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So You're Thinking of Becoming a Cheat

Sure, you're only cheating yourself, and you'll most likely get caught ... but what happens if you get away with it?

by [Brandon Burt](#)

Life's so unfair. If you had the brains the gods gave a turnip, you could sail through four, six, or even eight years of college without firing as much as a neuron—like the geeks you used to laugh at and/or beat the s—t out of in gym class.

Well it's the geeks who are laughing now. Your professor grades on a curve, the geeks are beating the s—t out of the class average and PE is no longer a required subject. Looks like you have to resort to duplicitous tactics.

That means cheating, genius.

It also means, at the very least, you'll experience guilt and self-loathing not felt since adolescence. You'll develop a sketchy, easily startled, eye-darting demeanor.

And, once the professor finds out, it's all over: Your grade will be docked or you'll get bounced from class. You might even have to appear before the student behavior committee, in which case you may as well just toss the whole education thing and start looking for work in the wonderful world of telemarketing.

“But, hey,” you think. “That won't happen to me. I'm too crafty/clever/cute to get caught.” Very well. If you must embark on an academic career with no intention of opening a book, you should at least know the consequences.

COPYING

What it is: The most basic and least creative form of cheating, copying requires little more than the ability to move your eyeballs without moving your head.

Benefits: If you copy consistently, you're at least guaranteed not to have the lowest grade in the class.

Pitfalls: Worst-case scenario? You tie for last place—be sure and sit next to one of the smart kids. Note: Now that you're in college, the smart kids don't always look like the smart kids you remember from high school. These days, taped-together glasses may actually signify a learning disability.

It only works if ... your professor is unobservant and self-absorbed enough not to notice your “imperceptible” moves.

If you don't get caught ... you've got a bright future as a TV studio exec.

PLAGIARISM

What it is: Basically the time-release version of copying, plagiarism could be the deadliest of academic sins. If you don't understand more than half the term paper you just “wrote,” chances are you plagiarized it.

Benefits: Since you don't know enough of the subject matter to formulate an original idea, what've you got to lose?

Pitfalls: Anybody who's been published in a book or academic journal is, by definition, a better writer than you. That means you're pretty much limited to materials listed in Google search results. Do professors know how to use Google, too? Only one way to find out!

It only works if ... you do it right. Learn how to paste unformatted text in Microsoft Word. According to assistant professor Alex Halavais at Quinnipiac University, “When I am reading a document in black, Times New Roman, 12pt, and it suddenly changes to blue, Helvetica, 10pt ... I'm going to guess that something odd may be going on.” (See that? That's called an “attribution.” Not a plagiarist!)

If you don't get caught ... at least you can start your own blog.

GRADEGRUBBING

What it is: Emotionally manipulating the faculty into giving you special treatment. This requires that you have a near-sociopathic lack of empathy for your professor and classmates alike, as well as no personal pride whatsoever.

Benefits: If you can cry on cue, remember: Tears always help, especially for male students. Uncontrolled sobbing always makes a professor uncomfortable, and he or she will say just about anything to get you out of the office.

Pitfalls: The faculty will laugh at you behind your back.

It only works if ... used sparingly. You know the score—you'll run out of grandmothers pretty quickly, so the maximum number of funerals per professor/per term is two. But even if you

remember to change up your personal emergencies (boyfriend/girlfriend has a terminal illness, your hard drive crashed, etc.) it won't be long before you develop a reputation as a drama queen.

If you don't get caught ... you could become vice chair of the Utah Republican Party, or even president of the Sandy Chamber of Commerce.

http://www.slweekly.com/editorial/2006/bts_7_2006-08-17.cfm