



Integrity: Character, Values, and Professionalism¹

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Integrity is not just an academic requirement—it reflects who you are. The choices you make in your coursework reveal your character, values, and the professional you are becoming. Being honest in your work, trustworthy in your commitments, fair to your peers, respectful of others' ideas, responsible for your actions, and courageous enough to do what is right are qualities that employers expect, colleagues rely on, and communities need. How you handle your work now shapes the habits you carry into your career.

Approaching academics with integrity helps you:

- Build the skills and knowledge your future career demands
- Develop confidence that your credentials reflect your real abilities
- Strengthen the ethical decision-making you will use throughout your life
- Establish a reputation as someone others can trust

The essential point is that integrity is your choice. The choices you make in your coursework matter—not because of rules, but because they reflect your values and character.

Acting with Integrity

Demonstrating integrity in your academic work involves four interconnected practices: understanding expectations, building your competence, producing authentic work, and growing from mistakes. Each will serve you beyond school—at work and in life.

¹ Content developed with AI, based on [the CAST UDL Guidelines™](#), scholarly sources, and web resources. Icons courtesy of [Flaticon.com](#) contributors and others.

1. Understanding Expectations

Instructors, courses, and even assignments may have different rules about working with others, using technology, or citing sources. Taking time to review and clarify expectations before you begin protects you from unintentional mistakes.

Strategies:

- Read assignment instructions carefully, looking for guidance on appropriate collaboration and source use
- Ask your instructor when you are unsure—questions show responsibility, not weakness
- Check your syllabus for policies on citing sources, using AI tools, and completing independent and group work

2. Building Your Competence

The academic skills that support integrity—like paraphrasing, citing sources, and managing your time—can be learned. If these feel challenging, you are not alone. Many students come to college without much exposure to formal academic expectations.

Strategies:

- Practice putting sources into your own words—this deepens your understanding
- Use campus resources like tutoring, the writing center, or the library to strengthen your citation skills
- Plan ahead so time pressure does not lead to shortcuts that compromise your integrity

3. Producing Authentic Work

Authentic work shows your thinking, your voice, and your engagement with the material. When you submit work that represents your own genuine effort, you gain skills that benefit you far beyond the grade you earn on the assignment.

Strategies:

- Connect assignments to your own experiences, career goals, or interests when possible
- Acknowledge all sources that informed your work, including websites and conversations
- If you feel overwhelmed, reach out for help before turning to risky shortcuts

4. Growing from Mistakes

Everyone makes mistakes. What matters is how you respond. Learning from an integrity concern can strengthen your skills and reinforce your commitment to ethical practice.

Strategies:

- If you made an error, take responsibility and focus on what you can learn from it
- Use feedback to identify gaps in your understanding of academic expectations
- Seek support to rebuild your confidence and improve your approach going forward

Key Takeaway

The honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage you demonstrate in your coursework follow you into your career and community. When you understand expectations, develop your skills, produce authentic work, and learn from setbacks, you demonstrate the character that employers value and colleagues respect. What you do here matters. Make it count!

Resources

- Anthropic. (2025). Claude Opus 4.5 [Large language model]. <https://claude.ai/>
- CAST. (2024). Cultivate empathy and restorative practices. *Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 3.0*. <https://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- International Center for Academic Integrity. (2021). *The fundamental values of academic integrity* (3rd ed.). <https://academicintegrity.org>
- Karp, D. R. (2019). *The little book of restorative justice for colleges and universities* (2nd ed.). Good Books.
- van As, J., & Kluyts, M. (2023). Reimagining academic integrity through the lenses of ethics of care and restorative justice. In U. G. Singh, C. S. Nair, & R. Watson (Eds.), *Academic quality and integrity in the new higher education digital environment: A global perspective* (pp. 23–54). Elsevier.