

In last year's Advanced Placement (AP) Physics C class, Ben grabbed a test off the teacher's desk, found the previous AP question's answers online, programmed the answers into his TI-89 calculator the night before and went in to take the test next day. He got a 45 out of 45 and was never caught.

These occurrences are not unique. Ben also found the questions and answers to an AP Chemistry test and again programmed them into his calculator. Another student took pictures of an AP U.S. History (APUSH) test for one of his friends. Still another student gave out the free response questions from a math test in return for candy. Circulating in many of Palo Alto High School's math classes is a little gem students call the "Bible," which has the solutions to every single question in the course textbook. There is also a "Bible" for APUSH, which contains examples of exemplary essays and the answers to all the supplemental reading questions handed out over the course of the year-long class.

Although under the radar, cheating has manifested itself in the school environment in a variety of forms. It's no longer just the typical looking at someone else's paper during a test, writing notes on your arm or telling another student the questions; but has expanded radially into a myriad of creatively latent schemes: printing out equations on water bottles, stealing tests or even taking performance-enhancing drugs, to name just a few.

TRICKS OF A PALLY CHEATER

TEST SWIPING

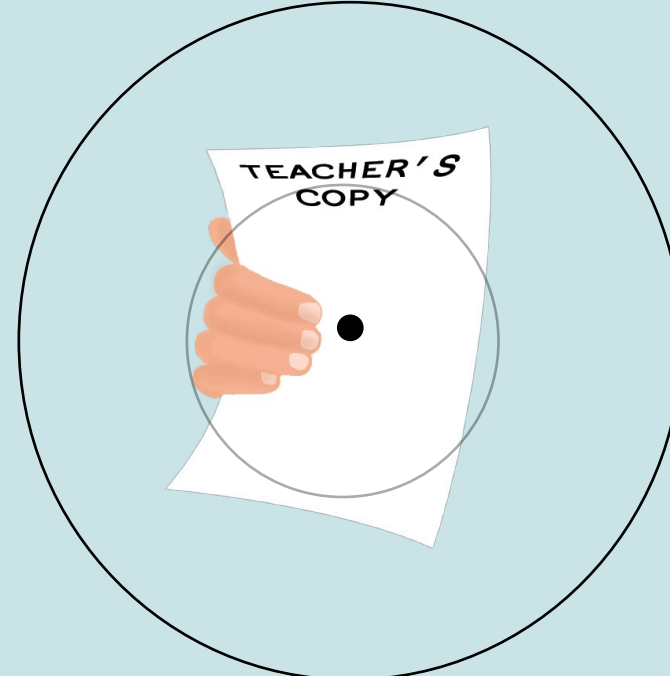
Perhaps the most rare and criminal method of cheating that occurs is the stealing of actual tests. This method is almost unheard of compared to other types of cheating students employ due to the fact that it is the most dangerous and difficult method to pull off. It takes courage and sheer desperation for students to even consider, let alone execute.

"Using the test is high-risk, high-reward," senior Jeff said. "If a teacher finds out about them they can be easily traced. However, they guarantee you an A."

Jeff was involved in a cheating scheme in an AP science class that has been going on for years. Years back, the teacher's **Teacher Assistant (TA) swiped every test for the class and gave them to his or her friends.** Since then the tests have been passed down and used by a small group of students in the class every year. This is especially useful because the teacher in question gives similar, if not identical, tests year after year. "They came down through a chain of students that started years ago," Jeff said. "They get passed down every year. It's kind of like a 'Bible.' I gave them to a kid and I got them from someone who got them from someone else the previous year."

Even when students are able to successfully obtain a copy of a test, they usually keep it to themselves and a few close friends to avoid word getting around, keeping the risk of getting caught at a minimum.

"The more people that have the test, the easier it is to get caught," Jeff said. "But if it's just you and a friend, you are pretty safe."



CODE COMMUNICATIONS

The most common method of cheating is the use of signals and codes to communicate with one's fellow test-takers or sneaking a glance at another student's test. These methods are considered to be relatively safe and require the least amount of work, which is why they are utilized with such regularity.

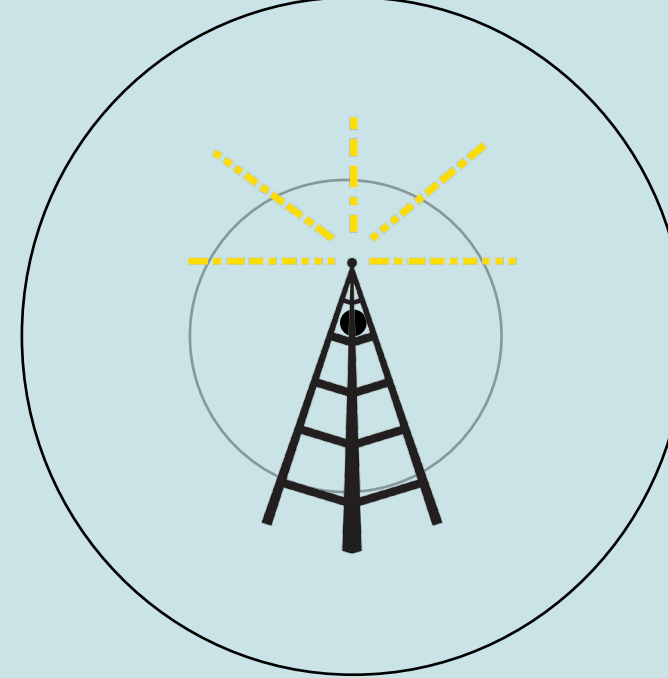
"I only really deal with plans that are low risk or can't be proven," senior Josh said.

