

Academic Integrity in Science

What is academic integrity and why are we concerned about it?

Academic integrity means being honest about your intellectual work. In the context of science this means that you assert that written work you submit for the course is a product of your intellectual effort and not the work of someone else. The written materials you prepare for science class are a method of demonstrating your knowledge of the facts and your understanding of the concepts of the field of science. If you use the words and ideas of another as your own you are not being honest and you have only demonstrated the other person's knowledge and understanding, not your own.

Working with a learning partner, as a member of a study group, or as part of a tutor/tutee relationship can be an effective and efficient method of learning science or almost any subject. Interacting with other people is a natural way for humans to learn, but each person must construct her or his own knowledge in the process. In science courses we encourage you to work and study together and will provide you with opportunities in discussion and lab sections to do this. In addition, you will be asked to prepare written material in the form of homework assignments, lab reports, and if you choose to participate in them, extra credit projects. All of these projects provide a framework for group study and discussion. Because your written materials produced as an outcome of these interactions are also a means of evaluating your personal knowledge, the topic of academic integrity becomes an issue.

The Belmont Hill School has specific policies and regulations concerning academic integrity. The academic reputation of the school is founded in the academic integrity of its faculty and students. Infractions of these regulations are taken seriously and can result in severe consequences, including expulsion from Belmont Hill. As a student of the school it is your responsibility to become familiar with, understand, and abide by the Honor Code. It should be noted that ignorance of these regulations is not a defense in cases of infringement of the rules of academic integrity.

How to learn with others and maintain your academic integrity.

1. Do not copy the material of others without giving credit:

The use of computers makes copying and pasting electronic text and images easy and tempting. When you do this without crediting the source you are essentially stealing the work of another and are not demonstrating your understanding of the subject matter. After reading and synthesizing the facts and ideas of other sources write your own interpretation of the material. If you need to quote someone else's work to support your own ideas use quotation marks to let the reader know you are quoting and provide a reference for the quoted work. If you are using text from a web site, provide the URL of the material, or if you are preparing an electronic document, provide a direct web link to your source in addition to using quotation marks. Most importantly, include your own interpretation so that you clearly communicate your understanding of the quoted material.

2. Do not paraphrase the materials of others without credit.

It is tempting to paraphrase the work of another person (text book, journal, website, another student, etc.). You should not use the facts, ideas, illustrations, or organization of another person and simply change a few words in an attempt to make it appear to be your own. Organize your understanding of a subject and prepare your answer in the form of a "mini-lesson" in your own words or illustrations meant to explain the ideas to the reader. If you paraphrase part of the text book, other print source, or web site as supporting evidence of your ideas, provide a reference for the paraphrased section so the reader knows which ideas are yours and which belong to someone else. These paraphrased sections should be a small portion of your work. Clearly communicate your understanding by including your own interpretation of the paraphrased material.

If you work with another student or a study group, do not write your answers to take home quizzes, homework assignments, or lab reports together. Meet together and discuss questions and share ideas to help each other understand the material, but then INDIVIDUALLY reflect on your discussions and thoroughly understand those ideas before constructing your own answers in writing. DO NOT divide up the questions among the members of your group, write answers to your portion, and then share them with your study group to copy or paraphrase.

3. Do not become a victim of another's lack of academic integrity.

Just as it is considered wrong to copy the work of another, it is considered to be just as wrong to allow another student to copy or paraphrase your work. Do not give or loan your work to another student. You may not intend to allow the other person to copy your work, but that might very well happen. If it does happen, both of you will be subject to disciplinary action.