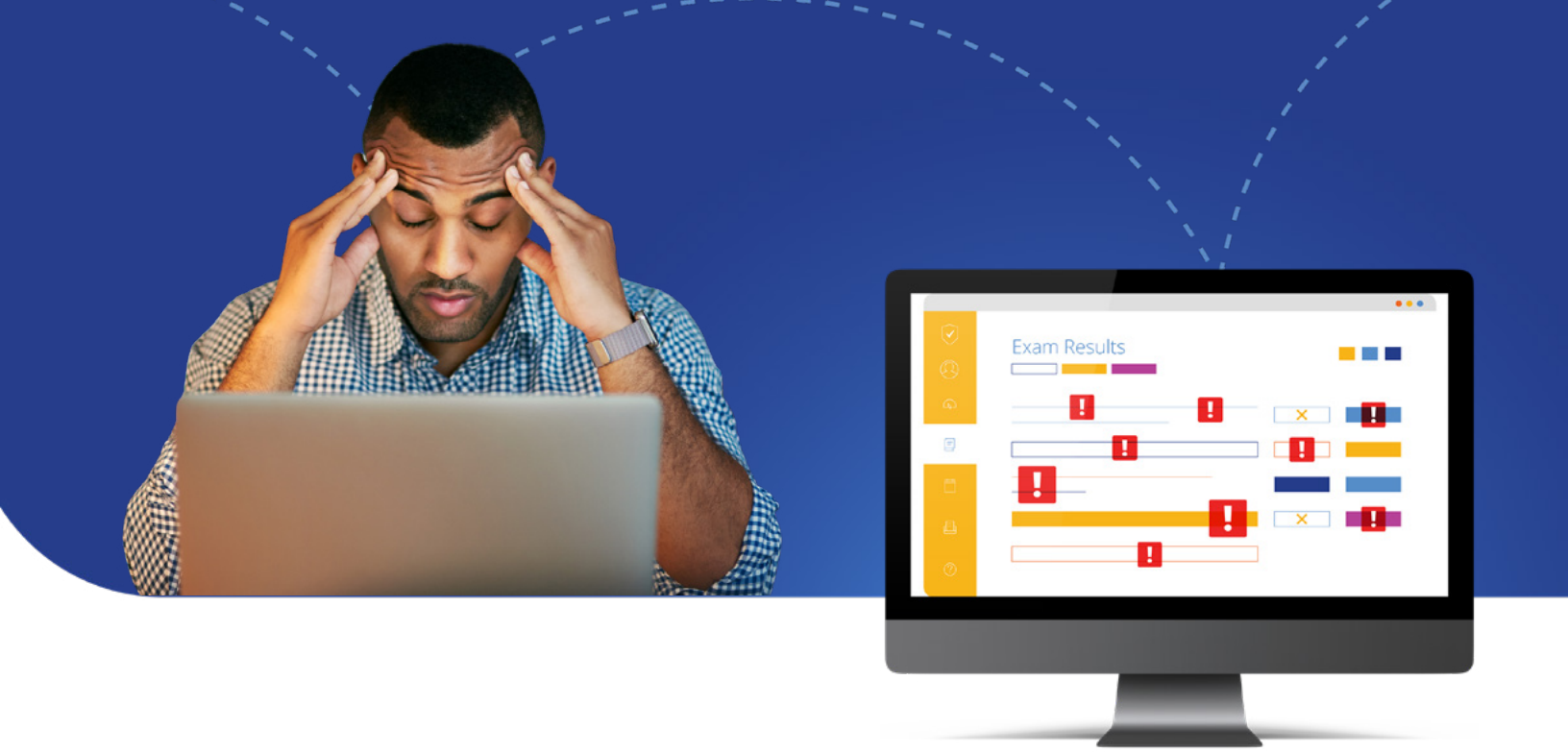
In a survey of almost 600 college students, many pointed out that people can access resources and share information in real life, so they don't see that behavior as cheating (Cole et al., 2014).

Student survey response

"Getting a good grade is more important than learning anything anymore... because when you get to the workplace, they teach you what you want to know, your diploma is just your foot in the door for the most part."

(Cole et al., 2014, p. 43)

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Courses focus on grades, not learning

Students are more likely to cheat when they feel the course focuses on grades (Anderman & Koenka, 2017). This is different from a student's personal focus on earning good grades. When a course is focused on grades, students feel like everything revolves around grades rather than learning (Anderman & Koenka, 2017; Anderman & Won, 2019). This can happen for many reasons, such as when instructors rely heavily on high-stakes exams to assess knowledge or when every exam or assignment seems to be high-stakes.

