

## Others' work

# Writing about others' work: verbs for citations (Harvard APA style)

In many kinds of academic writing you need to **cite** work that you have read.

However you decide to use a citation, you *may* need to use a **reporting verb** to integrate it into your text. For example:

Malley (1998, p.26) **found** that study skills are increasingly used by Higher Education institutions.

*In this case the verb **to find** has been used*

Below is a table of other useful reporting verbs that you might use with citations. **Please note, however, that these verbs are not all interchangeable!** Before selecting a verb it is vital that you carefully read the source and clearly understand the author's claim(s). When you have chosen a verb, ask yourself whether that is *really* what the author intended. You must make sure that you report others' work accurately.

Reporting something the author <i>did</i>	Reporting something the author <i>stated</i>		Reporting the author's <i>opinion</i>	
	'Weaker'	'Stronger'	'Weaker'	'Stronger'
observe, discover, notice, demonstrate, find, report, describe, determine, discern, show, assess, study, analyse, calculate, examine, investigate, identify, prove, establish, conclude	comment, describe, discuss, point out, note, remark, write	affirm, emphasise, stress, maintain, stipulate, explain, conclude, clarify, identify	accept, believe, consider, view, see, question, query, think, suggest, propose, suspect, speculate	argue, assert, claim, contend, deny, recommend, reject, advocate, maintain, conclude

If you are unsure about the exact meaning of any of the verbs in the table above, you should consult a dictionary – preferably one that shows usage. A good one is the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, which is also available online at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org> (note that there is no 'www' in the URL).

Many of the verbs in the table are used with the conjunction **that**. For example:

Mahoney (1998, pp. 10–12) established that this reaction is in fact...

When Smith and Sampson (1989, p. 98) contended that this position was untenable, they were...

Some of the verbs, however, cannot be used with 'that' (**describe, assess, study, analysed, examine, investigate, discuss, clarify, question, query** and **reject** do not need a conjunction). For example:

Martin and Baker (1980) examined the issue from a different perspective.

The verb **view** is used with the conjunction **as**, placed after the subject of the sentence. For example:

Hui (2001, p. 49) views **this** explanation as too simplistic. She maintains **that**...

Notice that some reporting verbs are more often used in the **present tense**.

All the above examples use the reporting verb *actively*. It is also common for the verb to be used *passively*. For example, instead of:

Dominguez (2002, pp. 76–79) **suggested** three possible interpretations of these results.

you could write:

Three possible interpretations of these results **have been suggested** (Dominguez, 2002, pp. 76–79).

Here are some other examples of using reporting verbs in the passive form:

It **has been claimed** (O'Shea, 1997, p. 45) that...

It **has been shown** that this is not the case (Akabi, 1979, pp. 310–319).

The practice of...**has been questioned** (Chopra, 1990, p. 92) because of its...

These findings **have been extensively analysed** (e.g. by **Stamford**, 2001a, 2001b, **Ma**, 2002) and interpretations vary from...

*You can of course add adverbs to your reporting verbs if appropriate – but make sure that they too accurately reflect the original material. (In this case you would need to be sure that the findings in question have indeed been 'extensively' analysed.)*

*The passive form is often used when citing several authors (in this case two works by Stamford and one by Ma) to back up a single point.*

Note that it is also possible to cite an author without using a reporting verb, either by simply restating the author's point, or by using the phrase 'according to'. For example:

Study skills are increasingly used by Higher Education institutions (Malley, 1998, p. 28).

According to Malley (1998, p. 28), study skills are increasingly used by Higher Education institutions.