

Cheaters Gonna Cheat

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In discussions surrounding artificial intelligence (AI), there is a widespread acknowledgment of its transformative impact on education. However, this agreement usually ends with the influence of AI on academic integrity and cheating. While some argue that AI may exacerbate cheating, my stance, which is shared by others, argues that the inclination to cheat existed long before the advent of AI. Surprisingly, there are indications that the introduction of AI has contributed to a reduction in cheating within the educational sphere. AI-enhanced tools not only simplify the process of catching plagiarism but have also proven effective in curbing less obvious forms of cheating. My perspective challenges the notion that AI encourages an increase in cheating, and instead emphasizes its potential role in fostering a more accountable and honest learning environment.

Education serves as a foundation for personal and societal growth, and degrees earned through earnest means carry incredible value in the workforce. Degrees are not merely pieces of paper; they symbolize a person's knowledge, skills, and dedication. Employers rely on these credentials not only as indicators of a candidate's competence but also for suitability in a potential position. As such, cheating calls to question the integrity of academic achievements and poses a significant threat to the sanctity of the education system by jeopardizing the trust that employers place in educational institutions. When someone resorts to cheating they compromise the authenticity of their qualifications, rendering the entire education system susceptible to skepticism. This erosion of trust can have far-reaching consequences, negatively impacting the workforce and the broader societal perception of the education system as a whole. Upholding the sanctity of the education system is crucial to ensuring that degrees continue to serve as meaningful and reliable indicators of a person's ethics and capabilities.

From borrowing and copying a friend's homework, to the age of the internet where answers to most school problems are readily available with a simple Google search, cheating has been prevalent, and easy even, since the dawn of schooling. In the early days of cheating students may have written some answers on their hands, or hid a small note with answers. Cheating has been commonplace in schools in many different ways and for quite a long time. In a report from 2001 created by Donald McCabe, the "founding father" of research on academic integrity, it was found that 77% of students had gotten questions and answers from someone who had already taken the test, while another 68% turned in work copied by another person (Cheating). A follow-on study conducted by McCabe from 2002 to 2015, prior

to the introduction of AI, found that “62% of undergrads admit to cheating on written assignments at least once” (Statistics on Cheating).

While these practices are probably still in use, cheating has evolved in many ways due to the advancement of the internet. There are many “flashcard” sites that mirror exact copies of quizzes and tests, allowing for students to quickly type in a question from a quiz and get their answers immediately. A student may also simply search for a subject that has already been covered, and copy nearly word for word into their essay and hide it by changing out words. The ability to cheat has always been available, and while AI does simplify the process that doesn’t mean that more students are using it.

While my perspective emphasizes the potential positive impact of AI on reducing cheating in education, others argue that the emergence of AI may not necessarily lead to a decline in academic dishonesty, but rather introduces new challenges. Skeptics say that the tools designed to catch plagiarism and detect cheating could prompt a cat-and-mouse game, where students and AI models continuously adapt to outsmart evolving AI detection algorithms. The rapid development of technology may outpace the enhancement of detection tools, creating a struggle for educators to keep up with the new innovative cheating methods. To combat this, educators need to be vigilant in coming up with systems that can catch this level of cheating.

One possible solution, if the school enforced the use of the Google Doc ecosystem, is to use the browser extension DraftBack. This extension allows the teacher to view edits made by students who share their documents as a “live” recorded document, which would allow teachers to see if large portions of text were added at a single time or if it was typed out thoughtfully. It has the added benefit of giving teachers insight into how their students think and write. This is only one example of a way for the education system to adapt and overcome the challenges facing academic dishonesty. Continuous research and adaptation of detection mechanisms to stay ahead of emerging tactics, which ultimately upkeeps the integrity of the educational environment, is vital to maintaining the sanctity of the education system and the benefits it provides.

As AI becomes more commonplace, there is concern that the temptation for students to exploit its abilities for academic shortcuts may grow, potentially leading to an increase in cheating. Recent studies, however, provide insights that challenge some of these concerns. In a question and answer session between scholars at Stanford University, Denise Pope reported, “[the] percentage has stayed about the same or even decreased slightly in our 2023 surveys, when we added questions specific to new AI

technologies, like ChatGPT..." (Spector). This isn't likely due to not knowing about the platform either, as it has gone viral on many different social media platforms in use by youth today. In a study from November 2023 conducted by Pew Research, they found that while 66% of teens have heard of ChatGPT only 19% of them have used it for school work (Sidoti). That is significantly lower than the percentage of students copying off of their friends or cheating on their tests. In addition to students not reporting to have used ChatGPT or other language models, the advancement of plagiarism detection tools has made cheating a scary prospect for many low-effort cheaters.

While there are many ways that students can use ChatGPT and other language models to build an essay for them, AI has a knack for repeating itself. For example, If prompted to build an essay around football, many of the same idioms and phrases that the language has pulled from its databases would be used to build another essay around the softness of cats. In addition, these language models will typically use a general model for building sentences which makes it easier for teachers to detect. A quick Google search for AI detection tools will net many different results, ranging from relatively "simple" plagiarism checking tools down to syntax detection that can specify the model used. Though, the latter is developing and still has many false positives.

Many of these tools are readily available to anyone, and in some cases are offered for free. Within the grammar checking app, Grammarly, there are plagiarism detection tools built in for teachers to be able to use. In a study conducted by Harvard University, it was found that these tools are extremely effective, and "...[Harvard's detection tools] were able to detect fake text with an accuracy of over 72%..." (Gehrmann et al. 112). As AI develops so will detection tools, and Harvard likely isn't alone in developing its own AI detection. Therefore, while teachers may be worried that the use of these AI programs will make their students lazy, tools are becoming more available to deter would-be cheaters and catch those who make the mistake of actually following through.

In conclusion, the integration of AI into education has undeniably reshaped the learning landscape, prompting debates on its impact on academic integrity and cheating. While there are concerns that AI might facilitate dishonest practices, the historical prevalence of cheating suggests that such behaviors already existed independently of technological advancements. Some indicators have emerged saying that the introduction of AI has contributed to a reduction in cheating, possibly attributed to enhanced plagiarism detection tools and an increased awareness of the consequences associated with AI-enabled dishonesty. The perspective presented challenges the assumption that AI inherently encourages cheating, highlighting its potential for a more accountable and honest learning environment. As

technology continues to evolve the proactive use of AI detection tools coupled with educators' vigilance provides a promising deterrent against academic dishonesty, reinforcing the importance of maintaining integrity in education.

Works Cited

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