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Test Proctors Share All: Stories From The Frontlines of Testing

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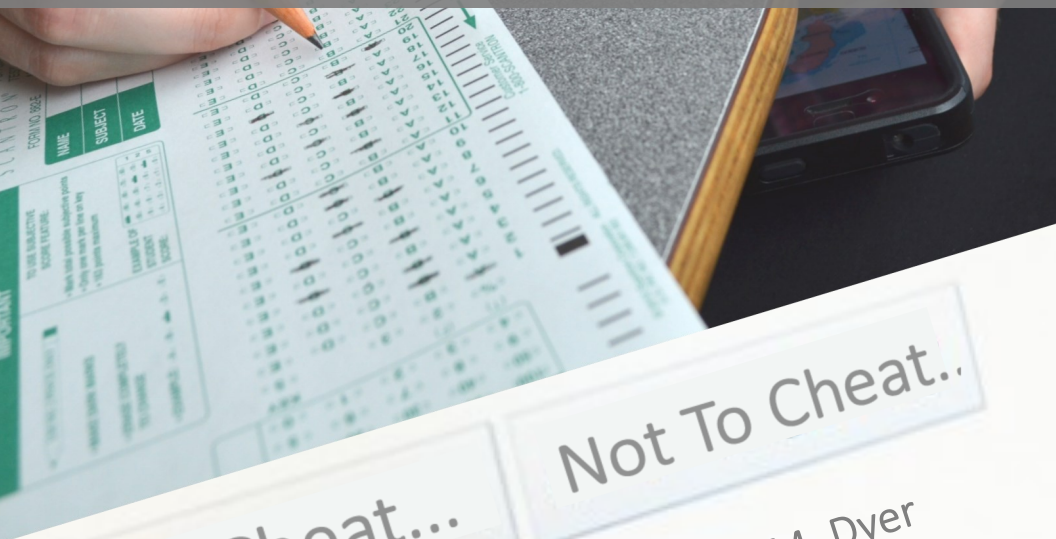
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Test Proctors Share All

stories from the frontlines of testing



To Cheat...



Not To Cheat..

Edited by Jarret M. Dyer

Test Proctors Share All

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Abstract

A compilation of test proctor stories from testing centers around the United States and across the globe. Proctors reveal the day-to-day realities of being on the frontlines of test fraud mitigation in an ever increasing digitally shareable society.

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Preface

Over the years, I have heard numerous cheating and attempted cheating stories from members of the National College Testing Association (NCTA). They always illuminate the great lengths to which candidates will go to cheat.

In Spring 2015, I reached out to NCTA for their best cell phone cheating stories in preparation for a cheating presentation for our faculty. The response to the request was swift and overwhelming. During the presentation, many reacted strongly to these stories and two follow-up sessions were planned.

Given the interest at my institution, I felt these stories could be used as tools to assist testing centers in engaging campus-wide discussions on cheating and its prevention.

In this e-book, I have compiled many of the stories sent over this past semester. I have, in most cases, presented them as they were written limiting editorial changes in the hope to convey the emotions of the author at the time. The reader should also know that, for the most part, each section has a different author.

I have always been impressed with the level of dedication and integrity of the members of NCTA. They are the frontline of test security and work daily to uphold strict testing processes and policies as evidenced by many of these stories. Many thanks to all those that shared their stories from over the years.

~JD

Digital Cheating Stories

and some tempting attempts

1.

We had an incident in which a professor contacted my office because an individual in his biology course was sharing testing information on a social media site. We checked our camera footage to see if the information he received was true. We watched the video and saw a male student using a cellphone to take pictures of the exam even though a proctor was walking the room and looking for suspicious behavior.

2.

We caught a test taker on the internet and when the proctor asked her if she was allowed to use the internet she replied, “No, but I don’t know the answer.” In addition, we’ve caught multiple people texting. They either try to text with the phone in their pockets or they try to hide the phone under test papers.

3.

We recently had a student lock up his cell phone in the designated testing locker. While taking his test, the student pulled out a second phone from his pocket and used it. When confronted, he at first denied it, but then changed his story claiming that he forgot he was under surveillance.

4.

This particular instance was observed during the testing for a professional licensure exam taken across the country. The specific test site was on the East coast. During the mid-day break, a proctor saw two examinees huddled over a piece of paper by a phone in the hallway. One of the students was overheard saying numbers followed by letters, like “2C” and “4B”. Concerned about the possibility of time zone cheating, the proctor intervened. The testing company reached out to a local private investigation firm who immediately went to the test site so that they could individually question these two examinees when the exam was over.

Interestingly, both examinees, neither of whom knew they were going to be questioned, independently claimed that the conversation the proctor had heard was them placing a delivery order with a Chinese restaurant. Phone records and the subsequent delivery later confirmed that this was, in fact, what the call was about. “2C”, as the proctor wrote was quite possibly, General Tso’s chicken!

5.

I noticed a student continuously looking at her ring and smiling. Upon further observation, I noticed she would look at her ring prior to every response she would give on the test. I walked up to her and said, "I need to see your jewelry." She stated that she would show me and began taking off her earrings. That's when I noticed that one earring was actually a video camera! The ring on her finger had a LCD screen in which she was receiving text messages!

6.

At our school, the students are required to turn off their phones and leave them outside the testing room. One particular student complied by leaving his phone outside the room. He then was observed during the exam looking away from the table and into his lap. A closer inspection revealed that he had snuck in a second phone! His exam was collected and the incident was reported to the faculty member.

7.

My story involves a faculty computer based make-up test. This faculty member allowed students to use calculators. I usually seat students where I want them in the testing center. This particular student requested a seat that was the most difficult for the proctor to see stating, "I always sit there." This was a big red flag to me. She had been in the testing center twice before and I had seated her and it was not in that seat. I kept a close eye on her and saw her phone out, but upside down. Then it was moved. She was very slick. Every time I looked at her she would have the calculator app on the screen. Finally, I caught her using the internet on her phone. I told her to put her phone away. This student was a disappointment to me because I went out of my way scheduling her test at times most convenient for her and not for me. She did not appreciate it and cheated. I informed her instructor of what happened and that I would prefer not to test the student in the testing center again. The instructor did not send her to me again.

8.

