

University Policy for Using Online Plagiarism Detection Tools

When using online plagiarism detection tools like TURNITIN, the University Education Council has determined that **faculty must inform students** that they are using an online tool to help detect and deter plagiarism.

SAMPLE STATEMENT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SYLLABUS

You are responsible for being familiar with the university standard for academic honesty and plagiarism. Please see the CMU Student Handbook for information. In order to deter and detect plagiarism, online tools and other resources are used in this class.

The mission of the Office of Technology for Education is to support faculty in the selection, implementation, and evaluation of educational technologies. As part of this mission, we continually monitor and assess the use of educational technologies on campus so that we can understand and better meet the needs of our faculty and students. Periodically, we may ask for information on the usability and value of the Turnitin tool. Your comments are vital to the evaluation of the tool and will help determine the future role that Turnitin will play at Carnegie Mellon.

Feel free to contact us if you would like to provide comments or suggestions.

NEED HELP USING TURNITIN?

Contact us at:

ote@andrew.cmu.edu

412-268-9090

Thank you,
Office of Technology for Education
Carnegie Mellon University

NEED HELP USING TURNITIN?

Contact us at:

ote@andrew.cmu.edu

412-268-9090

Office of Technology for Education
Carnegie Mellon University

Guidelines for Using TURNITIN

Although TURNITIN is primarily designed to detect plagiarism, it can also be used as an instructional and educational tool.

DETECTION TOOL

Using Turnitin as a detection tool can save you time searching for the plagiarism source and can provide you with specific information about the nature and extent of the plagiarism. Once papers have been submitted and analyzed, the originality report presents you with a similarity index and the URLs to the source sites.

WARNING. The similarity index alone cannot determine plagiarism.

Turnitin cannot detect if a student has included the appropriate references for the text that is identified as similar to some other document. A paper with a high similarity rating needs to be examined to determine if plagiarism has occurred. The similarity rating can help you identify suspicious papers and the similar passages but the instructor or grader will need to further analyze the papers to make an informed judgment.

INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL

Turnitin can provide the instructor with valuable information about students understanding of plagiarism and standards for citing work. Many students, especially freshmen, may have very narrow definitions of plagiarism, believing that re-ordering, paraphrasing, or inserting portions of another text into their own is not plagiarism. By examining the originality reports and comparing the student's paper to the source documents, an instructor can get a clearer model of the student's understanding of plagiarism and then provide targeted instruction addressing these shortcomings.

EDUCATIONAL TOOL

Turnitin can also provide information to students to help them evaluate the originality of their own work. Turnitin gives instructors the option of allowing students to view their own originality reports. By comparing their paper with the source papers and noticing how superficial changes (e.g. re-ordering) does not have much impact on the similarity ratings, students can develop a better understanding of plagiarism and detect where they have forgotten to cite a source. Furthermore, allowing students to repeatedly submit papers in an effort to reduce their similarity rating can ultimately result in them writing more, and eventually writing their own paper. The additional effort required to "beat" the system may act as a deterrent in the future.