Focusing on grades also makes cheating feel more acceptable in classes students dislike or aren't interested in (Anderman & Won, 2019). This is especially troubling for instructors who typically have students taking their course as an elective.

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Part 3:
10 practical strategies to prevent cheating



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1. Encourage students to participate

Students significantly influence their peers' academic behavior, both positively and negatively, so faculty and institutions should collaborate with students to align on acceptable behavior and build a culture of academic honesty where students reject cheating and lead by example (Daumiller & Janke, 2020; Forkuor et al., 2019).

Students learn more about academic integrity when their peers teach them, and having student delegates address integrity issues and guide them through processes like requesting hearings creates a more positive, lasting impact (Malizia and Jamenson, 2018; Zivcakova et al., 2014).

Orr & Orr (2019) suggest that peer-to-peer discussions about academic misconduct can deepen students' understanding of academic integrity and recommend training student delegates to:

- Conduct respectful, supportive conversations
- Understand academic integrity policies, procedures, and processes
- Practice real-life scenarios to prepare for handling cases

Institutional leadership should continually talk to those involved in handling dishonesty cases and educating peers about academic integrity to understand how the institution can improve efforts, such as streamlining specific processes and offering students practical training and resources like citation workshops and digital guides with citation tips.

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2. Focus on learning instead of grades

Strategies to help shift the focus of your course to learning instead of grades:

- **Allow revisions to focus on mastery:** Students are less likely to cheat when they can revise and improve their work because it shifts their focus to mastering the material instead of chasing grades (Anderman & Koenka, 2017; Ruth et al., 2024).

- **Provide detailed, constructive feedback:** Providing feedback with examples, actionable tips, positive reinforcement, and supplemental resources helps students learn and improve their work.

- **Align coursework with real-world application:** Course activities that reflect real-world situations help reduce dishonest behavior (Ruth et al., 2024). For example, accounting students could create balance sheets in Excel instead of answering multiple-choice questions.

- **Consider ungraded coursework:** Not all coursework needs grades; try using ungraded alternatives like peer review, self-assessment, and group work.

These teaching strategies can help reduce students' motivation to cheat and build toward a more positive, supportive culture focused on mastery (Malesky et al., 2022). And here's some good news for instructors teaching elective courses to students who may only be there for credit: Focusing on mastery makes students less likely to rationalize cheating, even in classes they may be particularly interested in (Anderman & Won, 2019).

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3. Reduce test anxiety

Anxious students are more likely to cheat, especially when they're unprepared and/or fear bad grades, as stress increases risky shortcuts (Eshet et al., 2024; Salgado et al., 2022). Tests are stressful, and a student survey by Honorlock and a partner university found that students also worry about using test technologies. Managing these concerns can help improve performance and reduce cheating.

Tips to help reduce student test anxiety:

Set expectations: Reiterate exactly what the test covers, question formats, and any other details (time limits, grading criteria, etc.) to reduce uncertainty.

Review the rules and procedures: Use examples to clarify what's acceptable/not acceptable behavior, answer questions, and add a question at the test start to confirm understanding.

Make sure they know how any technologies work: Demostrate how to use any tools, platforms, or software they'll use during the exam.

Offer practice exams: Practice exams help students get familiar—and hopefully comfortable—with technologies and confirm their device meets requirements.

Show students how to access technical support: Provide technical support contact information and show them how to access it.

Provide information about accommodations: Discuss available accommodation options like extended time or using assistive technologies, and explain how to request them or get assistance.



Did you know?

Many college students with disabilities don't disclose them because they're unaware of available support or how to access it, and they fear stigma, judgment, and unequal treatment from peers and instructors. (Adam & Warner-Griffin, 2022; Herrick et al., 2020)

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4. Clearly define cheating

As we mentioned earlier, students struggle to understand which actions are considered cheating, which often results in academic dishonesty (Carpenter et al., 2010; Tatum & Schwartz, 2017).

Tips to create a shared definition of cheating:

Clearly define cheating: Provide detailed descriptions of what you consider cheating and share them throughout the course.

Teach citation skills: Plagiarism can be confusing—APA or MLA? When do you cite sources? What's considered common knowledge? Teach students how to cite sources and provide helpful resources in the course.