When our testing center first opened we asked students to place all personal items in designated storage units before entering the testing room. We thought this was a pretty effective method until four years ago. We had a professor contacted the office because a student that had been testing in our center had been accused of sharing test information on a social media site. The professor asked us to check our camera footage for a specific individual to see if the information he received was true. Upon request, we watched the video and saw an individual with a loose jacket sitting at a testing carrel taking the exam in question. The proctor was walking the room looking for suspicious behavior, but was unable to see the student using a cellphone during the exam. The student's seat was pushed up all the way to the carrel and was barely moving. His light jacket was the perfect piece of clothing to allow him to pull his cellphone out without suspicion. Upon seeing this, we immediately changed our procedures in our office. We now have storage boxes specifically for cellphones that we store behind our check-in desk.

We ask each student to place their cellphone in the storage box before entering the testing center and if the student says that he/she has the phone in his/her purse or backpack, we ask the student to store the phone in the storage box instead. If a student does not surrender a phone, we mark a star by the student's name and know to watch the student even more carefully. Since starting this policy, we have had students turn in dummy phones (old phones that they have) in place of their real phone, as well as, tell us they do not have one only try to use it later when testing.

9.

I've caught multiple people texting. They either try to text with the phone in their pocket or hide the phone under test papers. My personal favorite phone/cheating story didn't happen to me. Another staff person, many years ago, caught a student using his phone. When he asked to see the student's phone, he looked at the browser and found two tabs: answers to the test on one and porn on the other.

10.

One student took a number of exams with us throughout the semester. We had no problems with her all semester. On the day of the final she took the test and, as I usually do, I checked the internet history. As I closed the exam, I noticed that the student had forgotten to close out an online dictionary and calculator.

I asked her about it and she said, “Oh! The professor doesn’t care if we use it.” I e-mailed the professor and told him about the incident and attached screen prints of the online aids. The student received an “F” on the final and an “F” in the course. I wondered why she chose that time to cheat when there had been no evidence of prior cheating from her previous four sessions.

11.

The most common situations we have are with the students that put their cell phone away when they arrive, then in the middle of testing, they ask me if they can answer their phone because their daughter (or whoever) is calling. I have also had a couple of students actually answer the phone and whisper, “What? I am taking a test.” I don’t get it, I really don’t.

12.

A few months ago, I had a student looking at his phone while testing. I picked up his test and asked him to leave and told him that he could discuss the circumstances with his instructor. At check-in, I had verbally told him to shut off his phone, but he insisted he hadn't heard that and was just checking the time. I asked him to leave again and he became belligerent and refused. I ended up calling campus police to remove him (I told him I was doing this). Then his mother showed up and I had to have her escorted by the police because she was so belligerent. The student is no longer allowed to use the testing center. Because of the incident, I created a sign-in sheet with all the rules of the testing center. It includes the statements: "If you use, or appear to be using unauthorized aids of any kind, your test will be stopped and your instructor notified." Then I list possible aids. The sign-in sheet also says, "All cell phones must be turned off and placed in a purse, pocket or bag. Your instructor will be notified and your test will be stopped if your phone rings or vibrates, or if it appears that you are using the phone in any way."

13.

An encounter we had with cheating came when a student changed a payment form we signed. This particular form allowed a student to pay for their testing session based on the amount of time the professor allowed for the student to complete the exam. In this case, it was a three hour exam so the fee was for three hours. On the way to the business office to pay the fee, the student changed the form to a lower amount. When he arrived back, he told me that the business office had changed it. I called the business office and was informed that the student had arrived with the paperwork changed. I repeated this to the student and he admitted that he just wanted a lower price. I contacted his school and was told that their academic policy did not cover him when he was here taking their exam. I couldn't believe it. I told the student that he would have to pay the difference in order to take the exam. He paid the fee and tested. Because of this incident, we now have an electronic document that we fill out and email to the business office. The student arrives there and pays the fee on the form. This student has returned for additional proctoring and we have had no issues using the new form.

14.

I had a student that was texting while taking a placement test. I walked over to her and asked, “What are you doing?” “Texting,” she replied in a voice that made it sound that she knew she shouldn’t be. In addition, her mother was waiting for her in the lobby area. When I took a break, I noticed the mother was also texting on her phone. She looked at me when I walked by as if she had been caught doing something that she shouldn’t have been doing. I was suspicious before I caught the student texting that the mother was texting or trying to text her. The student put the cell phone away and did not get it out for the remainder of her placement test.

15.

We had a student move from a paper/pencil seat to a computer seat while proctors were changing shifts. The student then googled the exact questions on the test, and was quite surprised when we froze her computer and printed out her screens with our monitoring software.

16.

We had a student athlete in the testing center taking a paper/pencil make-up exam. During the exam she accessed the computer (the test was given in a large computer lab) and opened a search engine. She was reported to student conduct and in the meeting with them admitted her actions were wrong and was given a failing grade for the test. The student was required to take the next make-up exam for that course in the department office. While she was there taking her test, she again accessed the internet, this time on her phone. If a student who has been caught before, who has been through an athletic orientation program designed in part to discourage misconduct, who knows she is being watched will do this, it is naïve to think that other students are not using their cell phones to do the same thing.

17.

I had a girl come in to take a multiple choice test for a class. It was for an online class, so she took all of her tests in the testing center. I sat her at a computer in a small testing room. On our camera display of the room, I saw that she was using an online messaging service. I went into the room and asked her about it, telling her that online messaging was not allowed to be used during a test and that it would be considered

cheating. She said that she was not cheating and that she did not know where the conversation came from. She claimed that the conversation just showed up on her screen and that she had nothing to do with it. To make this even more interesting, the following week I went over to the advising office to speak with my supervisor. The young woman was there. Apparently she worked at our school!

18.

My favorite story involves a student taking a graduate school admissions exam. At our check-in point we have various signs posted that the room supervisor reads aloud before the exam regarding unauthorized electronics. When the students took their first break, the student in question sat down in a windowsill and pulled out his phone. The proctor, who was in the hall, witnessed this and immediately reported it back to the supervisor, who handed the student a dismissal form and told him that if he wished to take this up with the site supervisor he could. The room supervisor quickly had the proctor call me and let me know that the disgruntled student was on his way down. Upon entering the room, the student asked who he can speak to regarding this situation. I was proctoring

in a different room. When I explained to him the policies, he got quite loud and wanted to know if I couldn't just hold his phone until the test was over. I told him now and he proceeded to get extremely loud, slammed his hands down on the table saying, "But this is my career! I have to get into graduate school next year!" I tried to pacify him by offering to call the testing company on his behalf, but I could hardly speak to them due to his shouting in the background. During this exchange, one of the other proctors slid out and called campus security. When they arrived, they escorted him out of the building.

