

CourseTrees Ethics Statement

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CourseTrees exists to help students see how a curriculum fits together and plan their way through it. We can only ask students to trust the map if we are careful with data. This statement sets out the principles we hold ourselves to and the concrete steps that back them up.

Our principles

- Do no harm to students. Nothing we publish should make it possible to identify an individual student or expose a person's record.
- Collect the minimum. We gather only what the site needs, and we keep as much as possible in your own browser rather than on our servers.
- Be honest about our data. We describe what we hold, where it came from, and where it is thin or uncertain, in plain language.
- Respect the rules of the sources we use. We follow published terms and robots rules and gather at a respectful rate.
- Never sell personal data. We do not sell, rent, or trade personal data, and we do not run third-party advertising trackers.

De-identification and the cell-size floor

The single most important safeguard for grade data is de-identification. We only show grade distributions as aggregate group statistics, and we enforce a minimum cell size of 5. If fewer than 5 students sit behind a distribution or a cell within it, we suppress it. Small groups are where aggregate numbers can point back to a person, so we treat this floor as a hard rule.

This is how we keep aggregate grade data on the right side of the line that FERPA draws around a student's protected education records. Group statistics that cannot reasonably be traced to an individual are not personal records, and the cell-size floor is what keeps them that way.

Frameworks we follow

- FERPA. We are not a school and we hold no education records. Catalog data describes courses, and grade distributions describe groups, not identified individuals. Our cell-size floor keeps aggregates de-identified.
- GDPR. For people in the EU and EEA, we honor access, rectification, erasure, restriction, objection, and portability for the small amount of account data we hold. Email us to exercise any right.
- CCPA and CPRA. For California residents, we honor the rights to know,

delete, and correct, and we do not sell or share personal information.

- ACM Code of Ethics. We follow its guidance to avoid harm, respect privacy, act honestly, and respect the work and rules of others.

Scraping conduct

We collect public catalog data with automated tools. We keep our request rate respectful so we never burden a school's systems, we review each source's Terms and robots rules before we add it, and we attribute every source with a link back to its official catalog. When a source signals that automated access is not welcome, we respect that signal, even when it means we cover less.

Your rights and how to reach us

- Instructor or individual opt-out. Want data associated with you removed or excluded? Email coursetrees@gmail.com.
- Per-source takedown. Represent a university or data source and want data corrected or removed? Email coursetrees@gmail.com.
- Access, deletion, and correction. Signed-in users can ask what we hold and have it deleted or corrected at any time. Email coursetrees@gmail.com.
- Fix a specific course. Use the report button in any course panel, or email us.

We would rather hold less data than data we should not have. If you think we have crossed a line, tell us and we will fix it.