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Academic Writing and Grammar for Students

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Referencing

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter you should:

- understand the purpose and importance of referencing
- have an awareness of a range of referencing systems and what they look like on the written page
- be aware of more advanced referencing techniques you can use as your writing develops.

When we present the reader with evidence from our reading or research we must *reference* it.

This book does not deal comprehensively with every possible example of referencing; no book does! I will, though, discuss the key principles of referencing in a technical sense, and show you examples of common referencing styles.

Referencing is a broad term, and usually means *all* the things you must do to provide information about your sources; referencing, therefore, involves doing several things. Here is my definition:

Referencing is a system used to make clear to the reader when you are bringing ideas, words, quotes, illustrations, concepts or anything from other sources into your own assignments.



There are many referencing systems, also known as referencing styles. Some are almost identical, some vary more widely. Their aim is always the same: as stated above, to point out where you are using other sources. Whether you mention a radio interview, a computer game or a journal article, you'll have to reference these sources in a certain way, according to a certain system.

As with many other topics discussed in this book, a good way of learning how to reference effectively is to look at how it's done in what you read. The next time you are asked to read a journal article for a seminar, or take a book from your university library because it's on your 'recommended reading' list, take the time to look at how references are used by the authors. Like you, they *must* base their academic arguments on the research they've done. You'll see that the best writers, the published academics, follow the key tips I've suggested. You're likely to learn a lot more too, and absorb their ideas.

WHAT YOUR TUTORS SAY

'Develop a system for recording your resources used. When writing notes on the articles you've read, head your notes with the date, title, author and source of the material. Write this in the reference style required for the academic bit of work. And keep them all in one place!' – Alice, Occupation Therapy lecturer

Alice's point is important because, as you might be realising, referencing means collecting and using an awful lot of information. Just take a look at the reference lists at the backs of your textbooks, or the footnotes on their pages! Make sure, as Alice says, you save your information in a practical way that works for you. The librarians at your university don't like getting frantic questions about which book a certain quote is from – mainly because it's very hard for them to help you in a situation like that! *Always* make a note of the information your referencing system uses when you are studying or reading.

Think of referencing as how you make clear to the reader *what* sources you use. Critical thinking is the approach you take when analysing your sources – *how* you use them.

Remember that, a few paragraphs ago, I mentioned that 'referencing' referred broadly to a range of different things. Before talking briefly about the different systems, let's look at what those things are.

In most referencing systems, referencing is made up of:

- a 'reference list' or list of 'works cited', which contains your 'full' or 'long' references **at the end of your assignment**

and

- a ‘citation’ of each source, which might be ‘direct’ or ‘indirect’ **on the page of your assignment when you use that particular source**. As such, you’ll have citations appearing throughout your work, and some sources might be cited several times.

Key point

You may have heard of, or seen, the term ‘bibliography’. Sometimes you might provide one at the end of a piece of work. So what’s the difference between a reference list and a bibliography?

The two are often confused, with good reason. They usually *look* the same; they use the same referencing style/system.

A reference list/works cited list shows the reader all the books/other sources you’ve cited (or quoted) in your essay (I’ll explain what citing is in a minute). A bibliography uses the same format to give the reader a list of *books that might also interest them* or provide *more information not directly related to your topic*, and that you have not used directly in your work.

You won’t be expected to provide bibliographies for much undergraduate work; perhaps at the end of a longer assignment, like a dissertation. However, you’ll always have to provide a reference list.

Here’s an example:

You’re writing a dissertation about the subtext of modern Japanese horror films. You’ve read, as part of the whole course, a 30-year-old book that is seen as key reading in the field. It discusses ways in which to analyse films *in general*. You haven’t quoted it in your essay. However, you think that interested readers will benefit from reading it, and gain more from your dissertation by reading it. So you put it in your bibliography.

If you have used the book, by writing a sentence like, ‘The basis for my analysis can be found in ...’, then it belongs in your reference list.

