

# REPORTING VERBS

In academic writing, it is necessary to refer to the research of others using reporting verbs. Reporting verbs help the reader understand the relevance of the sources in your writing and can help you to strengthen your argument. However, students can sometimes get caught repeatedly using 'states' or 'reports'; there are many other reporting verbs that can show your interpretation of the research and the way the authors view their own research.

## Common reporting verbs

### Tentative reporting verbs

admit  
caution  
concede  
consider  
hypothesise  
imply  
postulate  
propose  
question  
recommend  
restate  
speculate  
suggest

### Neutral reporting verbs

assume	categorise
comment	compare
contrast	define
demonstrate	describe
document	discuss
examine	explain
explore	focus on
found	identify
indicate	interpret
list	mention
note	observe
point out	present
reflect	regard
report	reveal
show	state
study	take into consideration
use	view

### Strong reporting verbs

acknowledge	advocate
affirm	argue
assert	assume
believe	challenge
condone	concede
confirm	conclude
contend	deny
declare	determine
dismiss	dispute
disregard	doubt
emphasise	endorse
establish	highlight
ignore	infer
insist	maintain
misinterpret	negate
object to	oppose
presume	recognise
recommend	reject
refute	reveal
stress	substantiate
support the view that	

## Using tenses when reporting

Note the tenses used when reporting published research as tense can indicate much more than simply when something happened. Tense usage can vary a little with subject areas, so check the literature in your field for guidance. Here are some general patterns of tense use.

### Present tense

Use present tense to discuss findings from the literature that are generally considered factual and current.

Trang (2011) **emphasises** that this is not the case.

### Present perfect tense

Use present tense to give the general background of past research and to show that previous research still influences current thinking.

Research **has indicated** that economic factors are a major influence on the outcomes of planning strategies (Kendall 2013; Steadman 2012).

### Past tense

Use past tense:

- when referring to previous research that was completed as part of the methodology
- when referring to information that was relevant to a specific study but is not generalisable to the current situation.

Smith (2010) **used** a quasi-experimental methodology ...

Lee (2011) **found** that resource provision was ...

## Activity: Reporting structures and attitudes to knowledge<sup>1</sup>

**Task:** Fill in the empty cells in the table by matching the attitude with the example and comment (answers below):

1. There are new views identified by a particular author
2. Showing controversy
3. The cited writer's perception might be challenged
4. The cited writer's perception is acknowledged
5. Acknowledges (potential) controversy

Attitude to knowledge	Example	Comments
	a) Other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and harder to detect have been reported by Martin (1994).	The term 'have been reported' tells the reader that there might be new ways of understanding the problem. The cited author tells us that he found the forms.
	b) It has been suggested that there are other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and are harder to detect (Martin 1994).	This also indicates that not everybody sees the situation this way. The word 'suggest' is not very persuasive.
	c) It has been argued that there are other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and are harder to detect (Martin 1994).	There are different academic opinions on this. The term 'argued' indicates clear positions.
	d) Martin (1994) studied instances of plagiarism and found that... Martin's analysis reveals that...	Putting the writer's name in the text lets your reader know that this writer did significant work.
	e) Martin (1994) claims that...	The term 'claim' can imply that others could have a different perception or that the claim might not be verified

<sup>1</sup> Used with permission from Dr Julianne East, Academic Language & Learning, La Trobe University. Previously adapted from Buckingham, J., & Neville, M. (1997). A model of citation options. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 20(2), 51-66.

### Answers

1. (a); 2. (c); 3. (e); 4. (d); 5. (b)