Teach Your Students to Avoid Plagiarism

Overview

It is easy to assume that students entering our programs will know what constitutes plagiarism, but in reality, not all students have learned about the importance of submitting original work and how to properly cite their sources. Even students who report feeling confident in their understanding of plagiarism may not fully understand or recognize instances of plagiarism that are less straightforward than simply copying another student's work. Here are some tips on how to ensure your students are aware of plagiarism and know how to avoid it:

- **Identify the causes of plagiarism in your students**. It is easy to assume that students plagiarize because they don't want to do the work, but often, plagiarism occurs because of a misunderstanding about what plagiarism is and is not. At SPS, where we have a large number of international students, these misunderstandings may also be cultural. If you notice students committing plagiarism, ask them about their thought process and why they chose to complete the work in the manner they did.

- **Take time to teach students about plagiarism**. Students cannot avoid plagiarism if they do not fully understand what it is. Take time in class (or provide homework assignments outside of class) to teach students about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. The Online Writing Lab at Purdue (http://owl.purdue.edu) has many resources on guiding discussions about plagiarism.

- **Discuss the importance of using their own words**. Some students may have the mindset that when they copy and paste text directly from a source, they are, in fact, providing the *correct* answer; the authors of that text are clearly the experts, and so their words are the authority on the topic. It is important that students understand that their goal is to share their own perspectives rather than simply to report what the author says.

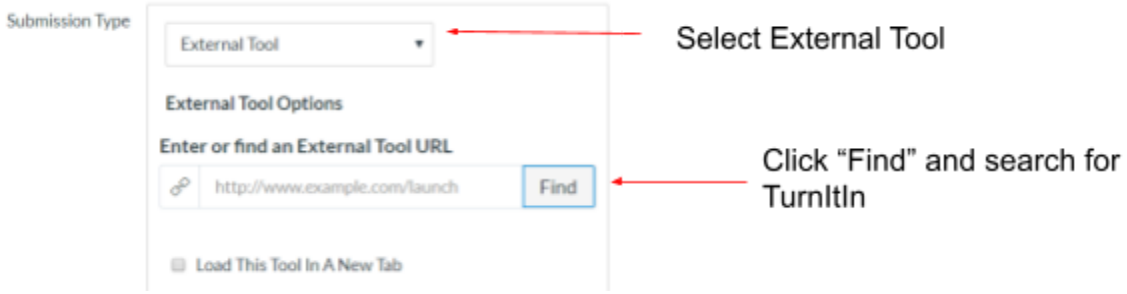
- **Help students practice paraphrasing.** One driving factor for plagiarism is that students may not feel comfortable enough describing external sources in their own words. Take time in class to ask students to explain concepts or sources themselves. For example, if your class is reviewing a case study, have students get together in pairs and give each other a brief (1-2 sentence) summary of the case. Then, have a few students share their summaries with the class.

Teach Your Students to Avoid Plagiarism

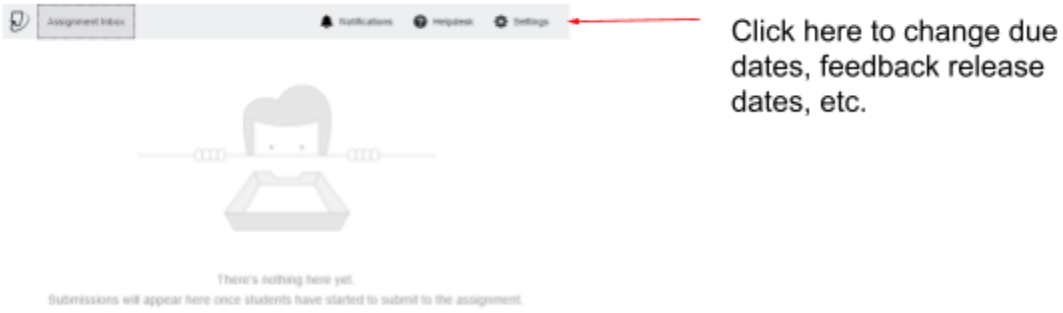
- **Have students submit work through TurnItIn.** TurnItIn is a tool that compares student papers to texts stored in several databases, allowing it to detect overlap between student work and other identified sources. This is helpful in detecting whether students are intentionally plagiarizing by buying papers online or copying and pasting directly from texts, but can also be helpful in demonstrating to students the importance of avoiding *patchwriting*- taking the author's words but making a few minor changes so it's not a direct quote. When enabled, TurnItIn will mark similarities so students can see how much of the original author's thoughts they are using even though they are attempting to make it their own. Instructions on how to enable TurnItIn are below:

  How To Set Up Assignments to Use TurnItIn

  1. Find the Assignment you wish to use with TurnItIn and click Edit.
  2. Scroll down to the Submission Type box and select External Tool
  3. Then, click the Find button and select TurnItIn (see picture below)



  4. Scroll to the bottom of the page and hit Save.
  5. This box should appear on the bottom of the Assignment:



  This is where you will see students' papers (and their TurnItIn scores) as they submit them. You can click the Settings button at the top to adjust due dates and feedback release dates and play around with other settings.