

# Practising academic integrity: Reporting verbs



## Quick Guide

### What is a reporting verb?

Reporting verbs describe and report on others' work. Using reporting verbs can help you to blend sources into your writing.

### Use reporting verbs to blend sources into your assignments effectively

When writing assignments at university you will need to blend other's work into your writing. Reporting verbs are used in academic writing to discuss or report on others' ideas, research, and creative work.

Carefully selecting the reporting verbs used in assignments can help you to:

- blend sources into your writing
- characterise the work being introduced
- identify the view of authors used in your work
- demonstrate your understanding
- add in your ideas and judgements.

### Avoid using 'says'

Avoid introducing paraphrase and direct quotations by using the reporting verb 'says'. Using 'Baker says...' over and over again is repetitive and can reduce the flow of your writing. Using the same reporting verb in an assignment can also be interpreted by markers as a lack of effort or skill on your part.

### Examples

#### Example one

Green (2009) says environmental concerns are over-stated in many popular texts.

Using 'says' does little to either characterise the work being introduced, identify the view of sources' author, or show your judgements about the source.

#### Example two

Green (2009) insists environmental concerns are over-stated in many popular texts.

In this example (above) the writer **demonstrates understanding** by identifying the tone of the source (insistent).

### What is in this guide

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## Reporting verbs can be used to characterise sources and authors' views

Reporting verbs are a concise technique for characterising sources. Characterising a source requires understanding and judgement. The reporting verb used can show the marker:

- your understanding of the source
- your ability to make judgments about it.

## Verbs that characterise sources as neutral or objective

Reporting verbs can be used to describe sources as neutral or objective, and to indicate you think the work offers credible information about the assignment topic.

In scientific disciplines objective, factual work based on observation is highly valued as a credible source of knowledge on a given topic. In assignments you can add in your judgement or evaluation that a source is credible by using a neutral reporting verb. Using credible sources can add credibility to your own writing.

### Example reporting verbs

observe(s), report(s), reveal(s), point(s) out, demonstrate(s), goes on to show, show(s), indicate(s), according to, describe(s), note(s), recommends, comment(s), reminds,

## Examples

### Example one

Moreton (2011) **observes** significant changes in environmental politics over the last decade.

### Example two

Davidson (2003) **reports** students have little trouble understanding how to use reporting verbs once they are given guidance.

### Example three

Brownstone (2012) **points out** new students are often enthusiastic and engaged when they start their studies at university.

In the examples above, reporting verbs are used to:

- **characterise sources** as factual, neutral, and objective
- **describe authors** as objectively conveying facts and events
- show the **writer's judgement** of the work.

## Reporting verbs that characterise sources as credible arguments

Reporting verbs can be used to describe sources as offering a strong argument based on sound logic and evidence. Using these verbs shows you understand the source is not objective, and is open to evaluation.

### Example reporting verbs

argue(s), contend(s), theorise(s), assert(s), find(s), counter(s) the argument that, refute(s), support(s) the view that, maintains that, emphasise(s), define(s), critique(s) the understanding that, recommends.

## Examples

### Example one

Dayson (2009) **argues** living sustainably is the most effective way to address environmental damage and social inequalities.

### Example two

Mayberry (2012) **contends** learning how to write assignments at university can be both stressful and rewarding.

### Example three

Eggleton (2010) **refutes** the idea that academic integrity is of little interest to most university students and academics.

These examples characterise the **sources** as taking a stance on a matter, and **authors** as offering their expert opinion (their interpretation of facts, events, and information).

In assignments you can use reporting verbs to show **your judgement** that the source is not objective, but is still a credible source of knowledge. Expert opinion is valuable, while also being open to evaluation. Carefully selecting reporting verbs can make it easier to add in your judgements about other's work.

## Verbs that characterise sources as limited, biased or speculative

Reporting verbs can also be used to characterise sources as being speculative, generalised, and uncertain in their claims. Depending on the discipline and the assignment, these qualities may make the source valuable (creative, insightful, and nuanced) or lacking credibility (uncertain and speculative).

hypothesise(s), propose(s), recommend(s), suggest(s), insist(s), believe(s), strongly refute(s), imply, assume(s), question(s) the view that, recommends, speculate(s), creatively rethink(s), postulate(s), moot(s)

## Examples

### Example one

Mook (2011) **speculates** about what it would be like to live in a sustainable society where environmental, social, economic, and cultural issues are equally important.

### Example two

Yale (2002) **insists** banning offensive language during question time in parliament will help improve the reputation of politicians.

### Example three

Smith (2010) **assumes** practising academic integrity is difficult for new students, and takes this as his starting point when **suggesting** how to support learners.

These examples use reporting verbs to characterise sources and author claims as uncertain, biased, and limited.

When writing assignments reporting verbs can be used to show you think the source explores possibilities rather than certainties, or that author claims are biased, or lacking evidence. This is an important way to add in your ideas, and judgements.

## More specific examples of using reporting verbs

There are many ways to use reporting verbs to introduce sources into your writing, and show your understanding of other's work. The examples below will help you to use reporting verbs to describe an author's position and beliefs on an issue, and describe what they are doing in a source.

### **Verbs to indicate the author disagrees or questions:**

doubts, questions, disagrees, questions, refutes, rejects, discards, attacks, complains, dismisses.

### **Verbs to indicate the author agrees:**

concedes, validates, admits, supports, agrees, extols, confirms, praises, acknowledges, accepts, recognises.

### **Verbs to indicate the author evaluates or examines:**

analyses, explores, unpacks, interprets, critiques, compares, contrasts, investigates, examines, judges, assesses, scrutinises, understands, finds.

### **Verbs to indicate the author proves something:**

confirms, substantiates, proves, verifies, establishes.

### **Verbs to indicate the author's beliefs:**

hopes, believes, insists, feels, holds, knows, maintains, assumes, thinks, expresses.

### **Verbs to indicate what the author did to make the knowledge:**

observe(s), analyse(s), experiment(s), examine(s), study, estimate(s).

## Tips when using reporting verbs in assignments

- Avoid using 'says' when introducing sources into your writing.
- Try not to use the same couple of reporting verbs all through the assignment. Markers may interpret it as lack of effort or skill on your part.
- Check the dictionary meaning of reporting verbs to make sure they fit in with the rest of the sentence and convey your ideas and judgements about the source.
- Generally use present tense when using reporting verbs. It is usual in academic writing to use present tense when introducing and discussing other's work, even if it was published a long time ago. Check this with your teacher to see if this is the case in your discipline.
- Double check reporting verbs during editing phases.

## Related Quick Guides

Practising academic integrity: How to include direct quotations into your writing, Practising academic integrity: Blending quotes into your writing, Practising academic integrity: How to use paraphrases in your writing, Practising academic integrity: Blending paraphrases into your writing, Practising academic integrity: How to define and use concepts in your writing