

Referencing for research writing: Frequently asked questions

Integrity: *incorruptibility; soundness. Synonyms: honesty, respect, reliability, trustworthiness, reputation.*

Ethical: *conforming to rules and standards of conduct; of or referring to ethics. Synonyms: moral, principled, precise, honourable, fair, open-minded, responsible*

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Introduction

This resource provides answers for frequently asked referencing questions. It does not cover basic referencing rules and conventions. For a summary of the conventions and principles underlining referencing and how to avoid plagiarism, please go to the [referencing](#) resource (*login required*).

When thinking about referencing it is important to bear in mind that it is not simply a technical task that protects the intellectual property of others. Appropriate referencing is critical to our integrity as researchers and to the overall aims of scholarship.

Research aims to advance our collective knowledge about shared problems. This requires:

- scholarship (learning from and building upon the work of others),
- critical awareness (acknowledging a diversity of opinion and taking an evaluative stance supported by evidence),
- testing research within a community of scholars (situating research within appropriate research traditions and subjecting it to expert scrutiny),
- sharing the results of research for the public benefit (publishing/networking),
- acknowledging and respecting the contributions of others (and taking credit only for one's own work).

Referencing allows us to acknowledge the work of other authors, and to contribute to a global research community in a systematic manner. It also enables us to distinguish our own contribution from work that has already been done in the field. Referencing is then the means by which scholars track their communications with one another. It is the foundation upon which scholarship is built.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a specific form of academic misconduct. Whether inadvertent or deliberate, plagiarism includes:

- direct copying of the work or data of other persons, from one or more sources, without clearly indicating the origin. This includes both paper-based and electronic sources of material from websites, books, articles, unpublished work such as theses, working papers, seminar and conference papers, internal reports, lecture notes or tapes, and visual materials such as photographs, drawings and designs;
- using very close paraphrasing of sentences or whole clauses without due acknowledgement in the form of reference to the original work;
- submitting another student's work in whole or in part;
- use of another person's ideas, work or research data without acknowledgment;
- submitting work that has been written by someone else on the student's behalf;
- copying computer files, algorithms or computer code without clearly indicating their origin;
- submitting work that has been derived, in whole or in part, from another student's work by a process of mechanical information (for example, changing variable names in computer programs); or
- in any way appropriating or imitating another's ideas and manner of expressing them where such assistance is not expressly permitted.

Text comparison software

As part of the University's procedures for identifying instances of academic misconduct, any work submitted by a research student may be subjected to testing using text comparison software. It is a condition of enrolment in a research degree program that research students give their consent to this process. The Statement of Agreement which research students are required to sign states: 'The HDR student authorises any written material submitted to be tested by the University for plagiarism,

using text comparison software. This involves the University or its contractor copying work submitted by the HDR student and storing it on a database to be used in future to test work submitted by others'.

Ethically questionable citation practices

There are also a number of ethically questionable citation practices including:

- citing sources that have not been read or understood (such as citing sources based on the abstract alone);
- misrepresenting or selective reporting of sources (taking one aspect rather than the whole, taking the source out of context);
- incomplete acknowledgement (borrowing substantive ideas but acknowledging only a minor point);
- careless citation practices (no page number for specific ideas, errors in citation details, incomplete information).

Questions research students frequently ask

In an immediate sense, the purpose of referencing is to provide enough information to enable the reader to check the author's sources and no more. The referencing information provided is designed for this purpose. For the most part there are strict rules or conventions about how this is to be done. It is important to use the referencing conventions appropriate to your discipline or publisher, to be precise and correct in every detail, and to systematically record publishing details for every item you refer to as you go.

If in doubt ...

In some instances it is unclear what information should be provided or how it should be presented. Some of these have been covered below. If you are still unsure, follow common sense, that is, provide the key information required to locate your source, and always use a consistent format.

1. What is the difference between a reference list and a bibliography?

A reference list includes only the sources that have been included in the text. A bibliography includes all sources gathered together, some of which are not directly included in the text. Research proposals often include both a reference list and a bibliography. This is because it is not always possible to cover all the important literature in the first phase of the research. The bibliography gives readers an indication of the relevant fields of literature and the future direction the research will take. Bibliographies are less common in the thesis which has a more definitive tone.

2. Do I need to include page numbers in my in-text reference?

If what you have written is not the key argument or finding, but a side point discussed on a specific page or pages, then include a page number or page numbers (for example, pp. 10–20). If the idea is central to the whole article, chapter or book, a page number is not required. This is because it is assumed that whatever comes before a date-only reference is the main argument or finding of the book or article. This highlights how important it is to read and to refer to key ideas, or to provide page numbers.

3. Where do I put in-text references, at the beginning or at the end of the sentence?

If the sentence is long and only part of it pertains to the author being referred to, put the citation at the end of the relevant clause.

