



– Q&A –

Q: What is Turnitin?

Turnitin is the leading Originality Checking and plagiarism prevention service in the world. In 1996, four colleagues from U.C. Berkeley created it to establish a new model for protecting written work from misappropriation on the Internet. All four founders are still involved with iParadigms, the company they started to deliver this service to the market.

Q: How does it work?

iParadigms' technology creates unique digital "fingerprints," or patterns from text documents, submitted for originality checking. Those patterns are then compared with the patterns of other information in iParadigms' massive databases derived from the web, as well as thousands of other sources likely to be used for plagiarism, such as encyclopedias, subscription-based publications, books, newspapers and periodicals. Search results are compiled into an Originality Report, which can be reviewed just seconds after a student's work is submitted. These reports help ensure that, once submitted, a student paper can never be sold, recycled or traded among students from different years, in other classes, or at another institution without being detected as unoriginal work by Turnitin.

Q: Who uses Turnitin?

Turnitin is the worldwide standard in more than 8,500 educational institutions in 109 countries, from middle schools and high schools to colleges and universities.

Q: How many languages does Turnitin support?

Turnitin supports Originality Reports and content searches in over 30 languages, including Chinese (simplified and traditional), Arabic and Japanese. The company most recently launched new interfaces in Spanish, French and German.

Q: Have we seen the last of the legal cases against Turnitin?

Judge Claude Hilton dismissed a lawsuit that was filed against Turnitin by students on Summary Judgment in March 2008. Judge Hilton stated in his judgment that Turnitin does not violate the copyrights of students whose papers are stored in the Turnitin database. Judge Hilton upheld a school's, "right to decide how to monitor and address plagiarism in their schools," and their right to, "employ companies like iParadigms to help do so." The judge further stated: "iParadigms' use protects the creativity and originality of student works by detecting any effort at plagiarism by other students," and that the service, "provides a substantial public benefit through the network of educational institutions using Turnitin."

While no company can guarantee that it will never be sued again, the outcome of this lawsuit does discourage future lawsuits, provides legal precedence to be used in determining the outcome of any future cases, and settles the question regarding Turnitin's "fair use" of student work in the minds of many people.

Note: the students' subsequent appeal of the above case was also dismissed in April of 2009, affirming the lower court's ruling.

Q: Does Turnitin also function as a course management system?

While Turnitin is delivered in an environment that includes many features of a course management system (such as a calendar, discussion boards, and a grade book), Turnitin's true focus is to streamline the workflow of student writing, feedback and assessment. As a result, we make sure Turnitin can be used in conjunction with all leading course management systems in common usage: Blackboard, WebCT, Moodle, Desire2Learn and others. Turnitin will of course continue to make new or updated CMS integrations available, and increase the depth of our integrations. Turnitin aims to be "agnostic" with respect to course management systems, giving customers the flexibility to change and grow over time.

Q: Has Turnitin reduced plagiarism significantly?

It has. Recent statistical evidence shows that the implementation of Turnitin by educational institutions improves the academic integrity of written work and reduces submissions of unoriginal work at those institutions by over 60% percent after several years.

Q: Can Turnitin eliminate the problem of plagiarism?

We can reduce plagiarism significantly by increasing awareness of best practices related to teaching students the appropriate use of other

people's textual content. This includes helping students learn proper research and citation methods, building student confidence in those skills, and doing this early and often in the schooling process. Ultimately, such practices can change attitudes about plagiarism, encourage original thought and better writing, and drive good digital citizenship and accountability in the use of information and technology.