About a month later, the same student came to our center to take a different graduate school entrance exam. When we asked him during the check-in what he was planning on majoring in, it was a different area than the month before! I wondered if he was pushed into the previous field by his family and not because of his love of the field. Needless to say, if he recognized any of us the day he took his second test, he didn't acknowledge it. Hopefully he was too embarrassed after raising such a commotion!

19.

I had a student taking a HS equivalency test that completed her 7 hour exam and left the testing room for her results. Once she completed the sign-out procedures, she withdrew her cell phone from her pocket and placed it on the counter. She looked straight at me with a look of defiance, to which I kindly remarked that I would have to file an incident report as she had a cell phone on her while testing. She looked bewildered and asked what that meant. When I informed her that if she had used a cell phone while testing, it would invalidate her scores, she got initially angry and then despondent. I think she thought that once the exam was completed, there was nothing I could do. I reviewed the video of her station and found that she had accessed her phone during the exam. She was very adept in searching while the phone was under the desk and out of site and the proctors had not seen her. That afternoon, I submitted an incident report with the video and photos attached. The incident remained open for six months! After which, she was barred by our state from testing for an additional 6 months. The true tragedy of the story is that her final grades were so high that I don't think her attempts at using her phone could have given her an advantage. If she had simply left the phone in the locker, she would have received her certificate!

20.

A student came in to our center to take a proficiency exam. She finished the multiple choice part without incident and was given the essay. It was about the easiest question you can imagine and she was told she could use any material she wanted, including the internet. She started to yell at the test specialist to give her more information, stating she didn't understand the prompt. The test specialist gave her a do-the-best-you-can standard response and the girl went off using profanity, slamming doors, and telling people to get out "or else". The test specialist told her to "knock it off" essentially and reminded her that others are testing, that her behavior is inappropriate and that it will lead to the discontinuation of her test. She got worse. I was in a meeting, so the test specialist got the clinical director of the center. The director discontinued the test and tried to get her to leave. She stormed out in enough of a disruption (throwing things, yelling, etc.), that the other offices on our floor went into lockdown and hit panic buttons. She came back and told the clinical director that he was going to call her the next day to give her the test "or else". Therefore, student conduct, the police, etc. all get involved.

21.

We just had someone finish a test. My proctor told the candidate to make sure she didn't have anything on her like a watch, cell phone, etc. When she finished the proctor noticed she had a smart watch. He told her again that everything had to be stored and that this type of watch has the capability to be used as a calculator, could be used to look on the internet, etc. He now has to write up an incident report. This is the 2nd smart watch that has come through our center.

22.

We regularly have students sneak cell phones into our testing center and they have been known to answer them, check their text messages, etc. We tell them twice to lock up cell phones. We have an agreement for them to sign at check-in, we have multiple signs in the center, the information is on our web page and test slips, and they always "forget" to lock up their cell phones. Our policy is to immediately stop the test. It is against our academic integrity policy to use any unauthorized materials to take a test.

23.

We have individual testing carrels with doors (like small closets) with a window on the door, so we can peer in. Last semester right before final exams we realized it was a little tough to see what students were doing on the desk itself, so we installed mirrors on the ceilings of each carrel that were tilted in a way that we could view them from the door, and it showed everything on the desk and the student's lap. In one instance, a tall male student had chatted with me before starting his test. Nothing appeared out of the ordinary with his appearance. When asked if he had put everything into his cubby, including his phone, he said yes. During the test we periodically check the mirrors and saw him remove a tablet computer from his pants! He then replaced it and continued with the test. When we pulled him out of the carrel it was quite interesting to ask him to remove the tablet. We take photos of any potential cheating device, but I made sure not to touch that one! I still can't believe he stood in front of me casually before the test, knowing that he had that in there!

We also caught two students with cell phones in their laps using our newly installed ceiling mirrors. Without them, we wouldn't have seen the cell phones. In both instances, the students were

shocked that we had seen the device and even more shocked that we had seen it through the ceiling mirror. Not a single student had even noticed it was there! Maybe word has spread - we have had zero cheating issues since that first week after they had been installed.

24.

A student was taking an online test and she was surfing a website that was not permitted. I walked up behind her and said, "Are you allowed on that website?" She said, "I was on the testing website." We both looked at her screen and a search engine came up on her screen.

25.

I was proctoring an online exam and I noticed a student who kept looking down at his lap. I walked up to him and I said, "Why do you have your cell phone out?" He said, "I'm texting my boss that I am going to be late for work." I asked him to put the cell phone away and told him that I would need to send a report to his professor and the dean. He said, "Okay."

26.

While proctoring last semester, I watched a student move their jacket and underneath it they were typing something into their cell phone. I pulled the student out and informed them that they were not allowed to use their cell phone and that I would have to stop the test. This student had tested with us numerous times and was aware of this policy. He told me that he was actually texting an instructor because he had a technical question about entering an answer into the exam and it would not let him. He then shows me his phone to prove that he wasn't actually trying to cheat, just had more of a technical question. He was indeed texting an instructor, but it wasn't the instructor for the course he was taking! Needless to say, I had to dismiss the student and send a report to his instructor. It would have looked pretty bad had we not caught that student considering the instructor, he was texting, knew he was in the middle of a test and is an instructor on our campus. I don't expect us to catch everyone all the time, they can be very inventive, but I'm glad we caught that one!

27.

We caught a student taking a classroom make-up exam accessing the internet for solutions to the test. As one of my proctors was documenting the student's web activity, the teacher for the class walked in. We called the teacher over to the proctor station to witness what was happening. The teacher wasn't surprised and mentioned that the student's reasons for missing class and taking the test in the testing center sounded odd from the beginning. "Well," said the professor as he was leaving, "he just earned himself an "F" for the semester. Have a good day."

28.