Other than this, there is no general rule about position of reference in the sentence, however the position of the reference within the sentence can influence the tone of the writing.

Authors names can be placed at the end of the sentence to give the writing a more assertive stance or to foreground your own voice when discussing the ideas of others. This pattern is called information prominent. For example, 'The sky is blue' (Brown, 1999). An alternative, author integral pattern places the author towards the front of the sentence. For example, 'According to Brown (1999), the sky is blue'. Texts that rely heavily on author integral citation patterns can be unclear because it becomes difficult to know what the writer thinks. For examples see the [research proposal](#) online resources.

The author integral style is useful however in highlighting the author, and to give the writer some distance to the idea expressed in the source referred to. For example, 'Brown (2011) finds a significant improvement in the Mini State Mental Examination of adults who undertake regular Tai Chi classes'. Or 'Brown (2011) claims that Tai Chi classes improve physical fitness'. On the other hand, placing the reference at the end of the sentence indicates agreement. For example, 'It has long been recognized that regular Tai Chi classes can improve the physical fitness of adults' (Brown 2011). Or, 'Regular Tai Chi classes improve the physical fitness of adults' (Brown 2011).

4. Should I use quotations or paraphrase?

To some extent this depends on discipline. Humanities and some social science disciplines use quotations more frequently than other discipline areas. Even in these disciplines however, quotations should be used sparingly. Quotations should be used when the exact words are essential to convey meaning. This may occur when an idea is expressed using terminology or phrasing peculiar to a specific author, or when the idea is expressed in a particularly eloquent or compelling manner. In general, use your own words, paraphrase and provide a reference.

Quotations, when used properly are time consuming as they require a lead in sentence or phrase, as well as discussion of their meaning for your argument.

5. What do you do if every book you read says the same thing that is common knowledge?

Common knowledge does not need to be referenced. For example, 'Darwin sailed on the Beagle'. Reference the overall finding or argument based on original data or argumentation, or a specific idea or finding, in which case a page number should be provided. To refer to well established or accepted findings and arguments in your field, refer to the original source if possible.

6. What do you do if you write a summary that has been synthesised from a number of different sources?

If the summary is the key idea of a number of books and articles, cite all of the sources used and list them in chronological order in the text. For example: 'The modernist view of the subject has received significant criticism among contemporary feminist scholars (see for example Lloyd 1984; Butler 1990, 1993; Hekman 1990; Diprose 1994; Grosz 1994). One of the key criticisms has been ... (describe core ideas held in common, but do not repeat references).' If different clauses within the summary belong to different sources, indicate which belongs to which by placing the references at the end of the relevant clause. For example, 'Brown dogs are more placid than other dogs (Brown 2011; Black 2013), while black dogs are more inquisitive (Samuel 2010; Chaney 2012).'

7. If a book was reprinted several times, which date do you use?

If the work cited is not a first edition, use the current edition date because information is often updated and may be different from one edition to the next.

8. How do you reference an internet site that doesn't have an author?

Use the title as the main reference as you would with any work that is anonymous. Make sure that you include the URL so that your readers can locate the source. Write n.d. if there is no date - there is sometimes a date though at the very bottom or top of the website.

9. I have written this in my own words, do I need to reference it in the text?

Rephrasing someone else's idea in your own words is called paraphrasing. Although you are able to write about the idea in your own way (which is recommended practice), you are still using ideas from another source. Therefore it needs to be referenced.

10. How do I reference sources from which there are missing elements, for example, no author is mentioned?

Some sources of information do not include all identifying elements, and are quite unorthodox in their provision of publication details. In these cases, apply the basic principle of referencing, provide enough details so that readers can locate the original source of information. Finding the exact source is facilitated by the citation in the reference list including all essential elements of referencing, namely: author, date, title, and source. Therefore, where possible include all of these elements in the reference list. If one of these elements is not recorded in the original source, then you can only use the other elements provided.

11. Is it ok to refer to an author's idea found within another author's text?

It is best to go to the original text yourself and to cite secondary sources rarely or not at all. This is because of the danger of misquoting the original author whose ideas are now twice removed from their original source. Sometimes the secondary source you are reading may have misquoted, taken out of context or misinterpreted the source. Sometimes however it is unavoidable, when for example you cannot locate the original source.

12. When you cannot avoid using a secondary source how do you reference it?

Both authors must be mentioned in the text, but only the text you read is provided in the reference list. There are a few ways to refer to an author cited in another text within your research writing. Marini (in Tan 1992, p. 71) stated that ... or ... Marini's study in 1975 (cited in Tan 1992, p. 71) stated that ... or ... Tan (1992, p. 71), reporting Marini's study, states ... In each case Marini is the primary reference contained in a book by Tan (secondary reference).

