

Disrupting plagiarism

Educator tips for implementing and maintaining an effective honour code

After creating an honour code for your classroom or introducing the honour code held by your institution, it's imperative to implement that code effectively and then maintain it well throughout the school year. Your students will have a better chance of truly internalising all aspects of academic integrity if you take time to meaningfully introduce the concepts of the honour code, as well as their implications on students' work within your classroom. Consider the following tips to help you effectively implement and maintain the honour code in your classroom.



Implementation

■ Be explicit and objective.

Clearly introduce and explore the points of the honour code. Your students will better understand and internalise the values and consequences of the honour code when you are clear with them about those details from the very beginning. Be sure that all language in the honour code is as clear as possible, and ensure that students actually understand what each detail means. Consider activities that ask students to restate the details of the honour code, as well as activities that present examples of work that meets and neglects the honour code.

■ Ensure clear understanding of all parties involved.

Be sure that everyone involved—students, educators, aides, parents, etc.—fully understand all elements of the honour code. Open a channel for direct communication, like a discussion board, email address or regular “town hall” meeting, if and when anyone has questions regarding the honour code. Address any concerns or questions quickly and accurately to ensure that everyone is always working from a space of complete understanding.

■ Engage students from the very start.

Include students in the creation & implementation of the honour code as much as possible. When students feel any sense of ownership of the honour code, there is a greater chance that they will carry that ownership and responsibility throughout their work. Consider using [Building and maintaining a classroom honour code: A 4-part collaborative activity](#) to work together with students to create an effective classroom honour code.

■ Publicly and visibly post the honour code.

Print a large poster version of your honour code or write it out on poster paper that can be displayed prominently in your classroom. In virtual environments, post a copy of the honour code in an easily accessible space online, such as on your class homepage or wherever students regularly access their assignments. Be sure that students are aware of its presence and can access the details at any time. Also ensure the honour code is included in the student handbook, syllabus for class or any other assignment details when the honour code is in effect. Prominent inclusion in each of these spaces will make it apparent to students that the honour code should be referenced throughout the year for all assignments.

■ Teach effective research skills.

Use the [Research Strategies lesson](#) and [Research Planning worksheet](#) to help teach your students effective research skills. When students are equipped with the appropriate skills to help them navigate the research process effectively, they will be less likely to resort to neglecting the honour code in the work that they complete.

Maintenance

■ Check in with students regularly.

Dedicate a quick 5-10 minute conversation at least weekly to check in with students regarding the honour code. Do they have any questions regarding how the honour code relates to the work that they are currently doing? Have any gaps in the honour code been revealed that need to be addressed? Are there any hiccups in the process that need attention? Checking in on the process regularly will ensure that it is effectively maintained throughout the school year, and will keep it top-of-mind for students.

■ Make the honour code a living thing—considered and discussed with all assignments, not just the one big research project.

Take time to discuss what the honour code means to each and every assignment when reviewing the assignment's expectations. Detailing how the elements of the honour code relate to each assignment will help to clarify how it applies to every aspect of class, reducing any confusion in students.

■ Teach and monitor effective research skills.

Teach, monitor and review students' research skills regularly. Catch any misunderstandings or poor practices early, discuss those concepts with students, and reteach if necessary to ensure students are demonstrating effective practices that will support the honour code. Consider asking students to complete the [Where did I go wrong? Self-assessment worksheet](#) to help identify those concepts where students may need further instruction.

■ Handle violations efficiently and effectively.

When violations of the honour code occur, handle them efficiently and effectively. Remain objective and follow the protocol set out in the honour code, but also adopt a formative approach that teaches students the value of review and revision after necessary consequences have been prescribed.

Remote learning considerations

■ Be more explicit than you think is necessary.

Because you won't have many opportunities to clarify things for students in a remote setting, be more explicit than you think is necessary. Include detailed explanations, examples with annotations and frequently asked questions that can help students navigate the honour code in their remote learning environment. Post these resources in one consistent place where students know they can always access them.

■ Engage students in discussions about the honour code and how it applies to their work specifically in a remote setting.

Hold discussions that are dedicated to exploring the honour code and how it applies to students' work in the remote learning environment. Address their questions and concerns, and provide examples of effective work and work that risks violating the honour code. When students have clear distinctions between right and wrong in the remote setting, there will be less chance of misunderstanding and violation of the honour code in the work that students complete.

■ Have a dedicated space for questions regarding the honour code where students can reach you with questions--discussion board, chat channel, etc.

Consider setting up a discussion board, chat channel, special email address, etc. where students can post questions or concerns about the honour code. Monitor this space regularly so you can react to these questions quickly and effectively.

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