Write clear rules and instructions: Create objective exam and assignment rules, review them with students, and discuss scenarios to collaboratively define cheating.

Emphasize the value of integrity: Discuss how academic integrity contributes to academic growth and prepares them for future success instead of enforcing compliance.[1]

Remind them of the course honor code: Mention the course honor code before each exam because studies show this can reduce cheating.[2] This shouldn't be the only time you discuss the honor code though.



Did you know?

Students' self-reported cheating was significantly higher after they reviewed detailed definitions of cheating compared to their initial reports before reading the definitions. This shows how clearer definitions can impact students' perceptions of their behavior (Burrus et al., 2007).

Recommendation from: [1]Forkuor et al., 2019; [2]Zhao et al., 2023

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5. Build a connection with your students

Strong relationships between students and faculty helps build a positive classroom environment that promotes academic integrity (Stearns, 2001; Tatum et al., 2018; Tatum & Schwartz, 2017). A positive rapport with the instructor, according to studies, makes it harder for students to justify dishonesty, and nearly 30% said they wouldn't cheat to avoid disappointing their instructors.

This doesn't mean that instructors need to treat students as friends; it's simply about communicating well and being responsive, respectful, empathetic, and fair.

Tips to start building a connection with your students:

- Ask for their input on your course honor code.
- Encourage them to ask questions.
- Set clear expectations about what you expect from them and what they can expect from you.
- Use inclusive language in all communications, whether it's during a live discussion, test questions, or even syllabus language.
- Offer different ways to communicate with you, whether it's speaking during live discussions, asking questions through chat, or sending an email, etc.

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6. Proctor online exams

While online exam proctoring effectively reduces cheating[1], its impact on exam scores is less significant and straightforward than it might seem. Unproctored exam scores are usually higher than proctored ones—sometimes by a lot[2], but more often, the gap is relatively small[3].

Shouldn't unproctored exam scores ALWAYS be higher if students cheat?
Not always. Preparation, difficulty, and the environment can play a part.

Students study harder for proctored exams
Part of the reason is that students tend to study harder for proctored exams because they know they can't use other resources (Howard, 2020). This extra effort, Howard says, helps their scores match those of unproctored students using other resources.

Preparing for proctored exams may improve recall
Students who took proctored exams scored higher on recall tests months later, which some studies suggest was because they prepared more thoroughly than those who took unproctored exams (Howard, 2020; Zhang, 2024).

These findings are consistent with responses from a student survey Honorlock conducted with Coastal Alabama Community College, where over 1,500 students shared that Honorlock helps them prepare effectively and stay focused:

- "... keeps me focused on my work."
- "... challenges you to really try your best."
- "... keeps me focused and not think[ing] about distractions."
- "... keeps me in the right head space."
- "... keeps me focused on finishing the test."
- "... helps me focus more and reduces the urge to cheat on things."
- "... helps me focus more since I'm in my own environment."
- "... gives me the flexibility that I need as a student-athlete."

[1] (Morin et al., 2022)
[2] (Alessio et al., 2017, 2018; Gibson & Kuhn, 2024)
[3] (Howard, 2020; Hylton, 2016)

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Exam difficulty matters
Another reason is that it depends on the difficulty of the exam (Howard, 2020). On easier exams, looking up answers offers little advantage, so score differences are smaller. However, on harder exams, benefit more from outside resources, which leads to wider gaps in exam scores.

Better grades on unproctored exams aren't just because of cheating
Other factors contribute to higher scores on unproctored exams, like question formats and testing in a quiet, distraction-free environment (Zhang, 2024). In other words, we can't lose sight of the fact that many students prepare diligently for every exam regardless of it being proctored, the difficulty, or the environment.

Students have mixed feelings about proctoring

Negative opinions stem from privacy concerns and ease of use
Han et al. (2023) found that students' negative opinions of proctoring mostly relate to data privacy and the stress of using software. And who can blame them? No one wants to deal with software that's more difficult than the exam itself.

Opinions are more positive when proctoring software is easy to use
Students reported greater satisfaction when proctoring software is easy to use (Han et al., 2023). The previously mentioned student survey reinforced this, with many students reporting ease of use as their favorite thing about Honorlock's proctoring solution, they described it as, "very easy to use and not a hassle," and "user-friendly, easy to use, and works quickly."

Madi Kuokos, a graduate of the University of Florida, echoed the student survey responses, saying that Honorlock reduced her test anxiety and added, "Other online proctoring systems felt really invasive and super glitchy to the point where they would affect the performance of my computer... Honorlock never did anything like that."