So what is citing? ‘Citing’ (the verb) or providing a ‘citation’ (the noun) is pointing out to the reader where, exactly, in your assignment you’re referring to a particular source. If you quote a book, you provide a citation in that particular sentence so the reader can see straight away that the quote has come from somewhere else. If you quote the same book in your next paragraph, you have to provide a citation there as well. If you provide a chart or diagram, from a different book, on the next page, it too comes with a citation. Think of ‘citations’ (which vary depending on your referencing system) as the bits of information you attach to quotes – although, as you’ll see, it gets *slightly* more complicated than that.

Then the reader can use the citations to look at the *full references*, in the reference list – usually at the end of the essay. Some referencing systems, like footnoting, provide full references at the bottom of each page.

The reference list is where you provide a lot more information about your sources – usually details like the publisher, all the authors’ names, editors, and so on; this is the information your reader would need to go and find a copy of that same source.

There is a simple reason these two things are done separately. Imagine including all the information I’ve mentioned in the previous paragraph every time you quote a book, within the sentences of your essay! It would severely disrupt the flow of your writing and make your work very difficult to read. Citations are like quick ‘keys’ that point the reader to the full reference.

Citing and referencing are both necessary to provide your readers with enough information. There are also two different types of citation you can use – this refers mainly to written text, rather than images or multimedia.

As the previous chapter explained, you can *quote* other authors (also known as citing them *directly*) or *paraphrase* them (citing them *indirectly*).

The different referencing systems/styles

Referencing ‘systems’ and referencing ‘styles’ are the same thing. A system or style is the actual *type* of referencing you’ll use, which dictates what your references look like, how they are inserted into your text, and how you construct a full reference list.

I can’t tell you which system you’ll be using at university. It depends on the subject you’re studying; whether your university has a preferred system/style; whether your department has a preferred style; and sometimes on what your tutors themselves prefer or expect. Sometimes, your tutor won’t specify a particular style, as long as you use a recognised system and do so correctly.

Each system will have a different format for direct citations, indirect citations and full/long references.

Most of the journals and books you’ll read will have reference lists and referenced sources. Remember that your lecturers have to follow the same rules you do when they publish books or articles! Don’t worry if the sources you read reference things differently – journals, for example, quite often have their own referencing systems, unique to them. The same thing applies to some publishers.

Key point

In this book, my examples use the Harvard referencing style.

I can give you some examples of the more common systems used at universities in the UK, but be sure to check with your department, course handbook and tutors.

In the ‘further reading’ list at the end of this chapter, you’ll see a book called *Cite Them Right*. This book contains many detailed examples of different kinds of source in the different referencing styles. For more detail on the different systems, I’d highly recommend this text.

These are the most common systems, and I’ve given some examples of the subjects that most commonly employ them (there are exceptions, however. Some universities in the UK, for example, recommend the Harvard system to all their students):

- Harvard referencing/the author–date system (widely used across a range of subjects)
- Vancouver/numeric referencing (Engineering, Design)
- Footnotes or endnotes (English, History)
- MLA referencing (also used for Humanities)
- APA (Psychology; very similar to Harvard style)
- OSCOLA (Law)

These systems all involve citing (directly and indirectly) and providing full references, but they do so in different ways. I will give a quick summary of each, as well as an example citation and full reference.

Key point

It is *crucial* you double-check what is expected of you. I’ve made this point several times, and it is very important! You might even find that one of your module tutors doesn’t mind which system you use – that doesn’t mean you can make one up! Also, do not try to ‘memorise’ how to cite and reference in a particular style. Your university will provide guides and webpages on referencing, and there are plenty of good books out there that explain how to reference any source – from a photocopy of an old manuscript that has been used in a lecture, to a blog post on the Internet, to a simple book, to a poem in an anthology.

Your lecturers, even the most experienced ones, will sometimes have to remind themselves how to reference a certain type of source, and look up an example. I know I do! The more you write, the more you reference, the more quickly it comes naturally. Of course, even though it eventually comes naturally, you still need to carefully check and double-check your reference lists as part of your proofreading process, to find small mistakes that might lose you marks.