For example, students may run their hands through their hair to signal the answer is "A" on a multiple choice test, or rub their shoulder to indicate "B." As long as students are careful, there is very little that can be done to prove a student using a method such as this was, in fact, cheating.

"One thing I always do is make sure to choose an answer or two different from the person I'm working with," Josh said. "People run into trouble with identical tests."

Cheating systems such as this rely entirely on teamwork and students working out a system to collaborate during the test.

"You give and receive," Josh said.



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BOTTLE PRINTING

For particularly difficult tests students will sometimes go to great lengths to cheat, especially tests that rely heavily on memorization. One remarkably inventive method of cheating involves **sneaking testable material such as equations into the test on everyday items** such as water bottles.

"I know the best way of doing something secretly is hiding it in plain sight," senior Mark said. "I thought since people have Coke bottles or water bottles on their desks all the time, it would be a great item to use."

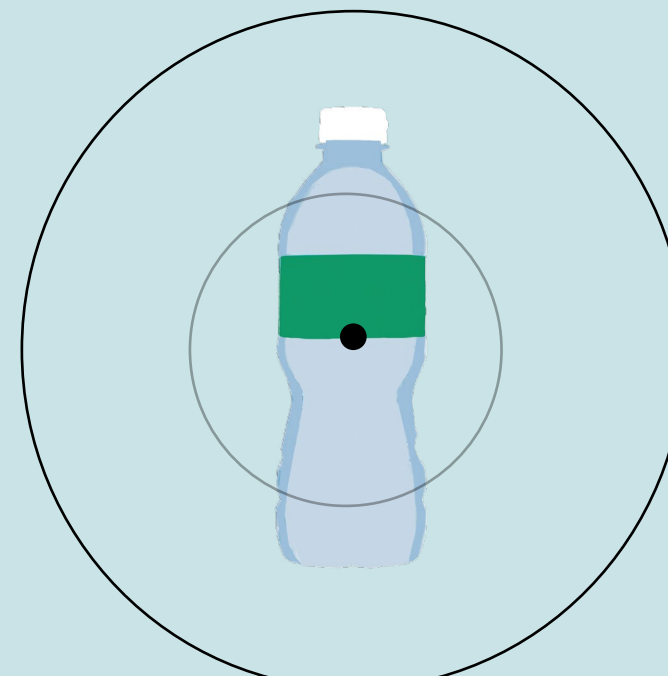
To successfully execute this method Mark had to put in a considerable amount of time and effort. Beginning with a normal water bottle Mark peeled off the label and used a small home scanner to scan the image of the label into Microsoft Paint. He then replaced the nutrition facts and other fine print on the label with his notes for the test and pasted the label back on the bottle.

For Mark the **peace of mind it gave him going into the test was the most valuable part** of the water bottle scheme.

"I definitely did start out trying to study the terms, and I studied them after I made the label for the water bottle," Mark said. "But it's nice to have a safety net just in case you run into a brick wall."

Although the process is certainly time consuming, it passes the eye test comfortably and is probably one of the safer methods of cheating.

"It's just looked past," Mark said. "I've done the stereotypical cheating before. [But with the water bottle method,] I had no worries at all about getting caught. It's a full-scale operation. It does take a decent amount of time, but it seemed too good to get caught...no teachers ever care to check or think twice. It was very incognito."



PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Another type of cheating cannot be found on a person's arm or on the text of a water bottle, but in the person's body. Nowadays, more and more students are taking performance-enhancing drugs as a means to achieve better results on tests.

Students at the high school, college level and now even low-income elementary school students — acting as a socioeconomic equalizer — are taking performance-enhancing drugs, the most common of which is Adderall, an amphetamine meant to treat narcolepsy and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), in order to improve academic performance. **Adderall is illegal for those who do not have a prescription.**

"I was prescribed Adderall for my ADHD but I didn't like how it made me feel and act so I stopped taking it, which left me with all this leftover Adderall," an Adderall dealer at Paly, Stacy, said. "Initially I was against selling my Adderall, but I needed the money and I thought that if I provided my friends with the drugs I would be able to help them out and get the money I needed...I was making forty dollars per day so I continued to sell the drugs until I had none left."

Adderall and other drugs like it like it are the steroids of academia. Though it does not give students the answers while they are taking the test per se, it does provide students an unfair advantage. Those under its influence have improved productivity and increased enthusiasm; they can study faster, study longer, study smarter and feel as if they enjoy the material. They can focus for longer and thus get better grades. For some, taking drugs and having the risk of dependence is a risk they are willing to take, especially in a competitive academic environment.

"A couple people I know wanted it for the SAT or ACT, or because they had a huge exam coming up and wanted to enhance their performance," Stacy said.

The sentiment that those who study more will fare better has been slowly fading, replaced with the sentiment that those who choose not to take the drug is just simply putting themselves at a disadvantage. But regardless of students' justification for using study drugs such as Adderall, it remains an unnatural way for students to boost performance.

"It is cheating," Stacy said. "I think people who don't have ADHD and illegally consume Adderall to boost their performance in academics are cheaters."

