

ACE Quick Guide to Reporting Verbs

What is a Reporting Verb?

When introducing a paraphrase or direct quotation from scholarly literature, you may be required to use a **reporting verb**. Accompanied by a citation, reporting verbs **signpost** where and how you have incorporated the work of scholars in your field. They also demonstrate your stance, **communicating the extent to which you agree or disagree** with the scholar's arguments.

(Newcastle University, 2024)

The Connotations of Reporting Verbs

When selecting a reporting verb, you should consider its potential connotations. How, for example, would the meaning of the following sentence change if you replaced 'explains' with a different reporting verb?

Taylor (2024) **explains** that ChatGPT can be utilised in the classroom to enhance learning and reduce tutor workload.

Try substituting 'explains' with the reporting verbs below:

acknowledges proposes demonstrates claims alleges proves notes

Each of these reporting verbs introduces a different stance. For example, the reporting verb 'alleges' undermines Taylor's argument – suggesting that it is flawed or unproven. In contrast, the reporting verb 'acknowledges' implies that the writer concurs with Taylor's findings.

As such, you should reflect on your objective when selecting a reporting verb:

- Why have you selected the source?
- How does it support and / or challenge your experiences in the workplace?
- Do you agree or disagree with the scholar's contentions?

There are many reporting verbs to choose from and, dependent on the context, they could be employed to convey a **positive, neutral** or **negative** stance.

The table below includes some additional examples.

(Adapted from Deakin University, 2023)

Reporting Verb	Possible Uses
Argues, Contends, Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To demonstrate that the scholar's argument is credible, backed up with evidence. • To introduce a debate. For example, when you are comparing or contrasting different theoretical positions.
Challenges, Questions, Doubts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show how one scholar questions the conclusions of another or challenges commonly held views.
Claims, Alleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To present information you do not agree with. • To contrast with further resources that you do agree with, using transitional phrases, such as 'however' and 'although'.
Defines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To offer a simple definition, contextualising your argument. • To evaluate the strengths and limitations of one definition in relation to another.
Describes, Outlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce a scholar's explanation of a process, theory, or framework.
Demonstrates, Shows, Establishes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show that you agree with the scholar's findings – that they have been proven by the evidence.
Highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To emphasise a position held by another scholar, subsequently contributing your own analyses.

Identifies, Discerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To name or describe something of importance, as identified by an expert in your field. For example, the components of a theory or framework which you will go on to evaluate – considering their potential benefits and drawbacks in practice.
Maintains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To convey that a scholar maintains belief in their line of argument, but you have some reservations and will follow this up with counter evidence.
State, Observes, Concludes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To demonstrate that the scholar has stated a fact, which you may or may not agree with.
Suggests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To present an idea that you neither completely agree nor disagree with, for it requires further discussion and evidence.

(Adapted from Deakin University, 2023)

The Grammar of Reporting Verbs

In academic writing, the **present tense** is commonly used to discuss findings from scholarly literature:

- Hernandez (2022) outlines the fundamental principles of interface design.

However, when referring to an activity that completed as part of the methodology, or to information that was once considered accurate but has since been discounted, you can use the **past tense**:

- Singh's (2021) case study identified a range of different leadership styles.

Furthermore, the **grammar** of sentences including reporting verbs may vary:

- Klein (2023) argues, in her study of psychographics, that...
- As Klein (2023) argues, the study of psychographics is...
- In her study of psychographics, Klein (2023) argued that...

Reference List

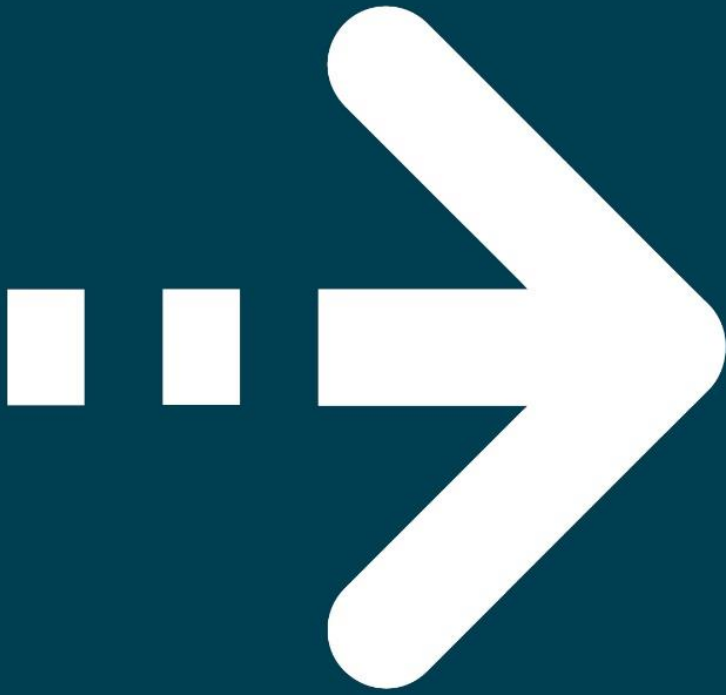
Deakin University (2023) *Reporting Verbs*. Available at: https://www.deakin.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/2234375/Deakin_Referencing-explained_Reporting-verbs.pdf (Accessed: 7 February 2024).

Newcastle University (2024) *Reporting Verbs*. Available at: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/academic-skills-kit/writing/academic-writing/reporting-verbs/#:~:text=Reporting%20verbs%20help%20you%20introduce,to%20build%20your%20own%20argument> (Accessed: 7 February 2024).

Additional Resources

The ACE Quick Guide to Using Sources offers further advice on integrating scholarly resources into your argument, including examples of how to compare theoretical viewpoints and challenge theory with reference to practice.

The University of Portsmouth's [Verbs for Citation](#) (2024) contains additional examples of reporting verbs and their potential uses.



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