Remember that these are intended to be *basic* summaries.

Harvard referencing/the author–date system

The Harvard system is based on putting citation information in parentheses as part of your sentences.

Key point

Harvard referencing is a commonly used system at many British universities. However, although the basic principles of the Harvard style remain the same, Harvard referencing in practice can differ slightly from book to book, or institution to institution. The examples here might not be identical to examples you're given by your tutors. Remember – they're marking your work, so provide the references they ask for!

This is usually the authors' surnames (unless you've used them as part of your sentence), the year of publication and a page number if you are citing directly. The full reference then also provides the place of publication, the publisher and the edition of the book, if necessary. The reference list is arranged alphabetically at the end of the essay.

- ✓ Example citation: One recent critic went as far as calling the film's dialogue 'unnecessarily inflammatory' (Davies, 2007: 36).
- ✓ Full reference: Davies, A. (2007) 'Fury and free speech: drawing the line', in Gordon, J. (ed.) *Contemporary Cinema and Relative Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 30–45.

In the box below are two more sentences from a text discussing the education policy of John Major's government. Both include in-text citations in the Harvard style.

- ✓ Under his 'Citizen's Charter' he determined to institute a fully independent inspectorate so that eventually organisations would be able to tender for contracts to inspect schools (Major, 1999).
- ✓ The Education (Schools) Bill which enabled this system came to Parliament as a result of an internal review of the inspectorate carried out at the behest of Kenneth Clarke, but his plans to allow school governors to choose and then buy in particular inspection teams were thrown out by the House of Lords just prior to the election of 1992 (Balen, 1994).

Below is an excerpt from a Harvard list of full references, with a variety of texts included, ordered alphabetically by the surname of the authors.

References

- ✓ Abell, J. and Walton, C. (2010) 'Imagine: towards an integrated and applied social psychology', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 49, 685–690.
- ✓ Abelson, R.P. (1995) *Statistics as Principled Argument*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- ✓ Abraham, C. and Hampson, S.E. (1996) 'A social cognition approach to health psychology: philosophical and methodological issues', *Psychology and Health*, 11, 223–241.
- ✓ Adams, E.W. (1966) 'On the nature and purpose of measurement', *Synthese*, 16, 125–129.
- ✓ Afkhami, R., Higgins, V. and de Kort, S. (2009) 'Ethnicity: Introductory User Guide. Economic and Social Data Service Government'. Retrieved from: www.esds.ac.uk/government/docs/ethnicityintro.pdf (accessed 02/12/2012).
- ✓ Arburton, J. (2014) 'Psychology in practice', in P. Ryan (ed.), *Practical Sciences*. Chichester: Wiley, pp. 24–59.

Vancouver or numeric referencing

In this system, you assign each of your sources a number, and simply put the number in parentheses as part of the sentence you use them in. You then organise a full reference list, in the order of these numbers, at the end of the work. If you quote a particular book, which is source number '2', several times during your essay, just repeat the same number appropriately. Your reader can then check your reference list to find more information about source '2'.

- ✓ Example citation: One recent critic went as far as calling the film's dialogue 'unnecessarily inflammatory' (2).
- ✓ Full reference: (2) Davies, A. (2005) 'Fury and free speech: drawing the line', in Gordon J. (ed.) *Contemporary Cinema and Relative Realism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 30–45.

Footnotes

Footnotes are found across a range of subjects but tend to be more common in the Humanities, and in particular, English. If you cite a source in a sentence, you put a small superscript number (like this¹) that points the reader to the

¹Your full reference goes here.

bottom of the page, where they will find more information about your source (look at the bottom of the previous page). There are various rules and techniques around using the same source twice, and even some Latin abbreviations you might need to get to grips with.

A similar style uses ‘endnotes’, where the same small numbers appear, but the full references are provided in a list at the end of a chapter or essay.