Want to learn more about proctoring software and how it works?

EXPLORE



Students appreciate that proctoring creates a level playing field
According to plenty of the survey responses (just a few below), students appreciate that Honorlock creates a fair test environment and proves they know their stuff:

- "I know I can take my tests without worrying about others cheating and that they have to try as hard as me to succeed."
- "With Honorlock, I know that all students are on an even playing field."
- "Honorlock makes you accountable for actually learning the material, not just cheating your way through."
- "I like the fact that Honorlock helps students remain accountable for doing their own work."
- "Honorlock proves to your instructor that you are not cheating, even if they think that you are."
- "[With] Honorlock, you can prove that you did not cheat on a test so the teacher does not think you are lying."

Finding the right proctoring solution

Basic proctoring features like identity verification and browser lockdown are good starting points, but those won't stop students from using cell phones—the most common way students try to cheat on proctored exams—to look up answers on the internet, including your test questions which may be leaked word for word, and it won't prevent them from using generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Claude.

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Types of online proctoring

The test experience is drastically different depending on the type of online proctoring—some inherently create a more stressful experience for students before and during exams.

Type	Overview	Pros & Cons
Automated (AI)	AI monitors behavior & flag potential cheating.	Generally speaking, it's cost effective & there's no exam scheduling, but no human oversight means overflagging & distractions
Live	Human proctors watch multiple students in real time & intervene if they witness misconduct.	Offers human oversight & real-time intervention, but it's expensive, causes scheduling hassles, & students don't like being watched.
Browser Lockdown	Restricts access to other sites/applications & blocks keyboard shortcuts.	Cost effective, no scheduling, & easy to set up, but it doesn't prevent cheating.
Hybrid	Combines automated & live proctoring with a browser lock. AI flags misconduct for a proctor to review & intervene if needed.	Cost effective, no scheduling, offers human oversight without constant watching, & less stressful for students, but some pricing models can be expensive.
Record & Review	Institution staff or a proctoring service reviews recordings after exams are over.	Less stressful for students & offers human oversight, but there's no real-time intervention & it's expensive.

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7. Write objective rules and instructions

As discussed throughout this article, confusion and different interpretations of cheating often lead to dishonest behavior. One piece of the puzzle to help reduce confusion and align on what's considered cheating is to write objective rules and instructions for tests and assignments. Writing these can be difficult, though; they need to be comprehensive but also clear and concise, which is a tough balancing act.

Here's an example of an online test rule that initially seems clear:
Your desk must be clear of all items except the device you use to take the test.

The problem? It doesn't account for situations where a student's only option is to place their device on the floor or a kitchen counter, for example, instead of a desk or table. Students might argue, "I was at a table, not a desk," or, "The rule says 'your desk,' but I don't own this desk."

These examples may seem far-fetched, but they show how even the smallest word choices can be exploited. And if nuances in word choices didn't matter, attorneys and contract specialists would have much more free time.

Here's a more comprehensive version of that test rule: The testing area and any surface your device is placed on must be clear of all items except the device used to complete the test. This includes books, papers, electronics, and other personal belongings.

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8. Support faculty & remove friction from the reporting process

Two faculty surveys found that they don't report cheating because it's so time-intensive, and they don't believe their institution handles cases of academic dishonesty consistently or effectively, all contributing to faculty feeling unsupported (MacLeod & Eaton, 2020; Staats et al., 2009).

Start with a tangible fix: removing friction from the reporting process.
Doing this the right way will help position the institution to support faculty AND students better.

Survey faculty and staff who handle cases of misconduct

Survey faculty and any staff involved in handling academic misconduct cases to figure out where the process falls short and gather ideas and input to improve.

Consider their input and review every step of the reporting process with these initial steps and considerations in mind:

- **Identify bottlenecks:** What specific steps are causing delays and why?
- **Revamp or remove obstacles:** Are there outdated steps or unnecessary requirements that can be changed or removed?
- **Identify quick fixes and long-term changes:** Start with quick fixes while planning and working toward larger, long-term improvements.
- **Leverage technology:** Can any technologies reduce manual work and streamline processes?

  Example: Use electronic forms to eliminate paperwork, scheduling software to automate meetings, proctoring tools to collect evidence, such as video recordings of misconduct, etc.
- **Collect feedback:** After making changes, ask those involved if the reporting process has improved and what still needs work.

