

How to incorporate evidence into your writing

Most assessments at university require you to draw on a range of academic sources (or evidence) to build your own argument. This guide provides tips and strategies for effectively incorporating sources while maintaining your own voice in your writing.

Incorporating evidence using *direct* and *indirect* voice

Direct voice is when you either **express your own arguments and thoughts**, or the **arguments or thoughts in the voice of another writer** (e.g., direct quotation).

Indirect voice is when you **summarise or paraphrase the words or thoughts of others**. It allows your reader to see evidence of *your* understanding of the source and how it fits in with *your* argument (see [Summarising and paraphrasing Quick Guide](#) under *Writing at university*).

Using a combination of both direct and indirect voice can be an effective way to blend your words with those of others.

For instance, a student may wish to incorporate the following excerpt of an original source into their writing:

"An understanding of the methods scientists use is important because research can be flawed and knowing how research should be done can bring those flaws to light"
(Cicarelli & White, 2009, p3)

Below is an example of how the student effectively has integrated this source by combining **direct (own) voice**, **direct (others) voice** with **indirect voice (paraphrase)**:

One of the core requirements of evidence-based practice is being able to evaluate the rigor and applicability of published research. However, this relies partly on knowledge of what constitutes sound research and an understand of potential methodological weaknesses and limitations. This notion is supported by Cicarelli and White (2009) who argued that it is crucial to have a well-developed understanding of the methods used by scientists in order to critically evaluate the relative merits of findings arising from studies, which has been described as one of "the core skills embedded into undergraduate science education" (Coil, 2010, p530).

Tips for balancing *your* voice with that of your sources

Aim to start and end *each paragraph* and *each assessment* (introduction and conclusion) in your own voice. Use reporting verbs to evaluate and place sources in context. This also helps strengthen *your* voice.

Make it very clear in your writing what constitutes the direct words and thoughts of others, your paraphrasing or synthesis of other sources, and your own voice. This refers to **direct and indirect voice** and using both can be used effectively to create balanced writing.

Good paraphrasing skills are essential for effective incorporation of sources (see [How to use paraphrases as evidence Quick Guide](#)).

Remember to always acknowledge your sources through correctly formatted referencing. If you would like to learn more about referencing, consult with the SCU LibGuide for your required referencing style ([SCU Referencing Guides](#)) or attend a Learning Zone workshop ([Register for a Learning Zone Workshop](#)).

Methods of incorporating citations:

Irrespective of whether direct or indirect voice is used, sources can be introduced into the text as either **author prominent** or **information prominent**. While a mixture of the two methods is often used, the general preference is for information prominent citation (especially in the Sciences).

In **author prominent citation**, the emphasis is placed on WHO developed the evidence. This can be important when;

- introducing evidence from seminal works,
- where the acknowledgement of the author is particularly important,
- in order to show a clear distinction between *your* argument and that of the author, or
- when you want to show evidence of your evaluation of the source

Example of author prominent citation:

Hansen et al. (2013) revealed that having supportive collegial relationships was among the most important factors for experienced rural general practitioners to stay in their practice for longer.

In **information prominent citation**, the emphasis is placed on WHAT the source has contributed. This is often the preferred way to integrate evidence into your writing, because it;

- adds a sense of objectivity to your writing
- keeps your writing, clear, relevant and succinct
- allows for a smoother integration of evidence into your own writing/argument

Example of information prominent citation:

Supportive collegial relationships have been flagged as an important factor contributing to staff retention among rural general practitioners (Hansen et al., 2013).

Further examples of incorporating sources into your work:

To include another person's ideas:

Brown (2023) claims that... argues that... points out that... reports that... proposes that... suggests that... states that... maintains that... implies that...

To make comments about individual studies:

The study comprised/consisted of... focussed on, has undertaken/attempted...

The findings were reported as... Brown's (2021) study has shown that / found that...

Jones (2019) has indicated that... develops a theoretical perspective that...

...is part of a growing body of work that... redefines the traditional notion/idea of...

...elaborates on the theory that... has undertaken/attempted a...

Brown (2021) raises... proposes... defends... substantiates... justifies the idea notion/proposition

To make comments about a number of studies:

Research (e.g. Brown, 2023; Smith, 2020) has shown that... Studies (e.g. Brown, 2023; Smith, 2020) have indicated that... Studies (e.g. Brown, 2023; Smith, 2020) generally agree/ confirm/disagree/refute... There is a common view that... The general finding is that... Traditional theories/ ideas are reworked as...

To give your opinion when you are making a suggestion:

Brown's (2023) claim seems to be that... suggests that... could be interpreted as... appears as though... It would seem that further investigations are needed to...

To make comparisons between studies/ideas:

Whereas previous studies ... this study seeks to ... While this study ... other studies ... Unlike previous studies, this study/article ... concludes that ...

Similarly, in comparison, in contrast, likewise, conversely, on the other hand, as was evidenced in previous studies, the findings/idea put forward in this study/article ...

The research has tended to focus on ... rather than on ...

Although considerable research effort has been given to ... less attention has been paid to These studies have emphasised ... as opposed to ...

To make critical comments (strengths, weaknesses, limitations):

The study was well presented and documented... assumes that... is predicated on the assumption that...
...Other differences were noted... however...

Even so, many questions were left unanswered.

The problem with these studies... The study does not... There is some contradictory evidence...

The... were questionable/debatable... It is unclear how...

The limitations of the... There are concerns with the...

Ways to introduce a new idea or topic (e.g. in an essay):

Recently there has been a strong interest in... The development of... is a problem...

The... has become a favoured topic because... The central issue is... The relationship between... and... has been investigated by... Many studies have focussed on...