I had to call security to physically remove a student! She was taking a placement test and initially gave the staff a very hard time about showing a picture ID. She created such a commotion that the staff brought her to my office. Once she settled down the staff began the check-in process. She was hyper and rude and interrupted staff several times. She started to test and I thought all would be fine, but about halfway through her test, her cell phone rang and she picked it up and answered it. I walked out into the testing center and told her quietly to gather her things and come with me. She immediately started screaming that it was her mother and I was not going to stop her from

talking to her mother. I asked her quietly again to come with me, but she refused. When I turned and walked away to go to my office and call security, she jumped out of her seat and came after me. I was more than a little shaken up. She was a large framed girl and she stomped after me. I quickly made it to my office and called security. She stood in the doorway of my office and yelled at me and was close enough to hit me. I thought she might. She yelled that she was not going to listen to some little girl (me) and she wanted to speak to someone above me. It was in the evening and my supervisor was gone for the day, as were most of the rest of the faculty and staff. I should have already left myself, but had stayed longer because of the initial hard time she had given the staff. Security arrived quickly and got her out in the hallway where she continued to yell that she was going to get us all fired. Security told her she could leave or they were calling the police. She finally left. That had to be the worst testing experience ever. It was the only time in 13 years I have had to call security. (Knock on wood!) I did learn from it that if I had to do it over, I would not have let her start testing. I would have put more responsibility on her to make herself calm enough to test or offer for her to come back another day when she wasn't so tense.

29.

I used to supervise a testing center that was about 75% online class testing and all tests were conducted on a walk-in basis. Saturdays were particularly busy with long lines and students often studying in line. Well, one student noticed another student studying in line and interpreted this to mean that textbooks were permitted in the testing center. This was regardless of the fact that she was told by two different staff members that she could not use any materials and the studying student was taking a different class. She was caught using her textbook and her test was stopped. She absolutely, positively refused to acknowledge that she was cheating and just kept saying that our policies weren't clear and that she misunderstood them. This woman also had two different names--like Jane Smith and Sally Jones--in her student account, but only had an ID for one. Of course, her account and student email were under the other one. To top it all off, I later found out that she ran a tutoring center for kids! We've had the usual texters and yellers, but this one was just bizarre.

30.

We had a student taking a placement test that was required to write an essay. At our school, we let them type it on the computer. Upon completion, the staff tells me I should check the student's station. I looked in the internet history and it shows that the student went to a website and copied and pasted the essay. I informed the student that we could not count his essay and that he would need to come back and take it another day. The student got mad and argued that he did not copy and paste it. I printed out the internet history and showed it to him. His next argument was that this is what he was taught in school and that no one told him he couldn't. He proceeded to get even madder and told me that we will see what the dean of students had to say. He stormed away and I proceeded to highlight the entire essay which was verbatim from the online essay. The student and dean arrived in my office a few minutes later. I proceeded to state the same thing to the student again in front of the dean and I showed the dean the online essay and the student's essay. I told him that he could come back another day and take the essay again without using any internet resources, but that this essay would not count. The dean looked up at him after looking at the two essays and stated that that sounded fair and that he should take it another day.

This is funny to me now, but at the time I was a little rattled. This was the only time I had ever had a student immediately go to the dean of students and come back to my office with her right away. I remain suspicious that he knew her personally and thought she would stick up for him even with such blatant cheating. I still can't believe this happened, especially when the student brought the dean in on it immediately.

31.

We had a student get caught using his cell phone during a test. We saw just a glimmer in the mirror on the ceiling, but knew it had to be a phone. When asked what he was doing, he said he was just checking the time. There's a rather large digital clock in each testing carrel, so this was obviously a lie. We had seen a white screen on his phone, and when he showed us the clock feature on his phone, it was definitely a dark black screen.

32.

I don't see anything wrong with telling students in a classroom that phones must be turned off. They serve absolutely no purpose, except to distract. If a phone rings, I ask the student to leave.

33.

We had a female student testing in a carrel that we caught with a cell phone. We had actually witnessed her putting her phone into a locker, so we were a little shocked as we watched her through a mirror pull a second phone out of her bra! When we went into the carrel she insisted she had put her phone away in a locker. We asked her twice to give up her phone, but she stood her ground stating that she didn't have one. We finally had to ask her specifically for the one that was in her bra and she relented.

34.

I have several cheating stories. One story is about a student who tried to take a photo of his test to prove to his professor that it was not the same information taught in the class. We have designated lockers in our testing center and the cell phone should have been locked up.

35.

We had an incident where an exam was compromised. We believe someone used a cell phone to take a picture of the test and then sold it to other students. However, we had no proof of the fact that a cell phone was used, so it is not as compelling of a tale as it otherwise might have been!

36.

I've only had a few instances where students were caught with cell phones. We do not allow cell phones in the testing room at all, so if I see a cell phone, I dismiss the student immediately, or have them put their cell phone in a locker (depending on the circumstances). There was one instance where I had to dismiss a student for using their cell phone. That story is one I tell when training a new proctor to emphasize the importance of actively monitoring the testing room.

37.

We had a student come into the testing office to let us know a group of students had attempted to use a spy pen (a pen with a video camera on it) to take pictures of our placement exam. They were hoping to share the materials with friends that had placed into developmental classes. Unfortunately for the students, our placement tests are adaptive and not every student sees the same questions. While I was frustrated they had been able to sneak a cheating device into the center, I was relieved knowing that the probability of the students getting the same questions they may have shared with a friend was slim. Constant vigilance!

Analog

Cheating

Stories

and a few noteworthy others

38.

A year ago, we had a student taking an accommodated exam for a nursing class. She was approved to test alone with extended time. During the test, she came out of the room explaining that she was feeling ill and needed to go to the restroom immediately. The proctor observed her go into the restroom and observed her return. The restroom was about twenty-feet down the hall. She returned in approximately ten minutes, finished the test and left. When the proctor talked to her before she left, the proctor had an uneasy feeling about the student. The proctor said her behavior was just a bit peculiar. It was peculiar enough that the proctor followed the student down the hall and talked to her briefly to assure that she was okay. We then reviewed our surveillance recording. We discovered that the person that returned from the restroom was not the same person that went in! They were sisters and they had exchanged places. Both students wore almost identical head scarves, clothing and shoes making them appear very similar. When reviewing the tape carefully, we were able to conclude that they were two different people.

39.

I recently caught a student with a lot of notecards just sitting on her lap. I pulled her out of the room and said, “There are notecards on your lap.” The student simply replied, “No.” So, I said, “They’re on your chair now.” And again, she just said, “No.” I stopped letting her debate the reality of the notecards and told her she was finished taking her exam.

40.

At my former college, one of my proctors found a student using notes while testing. As was our policy, she asked him to come out of the testing room with her. When he came out he admitted he had been cheating, but in a small voice proclaimed, “Please don’t tell my teacher. The last time I was caught cheating my teacher said that if it happened again, I would fail the class!” We could hardly believe our ears. Not only had he been caught before and been given leeway by his instructor, but he seriously also wanted us to overlook his current cheating!

