

CS166 and the Stanford Honor Code

Parts of this handout are based on similar handouts by Eric Roberts and Mehran Sahami. Thanks to Julie Zelenski for her input.

This handout discusses the Stanford Honor Code and how it relates to CS166. I'm sure that many of you probably don't think this handout will be relevant for you – the overwhelming majority of you are hardworking, honest students who would never think of cheating. That said, **please read this handout before starting the programming assignments in this course**. Over the past few years, we've seen an unfortunate rise in the number of Honor Code cases that have come out of the CS department. Most of the students we catch cheating aren't bad people. They don't arrive in their CS courses intending to get an unfair advantage over other students. Rather, they're good students who panic at the last minute and make bad decisions.

Our policy with regards to the Honor Code is the following:

Unless you indicate otherwise, any work you submit must be

- your own work, or joint work with your partner if submitting in a group;
- created without assistance from anyone else (except possibly the course staff); and
- created without consulting any resources other than the required readings, course handouts, and lecture content.

If any of the work you submit, in part or in whole, does not adhere to these criteria, you are **required** to provide a citation explaining the assistance you received or external resources you consulted.

We expect that you will get stuck at some point in the quarter and need help on some of your assignments. This is perfectly normal. When this happens, you're welcome to email the staff list or stop by office hours with questions.

Our expectation is that unless indicated otherwise, all work you submit will be your own (or, if you're working with a partner, joint work with that partner). If you discuss the assignment with another student, look online for inspiration or advice, or otherwise do anything that causes the work you submit to not be completely your own ideas and creations, you need to provide a citation. This can be as simple as including a sentence like “I spoke with Person *X* about this problem set and got help on Problem 3.ii” or “I consulted *Algorithm Design* by Kleinberg and Tardos for help designing aspect *X* of the data structure in this problem.” As long as you properly cite any outside aid you receive, you will not be guilty of plagiarism. However, we reserve the right to assess a penalty, chosen at our discretion, to any work you submit that in our judgment is not your own work.

The Three Day Rule

It can be overwhelming to be working on an assignment right before it's due while also juggling a full course load. The entire course staff can sympathize. It's unfortunate, therefore, when we see submissions that are clearly copied from other sources, since the consequences can be so dire.

To address this, we have the following policy in CS166: **within three days of submitting any assignment, you're permitted to contact the course staff to add additional citations to your assignment submissions.**

What exactly does this policy mean? We hope it doesn't come to this, but suppose that you're working on an assignment the night before it's due and hit a roadblock. Perhaps you can't figure out how to solve a problem within a particular time bound, or perhaps your code has a bug in it that you just can't

track down. In a moment of panic, you do a Google search for the answer or for working code, copy that into your solution, and submit it.

Now imagine what happens when you wake up the next day. At this point, you'd probably realize that you're in serious trouble: you've just submitted someone else's work as your own that you're probably going to be caught. In normal circumstances, you'd potentially be referred to the Office of Community Standards and risk failing CS166, a one-quarter suspension, and 40 hours of community service.

The three-day rule gives you an escape hatch. Within three days of submitting the assignment, you can send an email either to any member of the course staff explaining which parts your assignment are not your own work. With no questions asked, you've ensured that you are no longer in violation of the Honor Code (assuming, of course, that you're honest in that email). We can then give you partial credit for your work and can offer some help on the parts that you're struggling with.

So why the three-day clock? Our intent with this policy is to make sure that you're accountable for your actions. Everyone makes mistakes, and we want this policy to give you a chance to own up to your errors without getting severely punished for them. However, it's important that you be honest with yourself and admit to any errors you've made around the time that you make them.

Our Recommendations

- **Ask the course staff for help when you need it.** We're more than happy to answer your questions over email or in office hours. We'd strongly prefer that you ask us for help if you need it, since we can give you targeted answers and try to provide useful advice.
- **Do not look at other students' work or search online for answers.** Once you have seen how to solve a problem, it can be difficult to think of any other way of solving that problem. In other classes we've taught, we've had cases where a student looked at code or solutions that weren't their own (usually, for a hint) and ended up turning in a solution that, intentionally or unintentionally, was essentially identical.
- **Do not search for hints or advice online.** Although there are many data structures resources online, we strongly advise against searching for help on the assignments online. If you search online for advice on the assignments, you may end up a click away from complete working solutions. As mentioned in the above bullet point, once you've seen this solution, it can be difficult to write your own solution without being influenced by it to the point that the work you submit is not predominantly your own. To avoid putting yourself in this situation, we strongly recommend not searching for advice online.

Working in Pairs

You are permitted to work on the assignments in pairs. If you do, however, please be aware of the following:

- **You must submit a single, joint problem set.** We grade individual assignments on a relaxed scale, so submitting two individual problem sets after working jointly will give you an unfair advantage over other students.
- **If you collaborate with a student on any problem, you are required to submit a joint problem set.** Again, since we grade individual problem sets on a relaxed grading scale, you would have an unfair advantage over other students if you collaborated on any problems with another student and then submitted individually. Therefore, if you collaborate on any problem on the problem set, you must submit a joint problem set with your collaborator.