

## **Acknowledging Sources**

### **How can sources be acknowledged when you are paraphrasing, summarising or quoting?**

There are two methods: the first uses in-text references and the second uses footnotes. The use of in-text references is the preferred method in most Schools within the Australian School of Business. The exception is the School of Business Law and Taxation, which requires the footnote method. The following examples use the in-text reference method.

### **How can you incorporate the name(s) of the author(s) into your text?**

The author(s) can be incorporated into your text in three ways: with no specific author focus, with weak focus on the author, or with strong author focus.

#### **No specific author focus**

No particular author(s) is (are) named but reference is made to the state of previous research as a whole or to general agreement among scholars. This type of reference is generally found in the introduction stage of an essay or report when the writer wants to orientate the reader to the topic or to summarise previous research. For example:

Increasingly, human resource planning is being seen as a broader process, addressing multiple levers for increasing organizational effectiveness; for building and sustaining competitive capabilities based on the management of human resources (Walker, 1992; Ulrich & Lake, 1990; Schuler & Walker, 1990).

#### **Weak author focus**

The focus is placed on the evidence itself rather than the author(s) who gave it. The author(s) is (are) placed in parentheses at the end of the sentence. This type of reference is the most frequently used in the body of a text as it allows the focus of the sentence to be the issues. For example:

The information that has most value will vary according to what use is to be made of it (Carsberg, Hope & Scapens 1974, p.163).

#### **Strong author focus**

The author(s) is (are) named in the main text, usually in a prominent position in the sentence. This type of reference is usually found in the body of the report or essay when the findings or arguments of different authors are being contrasted. For example:

Johnson and Kaplan (1987) in *Relevance lost: the rise and fall of management accounting* suggested that management accounting must evolve or else run the risk of obsolescence.

## **What tense should you use when you are referring to others' ideas?**

The appropriate tense depends on the type of author focus: the current relevance of the ideas; and the reporting verb used.

### **Present perfect tense**

This tense is often used where the focus is on the research of several authors. For example:

The term 'globalisation' has become almost a by-word for heterodox analyses of the international economy and polity (Holland 1987; Gill and Law 1988; McGrew and Lewis 1992).

The present perfect tense is also used in general statements that describe the level of research activity in an area. For example:

Little research has been done on referencing in the assignment writing of Commerce students.

### **Present tense**

The present tense is usually used when the focus of the citation is on the information. This indicates that you consider the information you are citing is fact. For example:

General Motors Corporation and Ford Motor Corporation are independently creating online supplier networks for all goods and services they buy (White 1999).

The present tense is usually used with strong author focus and verbs of stating, arguing, showing and thinking. For example:

Smith (1999) argues that none of these methods is appropriate.

The present tense is used, in spite of the fact that the authors wrote their ideas at some time prior to your reference, because the ideas are still relevant in the present. You may, however, in some contexts, prefer to use the past tense or the present perfect tense.

### **Past tense**

The past tense is usually used when the author focus is strong and the verbs used are verbs of doing or acting. For example:

Brown (1995) found that the majority of students had difficulty with the first assignments they were required to write.

The past tense can also be used when you are citing references that are more than ten years old. You may be citing them to give background and to contrast the earlier ideas about an issue with what people think now.

## Which reporting verbs should you use?

Your choice of reporting verb depends on the meaning you wish to convey. Some reporting verbs are neutral and give no indication of either the author's feelings or of your feelings about what the author said. Other verbs can indicate the purpose of the author and how strong the author's expression was. They can also indicate the extent to which you accept the author's views.

### Verbs and other expressions neutral in meaning

according to	acknowledge	comment
define	describe	discuss
note	point out	state

### Verbs that indicate the author's position on an issue

allege	argue	assert
challenge	claim	concede
defend	doubt	emphasise
endorse	take issue with	maintain
put forward	recommend	reject
refute	suggest	support

### Verbs that indicate the author's thinking

assume	believe	consider
hypothesise	predict	recognise
take for granted	think	

### Verbs that indicate the author is showing something

demonstrate	explain	illustrate
indicate	present	show

### Verbs that indicate the author is proving something

confirm	establish	prove
substantiate	validate	verify

### Verbs that indicate what the author did

analyse	apply	estimate
evaluate	examine	find
investigate	observe	study

## Are there any grammatical rules that apply to reporting verbs?

Most reporting verbs can be followed by a 'that' clause. For example:

Brown (1999) **argues that** the system has failed. Jones (2000), on the other hand, asserts that the system has had many successes.

However, some reporting verbs cannot be followed by a 'that' clause. They must be followed by a noun or noun phrase. For example:

Smith (2001) **discusses the reasons** for the failure of the system.

Other verbs that must be followed by a noun or noun phrase are: define, challenge, defend, endorse, put forward, refute, take issue with, reject, support, present, illustrate, substantiate, validate, verify, analyse, evaluate, investigate, apply, examine, observe, and study.

## What other differences are there in the meaning of reporting verbs?

Reporting verbs vary from **neutral** (i.e. conveying no interpretation of what the researcher has said) to **interpretive** (i.e. giving an opinion of what the author has said). For example:

Lee (1998) states that the reasons for the failure were largely economic. (When I write this I give no indication of whether I agree with Lee or not.)

Lee (1998) claims that the reasons for the failure were largely economic. (I am suggesting that I am not sure Lee is correct about this.)

## How often should you refer to your source in an assignment?

The simple answer is 'often'. If you are summarising the ideas of an author over several paragraphs you should refer to the author by name in each paragraph and by a pronoun or 'the author' in each sentence.

If you do not do this, the reader will think that the sentences without a reference to the author are being written as your ideas, and thus that you are plagiarising!