As a side note to all this, I am now at a college where the only classroom proctoring we do is for students with disabilities who get accommodations. I have been amazed at the reduction in cheating when comparing the two colleges.

41.

Our disability services office used to do accommodated testing before we took it over and they had a very different approach to proctoring. By that, I mean, they just didn't do it. Therefore, students got used to it and were pretty shocked to find out that our office diligently proctored all exams. We had one girl try to pull a large amount of paper out of her shirt sleeve, only to try stuffing it back in when she heard the proctor walking up to the door to catch her. I was watching the surveillance cameras at the time and basically died laughing. This same girl was caught just a few days earlier on the internet and when the proctor asked her if she was allowed to use internet, she replied, "But I don't know the answer."

42.

We quite frequently have cheating attempts in our testing center. I now refuse to let students use their own scratch paper and all cell phones are required to be turned off. Students, however, are quite inventive. Sometimes the sniffing is quite melodious between classmates, along with hand signals. I hand them a box of tissue just to let them know I am aware of what they are trying to do.

43.

I was proctoring a chemistry test for another college a few years back and the instructions clearly stated there was no bathroom breaks. During the test, a tester informed me that she had received special permission to visit the restroom whenever she needed to because she was pregnant and had been having issues with morning sickness. I contacted the school and received an email confirming that she could take multiple breaks as needed. On one of her visits to the restroom a staff member, who was walking back from the bathroom as well, informed me that there were two students in the restroom who were dressed alike. I was really surprised and waited until she was seated at her computer. I then went into the restroom and hid in one of the stalls. About fifteen minutes later, the student returned to the bathroom and the second student emerged from one of the stalls. They discussed the test and the second student was about to leave when I stepped out of the stall and confronted them. They both started to cry. They were identical twins and I could not tell who was which. I reported them to the school and have not seen them since.

44.

Our most interesting story probably is the student who wrote on his leg. He wore very long basketball shorts and on the security system we could see him pull up one leg of his shorts then quickly cover up whenever someone walked nearby. We have had students try to use a cell phone, even though they are told to turn it off and lock it up before coming into the testing center. Our biggest issue lately is students going to outside web sites when taking online exams. Our computers do not have lockdown browsers. I wrote up four incident reports in one day for that during finals last fall.

45.

We often have cheating incidences, but never know who is the one cheating. Before the test begins, a student will leave notes in the bathroom and then, during the test, use the bathroom and look at their notes. We make a habit of checking the restrooms and waiting areas for notes after the test begins. We've also had a student tape the answers to a test underneath a table in the waiting area.

46.

We had a student write notes in henna on her ankles. When she was caught, we took pictures of the writing and told her to keep her feet on the ground while she completed her exam. The notes were in her native language and she tried telling us that her parents gave her the tattoos of *inspirational quotes* to get her through the stress of finals. We have a colleague who is fluent in the language and had her translate the notes. They were absolutely not *inspirational quotes* as she had claimed, but notes to her exam. During the judicial review hearing, we supplied the videotape of her looking at her ankles and a translation of the tattoos.

47.

One of the proctors today was checking in a candidate for a proctored exam. While checking his hands and wrists, she noticed writing all over the front and back of his left hand. When questioned, the candidate stated he had forgotten to wash off his hands....because they were just notes he used to study with. The proctor smiled kindly and directed the student to the bathroom. He returned a few minutes later....notes free =)

48.

We typically catch about six to eight students trying to cheat each year. Usually they are trying to use something they are not allowed to have such as notes, quizzes, etc. We have yet to catch someone using their cell phone because we are pretty diligent about making sure cell phones don't go into the testing room with them. One example I will share is a student that we were suspicious about because we thought he was writing down the questions on scratch paper. We noted that he was given two sheets of scratch paper and later he got up and requested two more pieces. A while later he asked one of the proctors if he could go to the restroom. She said yes, but told him that he had to leave everything at his desk. I watched him and he walked out with two pieces of scratch paper. I walked to the restroom closest to the testing center and he wasn't there. I later found him walking back. He stated that he had gone to a different bathroom. I asked him about the missing pieces of scratch paper. He stated that he threw them away. I then told him to show me where he threw them away because we were going to find them. At this point, he switched his story to say that he had flushed them down the toilet. I told him that removing anything with test content from the testing center was considered cheating. I assume that he was asking someone about questions on the test, but was not able to prove it.

I called the instructor and she actually told me she had caught him cheating in class before.

49.

I had a recent cheating incident where the student wore a patterned flannel shirt and wrote answers in the pattern. They were very hard to see. We've been seeing more and more of these techniques! The students all know we look for electronic devices, so they have gone back to doing it the old fashioned way.

50.

We had an international student with a cheat sheet laid out on his desk during a college entrance exam. The proctor asked him to put it away as the test was starting, but later noticed it was still on his desk. Again, she told him to put it away. The third time she noticed it, she took his test and brought him in to see the room supervisor. His excuse was that he didn't know using a cheat sheet was cheating!

51.

A frequent flying cheater, who receives accommodations in our office, struck again. She had four incidents of cheating in three weeks last year and the instructors all chose to go the remediation route with her instead of consequences through student conduct. This frustrated our office, the student conduct officer, and accessibility services. I had a long talk with her about integrity as did the student conduct office and the instructor. She had not, to our knowledge, done anything this year. Then, last week she requested an extension on a test. She was witnessed asking other students in her department about the test. That should have been a red flag to the department chair, but she was sent to test with us anyway. We had no problems with her in our office. However, the instructor wanted the student to return the test to his office once completed. Our policy is to seal the test in a tamper evident envelope, document the serial number on it, and have a staff member inform her to take it immediately to her instructor, without stopping or tampering with the envelope in anyway. Four days later, the instructor called us to find out where the test was. We told him our policy and that he should check with the student. We also informed him of the security measures on the envelope and recommend that he verifies the serial number on the envelope when the test surfaces. Sure enough, the student returns the test

and receives a 100% on it. Given her previous work, this is very suspicious, so now the student conduct officer is investigating whether she tampered with the envelope or perhaps took a few days to purchase a new one and forgot about the serial number on it.

Test

Proctor

Tales

and interesting anecdotes

52.

