

## Tech Snacks: What is Chegg?

Lately, we've seen a lot of media coverage on Chegg, the "[\\$12 Billion Company \[...\] Getting Rich Off Students Cheating Their Way Through Covid](#)." Originally, Chegg was most broadly known as a digital and physical textbook rental platform for students. However, it has also developed an online tutoring division called Chegg Study, which gives students access to homework help and archives of assignment solutions. While these services may seem harmless at first glance, some of them have opened the door for wide-scale cheating across college campuses.

### Chegg's "services"

Chegg markets its services to students through the following categories:

**Chegg Study** - With two subscription options, students can either pay \$14.95/month for Homework Help (access to over 35 million Textbook Solutions) and Live, Expert Q&A's; or \$19.95/month for Homework Help, Exam Help, Math Help & Writing Help services.

**Chegg Prep** - Students can create their own flashcards or study pre-existing flashcard sets, similar to platforms like Quizlet & Course Hero.

**Chegg Writing** - Students can upload their written work and run it through a plagiarism checker and grammar checker. Chegg can also create citations and bibliography entries, in a very similar way to CitationMachine, which is a Chegg service on its own website.

**Textbook Rentals** - Textbook rentals are a big draw for the Chegg platform. Students can rent both digital and physical copies of textbooks for very affordable rates. Students who rent a physical copy of a textbook can also use a free digital copy of the same textbook while they wait for their textbook to arrive by mail.

### How students are using Chegg to cheat

**Textbook Solutions** - Whether the intention was there or not, Chegg Study has become an easy gateway for students to begin cheating in their courses. The program's "Textbook Solutions" allow students access to real publisher-provided questions and answers for thousands of textbooks. Students can look up problems on the website and find answers for any publisher question that has already been searched through the site.

**Expert Q&A's** - Chegg's Expert Q&A's come as a part of the subscription to Chegg Study. This is where students can ask specific questions about their homework and wait for a real-life "tutor" to help them solve the problem in real-time. Many students will use the tutor's words as their own and thus turn in work they did not complete.

**Math Problem Solver** - Chegg has a tool that allows students to enter any math problem and find the answer they are looking for. Students can cheat because they are not actually doing the work to find the answers but having Chegg do it for them. Chegg will even provide steps for them to copy so that it looks like they are "showing their work."

### How to reframe your assessments to prevent Chegg use

There are several preventative steps you can take to help reduce the amount of cheating taking place in your courses via platforms like Chegg.

**Talk about Chegg** - Early on in your course, let students know that you know what Chegg is, that you know how students are using it, and that you consider specific ways of using Chegg as illegitimate and dishonest. Chegg has a policy that allows the company to share user information with colleges and universities during investigations of academic integrity. Making this known, while also making it known that you expect that your students are not using it, can discourage students from cheating.

**Create choice** - Multiple choice tests can seem like they're making your life easier and making the evaluation of student learning more fair. However, projects that involve higher-order thinking are much harder to complete via Chegg's services than a test with publisher questions. Consider developing a list of different project options that students can choose from. This can help reduce plagiarism and motivate students by giving them more options to prove their understanding of the course content.

**Avoid publisher questions** - Publisher questions that come with the textbook are very, very easy for anyone to find online. Students can typically search a quiz question into Google and find the exact quiz and answers online. Writing your own questions can help reduce the possibility of students finding exam questions online.

**Make quizzes low stakes** - It can sometimes be inevitable that even your own questions end up somewhere online. Even if students are using websites like Quizlet for legitimate reasons (e.g, to create study flashcard sets) those sets can be searched and viewed by the public. If you make quizzes "low stakes" in terms of their weight in the class, you can still incorporate chapter quizzes into your schedule while simultaneously maintaining a low incentive to cheat.

**Have students "pledge" academic honesty** - One practice used increasingly across the country is to have students pledge academic honesty before each quiz or exam. For face-to-face courses, this might include having them sign their name at the top of the quiz or exam next to an honesty pledge. For online courses, this could be done by creating a pledge question within the quiz itself.

## Understanding students' Chegg use

As stated above, Chegg has multiple functions—some legitimate and some not. It is important to know the difference between these functions before automatically assuming your students are cheating.

- **Understand that textbooks rented from Chegg come with a Chegg label on them.** If you see students with one of these textbooks, they most likely just chose to rent the textbook, and it does not automatically mean they are using the Chegg Study program.
- **When in doubt, track student progress.** If you have a student who struggles on assignments and quizzes early on in the semester but suddenly starts earning 100% grades on all of their assignments, this could be a sign of cheating via a platform like Chegg.
- **When in doubt, track time on your quizzes.** The Quiz tool in Brightspace allows you to see how long your students are spending on quizzes and individual quiz questions. If your students are suddenly receiving 100% grades on quizzes, check this feature. If your students are breezing through quizzes faster than they should be, this is a sign of cheating.

## Other sites to watch out for

- Quizlet
- CourseHero
- Socratic
- OneClass
- StudyBlue
- Brainly