13. What do I do if there are more than three authors?

If there are more than three authors, use the first name followed by et al. For example, (Brown et al 1967).

14. What is the correct way to acknowledge an organisation as the author?

If there is no author on the title page, and the publication was sponsored by an agency, association or corporation, the organisation should be cited. For example: 'A publication by the World Health Organisation (2007) reports ...'.

15. How do I reference personal communications?

For personal communications including emails, personal letters, conversations and faxes, provide a reference in the body of the text only. For example:

It has been confirmed by Black (2005, pers. comm. 28 July) that this practice is widespread.

No entry is given in the reference list. You must obtain permission from the person being referred to before including the reference in your text.

16. How do I reference electronic sources?

The basic rules for citing electronic information are provided below. For examples and more detailed information for the different styles see the following resources:

- [APA Style online](#)
- [The Owl at Purdue \(all styles\)](#)
- [Referencing Roadmap \(Harvard\)](#)

The order of information is: author, date when the publication was created, title, type of medium, journal volume and page range (for journal articles), internet address, date accessed.

The **author** is the first element provided. The author might be an organisation. If the author is unknown, the title comes first.

This is followed by the **date when the publication was created**. For books and journals the year and month are provided. For magazines, newspapers or newsletters provide the day, month and year if available. If the site is regularly updated, provide the date on which it was last updated. If there is no date, write 'no date' or 'n.d'.

The **title** follows the date. The title appears first if the author is unknown. For a journal, magazine or newsletter article, provide the title of the piece followed by the title of the periodical in italics.

'**Type of medium**' follows the title and is used to indicate electronic sources from print sources.

When citing articles in journals, magazines or newsletters, provide the **journal volume number followed by the page range**.

Instead of place of publication and publisher, online or electronic sources provide the **internet address** after the type of medium.

The last element of electronic sources is the date the source was accessed including the year, month and day. This is needed because electronic sources change and disappear regularly.

17. How do I indicate I have added italics to emphasise words within a quote?

Insert square bracket with 'emphasis added' after the page number, for example, '... raises the question of *what* desire is' (Smith 1991, p. 343 [emphasis added]).

18. Do I need to clarify the author's use of italics within the original when I quote?

Yes. This is done by inserting square bracket with 'original emphasis' added after the page number, for example, 'identities that are *not* simple to describe' (Smith 1991, p. 26 [original emphasis]).

19. How do I show that I have omitted a word or words from within a quote?

Missing text is identified with ellipsis points consisting of three full stops ... where the missing words should be.

If a paragraph or more is omitted from a block quotation, the ellipsis points can be placed on a line of their own.

20. What should I do if there's an error or a discriminatory expression within a quote?

Consider carefully whether to reproduce the quote and try to avoid doing so. If you cannot avoid using the quote, you should reproduce it exactly as it occurs in the original. However, you can indicate that the expression is not your own by adding 'sic' after the text enclosed in brackets. This strategy should not be used if there is more than one discriminatory expression.

Do not reproduce discriminatory expressions when paraphrasing.

21. How do I reference Acts of Parliament and other legal documents?

See [Australian Guide to Legal Citation](#)

22. Do I have to reference myself if I refer to my previous work?

Yes. There are two instances where you must reference your own work. The first is when referring to work submitted for a previous degree. The second is when referring to work that has been published.

Regarding work submitted for a previous degree, the University guidelines stipulate that 'work that has been submitted for any other academic award may not be submitted as the main content of the thesis. Where the main content of the thesis consists of any significant extension or elaboration of the candidate's earlier work, that portion referring to previous work must be clearly indicated'. In order to avoid academic misconduct, use the same conventions to refer to your own work as you would for any other author.

Where work has been submitted for publication, either in full or part, this must be declared within the thesis. If you are submitting your thesis for the award of PhD by Portfolio of Publications, you would attach your previous publications in full, and indicate this in the introduction of the thesis being careful not to infringe any copyright agreements you have entered into.

You can also draw upon previously published work without reproducing it in full. Again this must be clearly indicated. Use the same conventions to refer to your own work as you would for any other author. In addition, explain how previously published work has been incorporated in the introduction of the thesis.

For example: 'A version of Section 6 appears in [insert publication details]'. You would then reference your chapter/article/conference paper in full in the reference list at the end of your thesis.

You may also wish to mention the journals, books, or conference committees responsible for getting your work reviewed, as well as any reviewers whose names you are aware of in the acknowledgements section at the beginning of your thesis. For example: 'I would like to thank several individuals for assistance in preparing my work for publication. Joe Public and the anonymous reviewers assisted me in the preparation of my chapter for publication in *Ethics in Teaching* (2002). A version of Chapter Seven appears in this book'.