An instructor that had previously yelled at our executive director and my testing staff returned in full ire to yell at the testing specialist. She claimed that no one had explained to her where her students with accommodations were supposed to take their tests. She could test them herself, but doesn't to...so the students request to take their tests with either my office or the accessibility office. The instructor receives a form through email indicating the students class schedule, accommodations, location of the exam, and the process of sending and receiving it back from our office. We know this because we also receive a copy. The test specialist showed her the email and the woman tore it up, squished it into a ball and threw it on the ground announcing to the staff and students, "I don't have time to read every f-ing thing I see," and storms out. Therefore, we contacted the accessibility office and my colleague, who is the director there, went to the instructor's supervisor to file a grievance against her because we've had it.

53.

I constantly have people question why they can't use their own pens or mechanical pencils. When I tell them students have been known to put information inside the pens/pencils they roll their eyes!

54.

This story didn't happen in our center, but was shared by a colleague at one of our regional testing centers. They had a young male employee that worked as a proctor in the testing center. While on the desk, he was approached by two older students, of the same ethnic background, that wanted help passing their make-up exam. They said it was his duty to help them out and suggested he could allow them access to the exam before the test. The employee refused. He contacted his supervisor and shared that he was concerned they would continue to harass him about this issue. Sure enough, the following week both students approached him in the parking lot and again demanded that he help them. The employee informed them that they were in violation of the student code of conduct and he would have to report them to the dean of students. Fortunately this worked and the harassment stopped.

55.

So far, I haven't had much cheating this semester, and I really believe it's because the students have to sign in before I will check their ID and give them the test. I continue to verbally remind them to shut off their phone and place it in their purse or backpack which is stored in a designated area.

56.

We had an incident where a student athlete approached one of our student workers and attempted to bribe him with a tablet computer if he would take a test for them. Fortunately, the student employee reported the incident to the office supervisor and an incident report was filed with the dean of students. As this was a proctored exam for another school, I was called on as manager of the center by the school's vice president as a witness to the incident. The school deemed the incident to be against their student code of conduct and the student received a failing grade for the class. A few weeks later, I received another call this time from the student's coach at a third school where he was planning to transfer to play football. The coach begged me to help assist the student in completing the three credits he lost by attempting to cheat. I informed the coach that there were nationally recognized proficiency exams the student could take, just not at my center. The student attempted the exam, but was not successful. A few weeks after that, our dean of students received a long letter from the student's family stating that the testing center was responsible for destroying their son's future and withholding a large scholarship from him. In addition, they filed a grievance with the college for discriminatory practices.

When I was able to provide video of the encounter between my student worker and the student athlete as well as a written statement from the student employee, the grievance was withdrawn.

57.

We had an incident a few years back with an accommodated student who is autistic. We never had any problems with her until one day her professor failed to get a final test to us. The student was worried about the missing exam and despite us telling her that this wasn't her fault (it was the professors) and us calling to try and get the test for her she finally reached her breaking point. She was crying and screaming in our waiting room and nothing we tried would calm her down. We eventually straightened out the problem with the exam and she later graduated from our university. That was a tough day.

58.

Yesterday, we had a student taking a four hour exam urinate in her seat. She never mentioned it either to the proctor or to the front desk staff – our proctor found out about it after she left (luckily before another student sat there!)

59.

For one of our exams, the examinee is prompted to read an essay topic before beginning testing in order to be familiar with it before the essay portion of the test begins. The essay topic is found in a box on the last page of the test booklet with a letter designating which topic the examinee has been assigned. The essay topics were “A” through “Z”. When the examinee finished testing, I glanced at one of the essays. It was written about the letter “Q”. Not on the topic suggested in the box labeled “Q”, but on the letter itself and well written, too. It should have passed for creativity.

60.

I don't really have a cheating story, but we had an incident here last year when a person flunked all of her high school equivalency tests. The mother stormed into the testing center that was filled with students lined up to take a different test. She was yelling that we have to stop telling her daughter that she was flunking her tests. She was going to sue us for harassment. She kept getting physically closer to me to the point where I thought her next move was to slap me across the face. I told my assistant to call security.

61.

Our issue was not related to cheating, but it still became an issue when the student complained to the president's office about it. She came in to take her exam on the last allowable date in the afternoon. I proctored her exam and she wanted me to scan it right then and there. I was busy with another student, so she left. By the time I finished with the student and went to scan the exam, a storm had caused our Internet, phones and fax lines to go out. I scanned the test the next morning when everything was restored and sent an email to the professor explaining the situation and that it was through no fault of the student. The student was not happy about this and complained that I did not stop helping the other student to scan her exam to the professor. In addition, the student provided a self-addressed envelope to return the exam to the school, but it did not make it to the professor in time due to the holidays. We got it out in the mail the same day, but it did not make it there in time. We were held responsible and the student was furious.

Due to this, I put a clause into the proctor agreement that students will not be allowed to take the exam on the last available day. Also, we will return the exam in the manner requested within 24-48 hours after the exam, as time permits.

We follow the rules of the professor or school and there are so many different instructions from different schools to follow. That being said, regular mail is not the fastest way to return an exam and the student really should have been more understanding.

62.

Sleepers! I just had one recently. I had to wake him up in the middle of his test. He seemed pretty embarrassed and got through his test without further incident. But I had another sleeper a few months ago who had to be rescheduled over and over again to get through a placement test. He even drooled on the test booklet to which I was grossed out! He claimed he worked the night shift, but I think there was more to it than that.

63.

We had an unfortunate incident where a female student worker was caught helping a another student of the same ethnic background pass the state high school equivalency exam. I was on vacation during the incident and received a call from a staff member that something appeared to be odd with the records entered into the state high school equivalency database that day. It appeared that

the student worker had logged into the state database and changed the student's record three times throughout the day. Once while the student was in the office to print out an unofficial transcript, then again when the student left so no one would notice a discrepancy, and lastly at the end of her shift so the main office had the records to print an official certificate for the student. Unfortunately for the student employee, all web activity for the state database is tracked by an IT company. After the initial incident was reported, I was able to request all activity for her log-in on the day in question and found that she had in fact changed the record three times. Once I had this information, I pulled her into my office and informed her of the situation. Her response was, "Do what you have to do." That was it! She was terminated that afternoon.

64.

There was a student who told me rather tensely and accusatorily in front of other staff and students (large open area) that I told her she was stupid when she took her placement test. Later I found out that the student had gone around most of that day criticizing a lot of staff that she had dealt with for one reason or another. A couple of us very quickly let the dean of students

know who called the student in and took her around to the various staff and had her apologize. I was left out of the apology round because I was testing and could not be disturbed, but the dean let me know that if she could have brought her into me I would have gotten one also. I consider it all a learning experience and the more I experience different people, the better I will be at dealing with them.

