Turnitin and how it works

APSU Writing Center Handout

What is Turnitin?

Turnitin is a tool that professors use to check for similarities between your submitted assignment writing and existing content in the database. Existing content can consist of previously submitted student papers, publications, internal content, and more.

How Can I Use Turnitin?

Turnitin provides a **Similarity Report** that helps you identify text in your writing that is similar to what is in the database. It does this by highlighting text in your assignment that matches other sources and identifying those sources. This is created through a similarity score that is shown as a percentage.

Understanding the Similarity Score

The score does not automatically mean that plagiarism has occurredas matching text should be reviewed in context. The color of your similarity score is based on the percentage of matching text in your document. The percentage range is 0% to 100% with the possible similarity groupings being:

- Green: 0% matching text
- Blue: 1-24% matching text
- Yellow: 25-49% matching text
- Orange: 50-74% matching text
- Red: 75-100% matching text

How does Turnitin Identify Student Collusion?

Collusion is typically identified when a student's work matches another student's submission on the same assignment or to previously submitted papers.

Examples

- Eric acquired a copy of his classmate Jane's paper.
- Eric submits Jane's paper as his own and receives a similarity score of 25%.
- Jane, who originally wrote the paper, submitted her work a few days later and received a 100% similarity score.

How does Turnitin Identify This?

Turnitin can run a final similarity check against all submitted assignments. This allows professors to compare submissions against each other regardless of when it was submitted.

Reminders for Students

Do not panic when you see the similarity score as it does not automatically mean that you plagiarized your assignment. Make sure to look at the highlighted text and identify what you can change or improve. Remember to give credit to your sources through citations and ask for help when needed.

Accessing Feedback

Go to your course in D2L and click on **Assignments** on the navigation bar. Then, under the 'Completion Status' column, you will be able to see how many files and submissions you have made. Click the hyperlinked text in that column to view your submission history.

- **Similarity Report:** If your instructor enabled similarity checking and chose to display scores, a color-coded percentage bar appears under the Turnitin Similarity Report column. If the report is still processing, you will see **In Progress**. Your instructor may also choose not to display similarity scores.
- **Inline Feedback:** If your instructor uses Online Grading, a link to your feedback appears under the Inline Feedback column,

References

Turnitin. (2026). *Understanding the similarity score for students*. https://guides.turnitin.com/hc/en-us/articles/23713493434253-Understanding-the-similarity-score-for-students

Austin Peay State University. (2026). *Turnitin* https://www.apsu.edu/online/technology/turnitin/