Morals for your story

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Dilemma

Recently, I was taking a test, during which we were not allowed to use calculators. This is an upperclassman-level test, so the professors are fairly trusting, I noticed that a friend was using a calculator, which, as I have said, was not allowed on the test. Based on my discussions with him/her prior to the test, I am certain that this was totally an honest mistake on his/her part.
What should I do in this particular situation, and what is ethical in the general case?
--Witness of Unintentional Cheating

Responses

You should tell your professor what you saw. For starters, it is unfair to all the other students in the class if one student gets away with using a calculator on a test. Second, if you were not allowed to use calculators on the test, I imagine this point was stressed. The happiness of the entire class needs to be taken into consideration in this case. By telling your professor what happened, you are potentially making the situation more fair for the rest of the class and only diminishing the happiness of one person, your friend who used a calculator when he or she shouldn't have.
--Elisa Mullikin

The correct choice depends entirely on how confident you are that the person was unaware that calculators were not allowed. Not to be rude, but most students know whether or not calculators are allowed. But still, if you believe him/her then I do too.
If it was an honest mistake, you should tell this person that you saw him/her using a calculator. The person will find out that he/she did something wrong and decide whether or not to tell the professor. You should not tell the professor because it is not your grade, but you should encourage him or her to tell the professor. Your professor will likely appreciate your friend's honesty and may lighten any punishment as a result.
--Akash Jha

Was it really unintentional cheating? I think that it is hard to forget that a calculator cannot be used on a test. I'm questioning how well you really know this person. You need to talk to him or her and try to figure out what the true intention was. I may be mistaken, but I think you will find this was case of intentional cheating and that your "friend" should be reported.
--Batman

I don't think you should turn your friend in. While using a calculator when one isn't supposed to is a severe mistake, it is the job of the proctors to catch it. The test proctors should be alerted that an anonymous person broke a rule so that they can crack down on the next test and prevent another mishap.
--Scoop

I can see how this would be a hard decision for you to make, but I think you should tell your friend what you witnessed. Then you and your friend, you should go and talk with your professor together. This way you can't be accused of cheating, too, and your friend will have support for his or her case.
According to Kant, this would be the most ethical solution because you are not deceiving your friend or your professor. Additionally, you are respecting each of them, holding them accountable for their ability to think rationally and deal fairly with complex situations. This solution also appeals to utilitarian reasoning in that it makes the test most fair for the population affected—you and the other students in the class.
--Hallie Byth

Although you believe your friend made an honest mistake, I think you should ask him or her about it to see what his or her reaction is. If your friend feels that he or she had an unfair advantage with the calculator on the test, he or she will probably feel guilty enough to be sure not to do it again.
Chances are that the calculator really did not help your friend that much anyway if the test could be done without it, and if it was an honest mistake I see no reason to tell your professor what happened. It is your friend who missed out on the learning opportunity by using the calculator, not everyone else.
--Cayla Wood

To my surprise, I have been in a similar situation before. One of my friends used a calculator on a test on which calculator use was not authorized. But my situation was much different because the teacher caught my friend.
I believe you should confront your friend and ask why he or she used the calculator on the test and, depending on what he or she says, you should judge what to do from there. It seems important for your own peace of mind, though, to understand what the ethical reasoning of your friend is or was in the situation.
--Sarah Leatherbery

Next Issue's Dilemma

Don't worry; I don't live in the dorms or in Mines Park.
Recently a friend was studying at my apartment. He noticed some bugs on my reclining chair and said they were bedbugs. As soon as I was convinced that he was right, which took about two minutes of a Google search, my friend helped me carry the chair to the alley. We could not lift it into the Dumpster, so we left it beside said Dumpster. My friend didn't stay much longer, and he texted me on the way to his car to tell me that the chair was gone.
What should I do? Am I ethically obligated to put up a notice in my building to warn people that the recliner has bedbugs? Or do I let them alley-shop at their own risk?

--Recently Exterminated