Appendix:

Some More

Things to

Watch

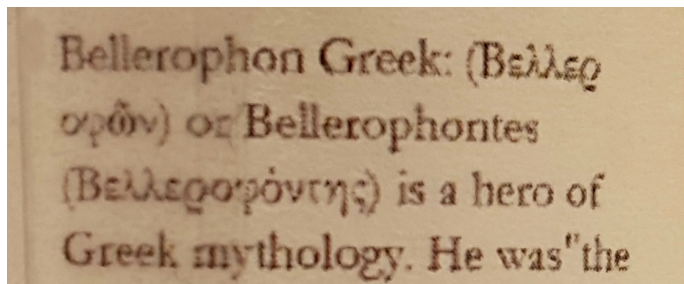
Out for

A1.

The Label Maker

A candidate that removes a drink label from a beverage and scans it into a computer. They add notes to the label, print it and then re-attach it to the bottle. If done carefully, the results are almost indistinguishable from the authentic item.

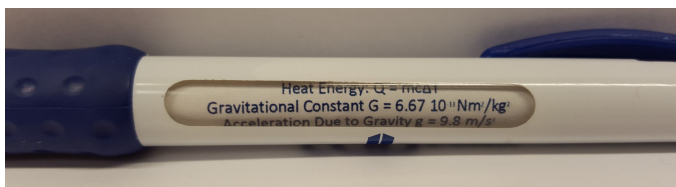
Here is an example of Greek mythology notes on a tea bottle.



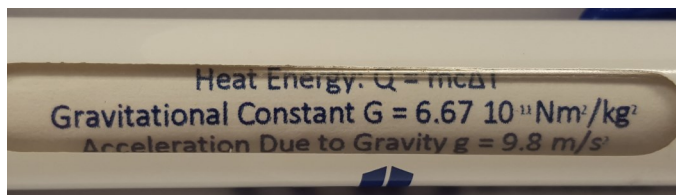
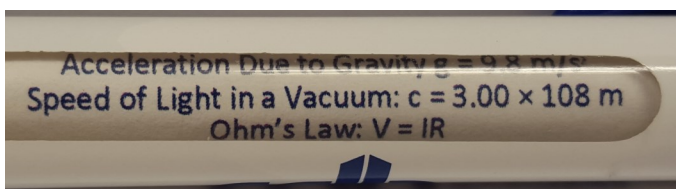
A2.

The Trick Pen

A pen that a candidate uses to hide notes inside. This example contains a rotating barrel. The notes can be printed on mailing labels and then affixed to the inside barrel of the pen. Once the test begins, simply clicking on the pen will display multiple lines of notes.



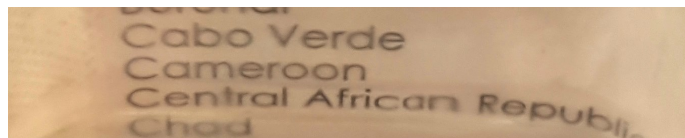
Here's a physics cheat sheet in a rotating blue pen.



A3.

The Label Remover

This is a candidate that removes the label from a beverage with a clear plastic bottle. They place the notes on the inside of the label and re-attach it to the bottle. Once the exam begins, the candidate can view the notes while drinking from the bottle.

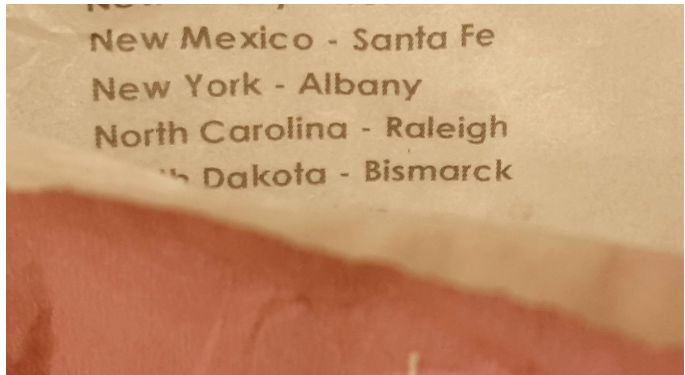


The above photo's demonstrate this technique using a list of countries in Africa.

A4

The Snack Bag

In this example, a candidate prints out their notes of choice on a sheet of thin paper. The notes are taped inside a popular snack bag. Once the test begins, the notes can be viewed while accessing the food.



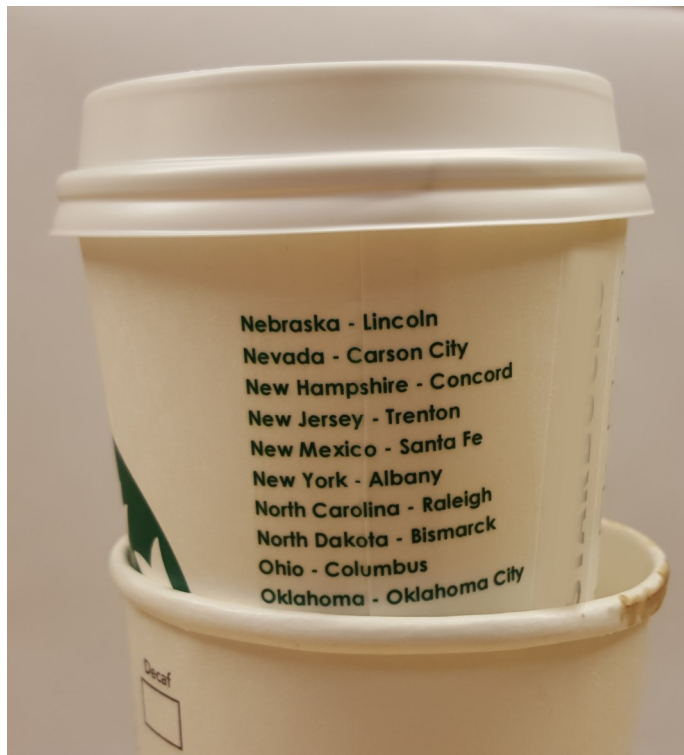
Above is an example of a geography cheat sheet using U.S. states and capitals in a snack bag.

A5.

