

15 Strategies to Detect Contract Cheating

Contract cheating can be tricky to detect. Here are some strategies to help you.

1. Use Metadata (Properties) in Word – Check to see if the name of the author matches the name of the student.
2. Look for quotations or citations from journal articles that draw from the abstracts, rather than the main article.
3. Look for citations, quotations or excerpts from books that only draw from excerpts available only online (e.g. Google Books, Amazon).
4. Be alert to in-text citations do not match sources in the References.
5. Look for a reference list with no in-text citations.
6. Keep an eye out for sources that are generic, irrelevant or unrelated to the topic.
7. Be alert to words or phrases repeated verbatim directly from the course outline or assignment instructions.
8. Observe selective compliance to assignment instructions. Contract cheaters need to write quickly and can miss important details.
9. Pay attention to suspicious broadening of the research topic – Contract cheaters tend to write broadly, not narrowly.
10. Pay attention to suspiciously high writing quality, in comparison to what you might expect.
11. Be alert to style – If you know your students, look for text that does not match their style. Ghostwriters will recycle material.
12. Look for “Compositional dexterity” (Turnitin, 2013) – Excellent writing with poor or inaccurate research.
13. Develop intolerance for “Rhetorical fluff” (Turnitin, 2013) – An attempt to try and fill up the page.
14. Question references in foreign languages that you are pretty sure your student does not know.
15. Look for particularly outdated sources or books that are out of print listed in the References.

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Note: This is a double-sided handout, with a complete list of References on the reverse. When duplicating, please include both sides of this handout.

15 Strategies to Detect Contract Cheating - References and Further Reading

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