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9. Address cheating every time it happens

Faculty understand the importance of addressing cheating but still hesitate to act on it when it happens (MacLeod & Eaton, 2020). However, cheating decreases when faculty address all instances of dishonesty (Tatum & Schwartz, 2017).

When instructors ignore cheating, students start to believe they don't care, making cheating more frequent and creating a culture where dishonesty feels normal (Shu et al., 2011; Tolman, 2017).

> "If the movement [goal] is to improve education, then issues of online course cheating must be addressed...The issues and perceptions of **academic integrity in online education must be addressed by universities in order to maintain their reputation as high-quality educational institutions** while also growing their online course offerings."
>
> (Peterson, 2019, p. 30)

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Sure, dealing with cheating is time-consuming and even disheartening, but what's the alternative?

Some instructors avoid addressing cheating because of the stress and anxiety it causes (MacLeod & Eaton, 2020; Staats et al., 2009).

But it's just as tough on students, even though some may see that as part of the consequences of breaking the rules. But is that still true when a student cheated—let's say they didn't cite their sources—but genuinely didn't realize it? Maybe they were never taught how to and when to cite them. Either way, **you have to address it or everyone loses.**

These conversations are as delicate to conduct as they are tough to prepare for. But they don't have to be as negative and stressful as they seem.

What do you say though? **Better yet, what SHOULDN'T you say?** What evidence do you need? What even counts as evidence? Do you email them first?

This guide has everything you need to effectively talk to students about cheating—even email templates and talk tracks, depending on the situation.

> **"Addressing suspected cheating has an impact beyond that individual case**... When instructors consistently address cheating, it helps reduce future misconduct, and it sends a clear message to students and their peers that academic integrity is valued at their institution."
>
> - Jordan Adair, VP of Product at Honorlock

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10. Emphasize academic integrity policies and honor codes

Aside from not wanting to be the reason another student gets in trouble, students often avoid reporting other students for cheating because they're unsure of school policies, reporting procedures, potential consequences, what constitutes a violation, or the student's motivations for cheating (Waltzer et al., 2022).

Academic integrity policies and honor codes won't stop cheating altogether, but they can help reduce it to an extent. Sometimes, even just mentioning them before an exam reduces cheating as students may think twice about their actions and potential consequences (Malesky, 2022; Tatum & Schwartz, 2017).

Most faculty are familiar with their institution's academic integrity policy, but many only pay attention to it after incidents of student cheating or when they receive reminders to include policy details in their syllabi (MacLeod et al., 2020). But they need to be more than a document on a school's website or something you quickly mentioned before a test. They need to be consistently embedded into larger efforts that influence and encourage a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

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For faculty

Discuss integrity policies regularly: Review and discuss academic integrity policies and class honor codes with students and link to them throughout your courses (syllabi, announcements, discussion boards, etc.).

Be open and genuine: Have open, genuine conversation with students about why you care about academic integrity and the imapct it has on their education. Try sharing a bit about yourself. Tell them about your values and experiences, or even a relevant story (bonus points if it's funny) to help them understand your perspective.

Assign student delegates: These delegates can help educate other students about integrity policies and lead peer discussions about academic honesty.

Quick confirmation question: Add a question (graded or ungraded) at the start of a test where students acknowledge that they understand the instructions, rules, and policies. This is especially helpful when recent changes/updates have been made.



For institutions

Build faculty and staff alignment: Hold semesterly training, require policy acknowledgments, and centralize resources to keep faculty and staff aligned on integrity policies and updates.

Collect faculty feedback: Survey faculty (anonymously) to understand what questions and suggestions they have for integrity policies and challenges they face in addressing cheating and handling it formally.

Train your faculty and staff on how to talk to students about cheating: Provide resources like templated talk tracks for different situations, prewritten email communications, and tips for handling reactions. Hold workshops with mock sessions for practice.

Learn from student delegates: Talk to those involved in handling dishonesty cases and educating peers about academic integrity to understand how the institution can improve efforts, such as streamlining specific processes and offering students practical training and resources like citation workshops and digital guides with citation tips.



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No matter what strategies, policies, or technologies you have in place, there's no cheat-proof system that lasts forever. Students are resourceful, and technology never stops evolving. That's why it's not just about the tools and processes—it's the people behind them. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students working together make the real difference.

When everyone aligns, a culture of academic integrity emerges, where cheating becomes the exception, and learning comes first.

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