

# Youth Culture Window

## No Need to Study

### *New Ways to Make an "A"*

An article from David R. Smith at TheSource4YM.com

Some of us, if we're honest, have cheated at some time or another in our lifetime. Those of us who are done with school might even have vague memories of writing test answers on the bottom of our shoes or scribbling geometric formulas on sticks of gum before eating the evidence.

Those methods are soooooo prehistoric.

Welcome to the new millennium, where cheating has gone hi-tech.

### **Grades that "Float"**

Growing up, there was so much attached to good grades: decreased auto insurance rates, perks from parents, the attention of a "good college," and more. For me, it was the prerogative to play sports. If I wanted to play football, my dad warned me that my grades "had to float." That was his clever little way of saying that my grades had to be "above sea (C) level." I either made "A's" and "B's" or watched the game from the bleachers.

In some classes, this was fairly simple, but in others, it was incredibly difficult. Since I knew my dad wasn't going to waver on the educational standards he had for me, I assumed my only recourse was to cheat.

So I did.

*In the end, I had grades that floated, but my integrity was sunk.*

### **Where There's a Will There's an "A"**

Making good grades has always been important, but the amount of stress involved in doing so has increased over the years. In fact, the HUGE, in-depth study by *The Associated Press* and *MTV* revealed the number one source of stress in teens' lives to be "school." Unfortunately, like too many of us from previous generations, today's students combat school-related stress with academic cheating.

But how they're doing it may surprise you.

Using YouTube, one of the biggest platforms for this generation, students share their systems of academic cheating with one another. If you want to see a laundry list of creative ways students have invented to cheat, simply visit YouTube.com and search "how to cheat" on the video page. You'll see one "how-to" video after another, all specializing in innovative, stealthy, and effective ways to cheat without getting caught.

One of the most intriguing videos, made by "Household Hacker," involved using Photoshop on a bottle of Coca Cola. The same group produced a follow up video that shows students how to use ink pens to cheat. In what I call "Tricks with Bics," which is far more clever than their name for it, students are shown how to hide notes inside the housing of a pen.

*These guys can do more with a gum wrapper and stapler than MacGyver ever could!*

One guy even shows viewers how to cheat using a sneaky little rubber band. As an added bonus to his how-to cheat video, he throws in some "helpful wisdom" from his own life. When lamenting over having to learn verb conjugations for Spanish class, he

closes with this gem: "*Cheat as much as you want. It'll only make you a better person.*"

Another [video](#) from the list plays like a "best of" compilation. It offers tips that range from low tech to hi tech, and from merely unethical to outright illegal. At least this collection of "tips" comes with a "moral warning" up front.

Of course, modes of academic cheating aren't just limited to "little MacGyver's." There are plenty of ways students can take cheating to a digital level using nothing but their cell phones. In a recent [poll](#) by *Common Sense Media*, 35% of teens admitted to cheating with their cell phone at least once, while 65% of teens say they know other students who used their cell phones to cheat. These tech savvy teens have ways to cheat that are as varied as their ringtones. Some surf the internet during the exam, some take pictures prior to the test to access during the test, and others just send a quick text message to a friend asking for answers.

Finally, for the students who want to keep their hands clean, there's always the option of having someone do the dirty work "from the inside." A [woman](#) in Pennsylvania – who is also a school secretary – was recently arrested for accessing the school's mainframe to make her daughter's grades better and other kids' grades lower. To be fair, it is still uncertain whether or not the daughter asked her mom for this "favor."

### **Making the Grade...*Ethically***

Academic cheating has been a reality since the invention of the pop quiz, and some students are "better" at it [than others](#), with steep consequences hanging in the balance. Throughout his career of studying academic cheating, Dr. Donald McCabe estimates that roughly 95% of teenagers engage in the practice. As parents and youth workers, we must figure out ways to help our kids avoid the luring temptation that is academic cheating.

1. **Expose the true cost of getting caught.** Teenagers who are only focused on “getting an A” usually don’t think about (all) the ramifications of getting caught. For them, getting an “F” is as bad as it gets, even though we know that’s not true. Sacrificed character, public shame, and the ensuing mistrust will plague them far longer than a tarnished GPA ever could. Integrity is one of those rare commodities in the universe that cannot be bought; it can only be earned by an individual who does the right thing for the right reasons over the long haul. Further, as we all know, integrity isn’t *just* damaged when students *get caught*; it’s also damaged when they successfully cheat, too. So, we need to...

2. **Create a home environment that undermines the “necessity” of cheating.** Since we know school is the most significant stressor in our kids’ lives, we need to do all we can to limit the amount of stress our children must endure. For instance, is it really wise for our kids to load up on AP courses at a magnet school if they will feel as though they “have to cheat” just to get by? Perhaps we need to look at all the extra-curricular activities our kids are involved with outside the classroom. Do they *really* need to be involved in sports year round? For that matter, do they *really* need to be on the drama team, the outreach team, and the worship band at church? We may find that a few shifts within the family schedule are necessary if we want to give our kids more time to study. As parents, we must be willing to invest the time it takes to help our kids. That can be as simple as family dinners, which, according to one [study](#), suggests kids’ grades improve by spending meal times *together*.

3. **Learn along with them.** When was the last time you read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*? If

we're honest, probably never...even though it was assigned to us in *English III*. If we're dedicated to learning alongside of them, our kids will see that we're committed to leading them by example. Our willingness to learn with them has a ton of terrific by-products: we'll be integrally aware of how our children are doing academically, we'll have more to talk about with them, and oh yeah, we just might learn something, too!

Teachers can confiscate cell phones at the door and give students a full-body pat down before taking tests, but it won't solve the problem of academic cheating. Our on-going presence in the lives of our kids is necessary if we want to overcome this problem. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it.