

## What is Turnitin?

Turnitin.com is an online service that analyzes document text for matches to other sources. Turnitin is used as a deterrent to plagiarism. It can also help students learn to use sources, to improve paraphrasing, and refine quoting skills. Indiana University has subscribed to Turnitin since 2003. To date more than 150 million papers have been submitted to the Turnitin database.

## How Turnitin Works

Students or instructors submit electronic versions of essays to Turnitin, which produces an “originality report.” This report shows the instructor and/or student the results of Turnitin’s comparison of the essay to content on the Web, to Turnitin’s database of student writing, and to some academic databases of full-text journals.

If a *student* submits a paper, the teacher can allow the student to view the report; if the *instructor* makes the submission, the report is not available to the student.

## Before the Semester Starts

Using Turnitin most effectively requires preparation and planning on the part of the instructor.

Reacquaint yourself with the IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct sections that address student academic misconduct and plagiarism.

<http://www.iu.edu/~code/>

Take some time to familiarize yourself with the Turnitin tool.

<http://www.indiana.edu/~turnitin/>

A workshop or individual consultation at the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL) takes about 45 minutes; contact CITL to arrange a time.

Test the tool with materials from your discipline—use sample work from classes, an original paragraph of yours, or text from a common web resource.

Decide whether you will submit student work or whether students will submit their own work.

## Incorporating Turnitin into your syllabus

Incorporate use of Turnitin into your point structure or assignment parameters so that using this tool becomes part of the routine of submitting written work. Determine policies about late submissions, and include these in the syllabus as well (for example, a paper handed in during class but not uploaded to Turnitin may be considered late.)

Organize orientation training for your students. Contact CITL to arrange one of these demonstration options:

- Presentation in your own classroom
- Hands-on, in computer lab (when available)
- CITL presentation in your classroom or an STC

Students will need directions on how to register with Turnitin and submit assignments. CITL provides instructions which can be made into a handout or linked to a course website.

## Caveats for instructors interested in this tool

Turnitin does not distinguish between direct quotations and text lifted directly from a source. Students who are quoting and citing correctly will likely have reports that indicate overlap with these sources. However, it is possible to remove quotes from reports.

Conversely, Turnitin does not catch essays that include plagiarized ideas or concepts, nor can it detect paraphrasing that dramatically changes the wording of an original source while maintaining that source’s organization and/or sentence structure.

The implications of originality reports are not always self-evident. Teachers need to discuss the interpretation of these reports with their students, and allow students an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the tool.

## Classroom Practice

Minimally, introduce Turnitin by conducting a practice assignment. Doing so allows students to practice for relatively low stakes. If you do this, ask students to produce and submit something original, rather than having all students submit writing based on a quote which may result in matches that Turnitin cannot accommodate easily.

Lead students in an in-class discussion about Turnitin’s results. Keep the discussion brief—about 15 minutes. Give them a chance to ask questions. CITL can provide samples of Turnitin originality reports for use in classroom discussion.

Include information about Turnitin in your syllabus. You may use the copyright-free template at the end of this pamphlet or revise it to suit your needs.

## Effects on your classroom

Instructors use various tools—Google searches, for example—to detect plagiarism; Turnitin is one among many such resources. Nonetheless, teachers worry that using Turnitin will have a chilling effect on teacher–student relations. Those using the tool report that it does not, but strongly recommend that instructors keep students informed about the use of Turnitin in their classes:

- Let students know in advance that Turnitin software is being used rather than revealing so after the fact; students often interpret undisclosed use of the software as an indication of faculty mistrust, or of the desire to “catch” them rather than to teach them about using sources.
- Include Turnitin information in course syllabi and web sites.
- Discuss Turnitin.com with your students. Explain your reason for using it, clearly introduce them to the software, answer any questions they may have, and set their expectations for its use in your class.
- Remind students in the assignment details that Turnitin will be used in your class.

Questions? Contact CITL: 855-9023 or send email to:

[turnitin@indiana.edu](mailto:turnitin@indiana.edu) or [citl@indiana.edu](mailto:citl@indiana.edu)

## Time required

An overwhelming majority of instructors report that using Turnitin requires far less time than they had anticipated, and that the time required rarely exceeded time they would have spent using other means of searching the web.

## Recommendations

- Consider Turnitin as a teaching tool as well as a deterrent or surveillance device. The tool can give students a chance to sharpen their understanding of quotation, citation, paraphrase, and use of sources.
- Hold some office hours near a computer; space is available to you in the CITL. Contact them to make arrangements.
- Check reports regularly.
- Where appropriate, have students use Turnitin at the draft stage of writing. This way they have a chance to revise in light of their originality reports.
- When faced with a case of plagiarism, consider the following before you have a face-to-face discussion with the student:
  - review the Indiana University Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct
  - review IUB academic misconduct procedure  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~code/bloomington/discipline/academic/>
  - print all documents
  - consult with your chair, course coordinator, or director of undergraduate studies
  - report academic misconduct online to the Dean of Students  
<https://www.indiana.edu/~dsa/cjp/Acad/academic-misconduct-form2.php>

## Materials for syllabus/distribution to students

You may use the copyright-free template at the end of this pamphlet or revise it to suit your needs.

## Turnitin Template for Inclusion in Syllabus

In this course, we will be employing the Turnitin.com online system as a tool for learning how to write with sources. Turnitin is useful in helping to determine whether or not a writer is relying too heavily upon sources.

We will have a demonstration of the software in class, as well as exercises based on Turnitin reports. All essays must be submitted to Turnitin at the draft stage (that is, before the final draft is turned in). Individual assignment sheets will provide specific instructions.

To read more about Turnitin, go to their web site:

*<http://turnitin.com/>*

You may also come to the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning where a CITL staff member will work with you as you figure out how to use Turnitin.

**How Turnitin works:** Students (or instructors) submit electronic versions of essays to Turnitin.com, which in turn produces an “originality report.” This report shows the writer and teacher the results of Turnitin’s comparison of the essay to content on the web, to Turnitin’s database of student writing, and to some databases of common full-text journals. You will be given [in-class] instruction by CITL staff about how to use Turnitin.

What this process requires of you as a member of this class:

- 1) For all assignments you are required to submit to Turnitin: all essays must be submitted by the date and time that is specified in the syllabus.
- 2) Turnitin reports are considered part of the final grade of a paper. As with rough drafts, no final essay will be acceptable without a record of its draft having been submitted to Turnitin on time.
- 3) You may submit each assignment ONE time to Turnitin and receive a report.
- 4) All draft and final drafts of papers are held to the University’s Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct [and to the department’s policies on plagiarism, if your department has them].

# USING TURNITIN.COM

## *A Guide for Instructors*

## CITL

CENTER *for* INNOVATIVE TEACHING *and* LEARNING

INDIANA UNIVERSITY - BLOOMINGTON

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