The following is a passage of text from a rather complex footnoted work. You’ll see the numbered citations in the text itself, and the footnotes at the bottom of the page. Note that a full reference appears to a text that wasn’t written in English; the author has incorporated the ideas into an English work, but provides the reference in the original language. Note 3 is a short title reference, which is used when the source has already been cited in the text.

✓ ... other Hittite texts, the strange deathbed text of Hattusilis I, in which the dying king, who had already rejected his own sons, now rejects his once favourite nephew as his royal successor and tries to settle the succession on his young grandson;² and the edict of Telepinus, in which Telepinus attempts to regulate the accession so that the bloodshed of royal assassinations and usurpations that had marred the most recent history of the Hittite throne could be avoided.³ This despite the fact that Telepinus himself became king only by driving out king Huzziyas and his five brothers. It is not entirely clear why some usurpers of the throne felt this need for self-justification while others did not. Neither Tiglath-Pileser III nor Sargon II, two famous Assyrian usurpers, provide a defence of their accession analogous to that of Esarhaddon, though it should be noted that the damaged annals of both kings are missing the introductory section.⁴ However, it may be that the pressure to provide such a defence was much greater when the new king was faced with ongoing opposition, hostility, and even rebellion after his initial success in seizing the throne.

Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA) referencing

MLA and APA referencing are very similar to Harvard referencing. I won’t confuse you by giving you more examples here. Refer to your tutors and course handbooks if you’re instructed to use either of these systems.

²F. Sommer and A. Falkenstein, *Die hethitisch-akkadische Bilingue des Hattusili I (Labarna II)* (Abh. der philosophisch-historischen Abteilung NF, 16; Munich, 1938).

³Sturtevant and Bechtel, *A Hittite Chrestomathy*, 175–200.

⁴For Tiglath-Pileser III see H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III King of Assyria* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994); for Sargon II, see A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* (Göttingen: Cuvillier, 1994).

OSCOLA

OSCOLA stands for ‘Oxford Standard for the Citation of Legal Authorities’. It is a system used almost exclusively in Law. Other referencing systems have ways of referencing legal material. You might, for example, be a social sciences student writing an essay about free speech. You might have plenty of laws to use and discuss in your work.

Law students, as you’d expect, make the *most* use of legal materials! OSCOLA can be quite a complex system. A lot of it is linked to knowledge of the subject, and what type of law you are discussing, or what journal a quotation has come from. You should be given guidance if you’re expected to use this referencing style. Use the examples you’re provided with!

- For the in-text references, OSCOLA uses footnotes. The formatting of full OSCOLA references depends on the type of legal source used. References to bills, statutory instruments and laws passed after 1963 (to name just a few types) will look different. Additionally, certain commonly used law reports are identified by unique abbreviations.
- This might sound like a lot to take in. As always, though, the important thing for law students is to understand why referencing is important. Use whatever guides and resources are available to help you, and don’t focus on memorising every single rule!

More complex referencing techniques

There are various techniques we can use in most referencing systems that allow you to be quite clever with your sources, and how you bring in your research. Even if you don’t use these during your early essays, you might find them useful later on. It is quite likely you’ll see these in your *reading* as well, so it makes sense to develop some familiarity with them.

The two I will focus on here are: the use of ‘ellipsis’ and the use of square brackets.

Ellipsis

Ellipsis means, quite simply, inserting three full stops (...) whenever you omit (leave out) words, phrases or sentences from your direct quotes. This can be useful in two ways. First, you can make your work more concise by eliminating small words that aren’t necessary to understand the full meaning of the original quote. Second, if a long quote contains information that isn’t relevant or necessary to make your point, you can remove the unnecessary parts. This, again, is an opportunity to make sure you are focusing on the topic or question at hand.

Here's an example. Let's say you are writing an essay about the importance of technology in teaching and learning. You find this sentence in a book about the history of the Internet:

It is difficult to quantify the impact that the rise of the Internet has had on the manufacturing industry, on business, on entertainment, on education, on developing employees at work, and on politics, among many others.