The Hidden Cup

This is a tricky one. A candidate purchases one coffee and requests a second cup. They place notes on the outside of the first coffee cup, then cover it with the second cup. During the exam, the cup can be lifted to reveal the attached notes.

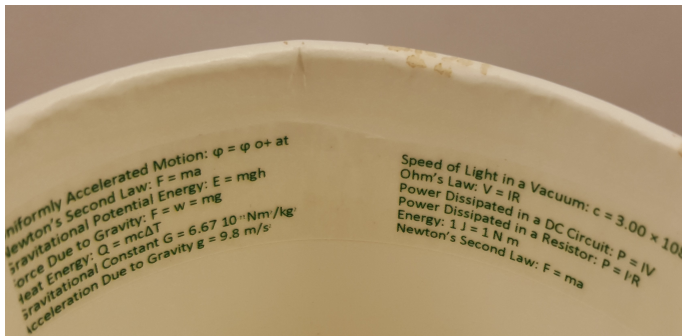
Here's an example using a U.S. states and capitals.



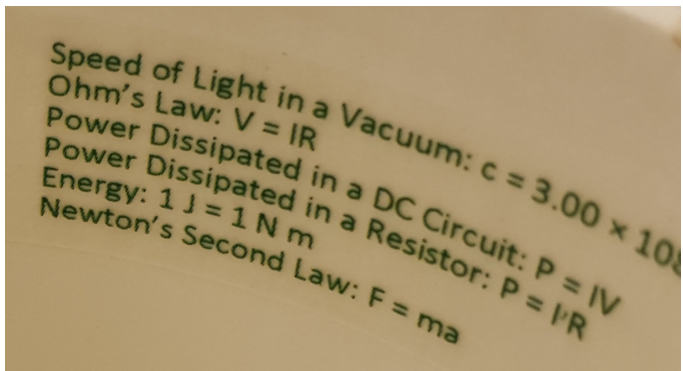
A6.

The Submerged Notes

Here's a simple example that is very difficult to catch. A cheat sheet is printed on a piece of paper and then "laminated" with clear tape. Once sufficiently waterproof, it can be taped inside a cup, right below the surface of the liquid. During the exam, the candidate removes the top of the cup and takes a drink, revealing the notes.



Here's a physics cheat sheet in a coffee cup.



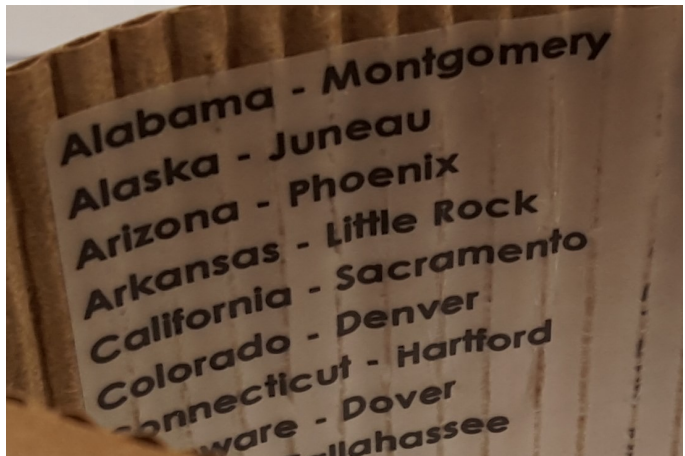
A7

Coffee Cup Sleeves

This is another tricky one that emphasizes how creative candidates have become. Notes are placed inside a coffee cup sleeve. The sleeve is removed at some point during the exam and the notes are revealed.



This example shows another version of the U.S. states and capitals cheat sheet.

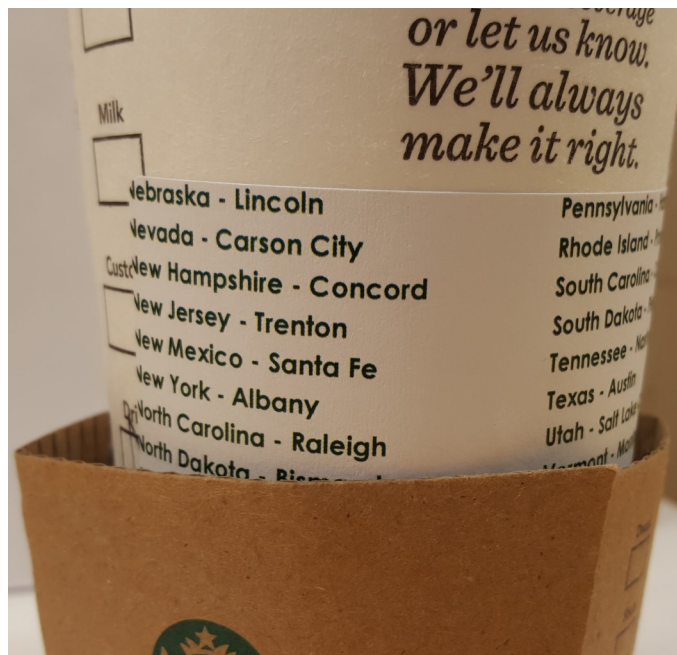


A8.

The Coffee Sleeve Drop

A variant on the last example where a candidate places notes on the side of a coffee cup under the coffee sleeve. If placed correctly, the candidate can view the notes on one side of the cup, while the proctor is not able to see them from the opposite side. Once the exam has begun, the sleeve can be dropped to reveal the notes.

Here's an example showing the second half of an alphabetical listing of the U.S. states and capitals.



About the Editor

Jarret M. Dyer is the Coordinator of Specialized Testing at College of DuPage, in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. He has worked in the testing industry for over ten years and is currently researching how students feel about cheating in today's society. He has co-authored a chapter on computer based testing in Proctoring Best Practices, a joint project by the National College Testing Association (NCTA) and the Association of Test Publishers (ATP). He sits on the Governing Council of NCTA and is a member of the Association of Test Publishers (ATP), the International Test Commission (ITC), the Northern Illinois Testing Coalition (NITC) and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME).

Jarret earned a Bachelor's degree from Messiah College and a Master's degree from Northern Illinois University.

Jarret attributes a summer job in college as the catalyst that led to him to a career in testing. While working the front door of a bar in a small beach side town, he denied a young women entry, citing the validity of her California driver's license as a reason. After reciting the information on the ID, the young woman revealed that she was the actress, Christina Applegate, in disguise. From that moment forward, Jarret knew his fate as an ID checker was sealed. And let's be honest, there's no better place to check ID's than a testing center.

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