Because your essay is about technology and *teaching and learning*, you can make your quote more concise by writing:

Walters writes that 'it is difficult to quantify the impact that the rise of the Internet has had ... on education' (2008: 209), and although this is true, this essay attempts to illustrate some positive benefits of this impact.

In this example, I've used ellipsis to pull out only what is relevant. This is an example of thinking critically; selecting only the key ideas and facts needed to make your point and answer your essay question.

I can also use this example to highlight how using the correct parts of a quote is a skill to be mastered.

If you were writing, for example, a dissertation that focused on the *problems* posed by assuming that the Internet and other technologies are too far-reaching, and you wanted to make the point that it is a difficult area to research, you might simply use the beginning of the sentence, and write:

Walters writes that 'it is difficult to quantify the impact that the rise of the Internet has had ...' (2008: 209).

Square brackets

You can use square brackets to *add your own words* to direct quotes. This can serve various purposes, and you must be sure that you are *not adding anything that substantially changes the original meaning*. So there is an element of judgement here, and this punctuation must be used carefully.

Here are some examples of the different ways in which square brackets might be used. Note that sometimes they are used in conjunction with ellipsis.

Errors in the original

- ✓ Rivers discusses some examples of asking primary school children about their feelings around bullying. I used similar interview questions in my classroom. When asked about his experiences of bullying, one child said, ‘the bullies was [sic] picking on me every day’.

Here, the ‘*sic*’ means that the original quote contained something ‘incorrect’ (in this case, grammar). Because I’ve added the word to the quote, I have to enclose it in square brackets to show that I’ve done so.

Emphasis added and emphasis in original

- ✓ The problem inherent in Walter’s investigation into bullying (1997) is that it only discusses two schools, even though he still sees fit to draw the conclusion that ‘bullying among schoolchildren is a damaging *and widespread* phenomenon’ [emphasis added].

In the above example, I have italicised a part of the sentence to draw attention to it. As long as I point out that this emphasis is mine, as the square brackets indicate, this is acceptable. If the original quote has italics, you can insert [emphasis in original] to make sure your reader is aware that you haven’t changed anything about the source material.

Adding words to a sentence

Let’s assume I have read the following sentence during my research:

‘This group of writers rebelled against what they saw as the morals of the time.’

If I am writing an essay that focuses on one particular writer, called Ellis, then I could make this clear in my own work using square brackets, as you can see in the following example:

‘[Ellis] rebelled against what [he] saw as the morals of the time.’

Summing up

By now, you should understand how important referencing is, and how it is a vehicle for demonstrating our critical thinking. Clearly, you will need to use a referencing system in your work – and you should be guided by your tutors when it comes to selecting one, or having one selected for you.

Your tutors can see straight away if you've not put effort into, or rushed, your referencing – particularly if your referencing is inconsistent and changes throughout an assignment. This happens far too much, and you will lose marks because of it.

Remember to use some of the texts in the further reading section, and to ask your tutors for advice. Additionally, as I've already mentioned, if you can't reference a particular source from memory, it doesn't matter; look it up or ask for help.

Further reading

As mentioned in the previous chapter's further reading list, I advise you to consider this set of books with those more focused on critical thinking as a skill.

Colin, N. (2007) *The Complete Guide to Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

- More technical than some of the critical thinking texts I recommended in the previous chapter, although it still deals with similar ideas (including how to introduce your own ideas into your assignments); this book discusses ten referencing styles, including some not appearing in *Cite Them Right*, below. As such, this is a great all-round book on referencing and critical thinking, with more space to discuss both ideas than I have here.

Pears, R. (2010) *Cite Them Right* (8th edn). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

- As mentioned in the chapter itself, this is the definitive text explaining how a huge range of sources can be referenced in various referencing styles, including Harvard, Vancouver and OSCOLA (a legal referencing system). This is not a book to read from beginning to end, but to use as a reference text if you are struggling with a particular source and how to put the reference on the page correctly.