**What is referencing?**

Referencing is the method by which a person acknowledges the work of others used as evidence in their assignments, presentations, and research papers. It is crucial that an author distinguishes the work of others from that of their own. This is accomplished using referencing.

Referencing provides the reader with the information to locate the original source material, enabling them to easily verify the validity of any arguments posed. Any sources used can be identified by placing indicators in the text of assignments. These are called citations or in-text citations.

The complete details of these original sources are provided in a reference list, which is usually situated at the end of the piece of your work. There are many different styles to choose from (please consult your student handbook for details of your suggested style). These can include the use of numerical and author-date indicators. Some styles can also incorporate either footnotes at the bottom of the page or endnotes at the end of the work.

**Bibliography**

A bibliography provides a detailed list of any background readings or other material that you may have read, as well as the cited reference list used within a piece of work.

**Reference List**

The reference list is a detailed list of all the citations used within a piece of work. In some cases, there may be a requirement to include a bibliography.

Referencing is an integral skill used in the academic and professional world. It underpins other academic skills such as searching and the evaluation of sources and allows the author to distinguish between facts and opinions in the work of other authors.

**When and why do you need to reference in your work?**

Referencing is important because it enables your reader to see how you have developed your argument and come to your conclusions.



Referencing informs your order about what sources you have used, which they can use to seek out further information. As your work interacts with and builds upon the word of previous academic writing, referencing also gives an indication of the broader academic context in which your work sits, and acknowledges that your work builds upon them.

Ensuring you reference accurately helps to ensure you avoid academic malpractice such as plagiarism, while also helping other people better understand your work in terms of where you are basing your ideas. Referring to the work of experts in your subject area illustrates that you are basing your arguments on established evidence from high quality sources. Referencing will lend credibility and authority to your own ideas, which helps to further support your argument and show that you have understood the question.

**What does referencing allow you to do?**

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| **Badge 1 with solid fill** | **INFORM**: Referencing enables you to inform your readers of the sources you have used. It is important for others to be able to follow up on your references to find the original sources of your information, which thorough and accurate referencing can support. |
| **Badge with solid fill** | **DEMONSTRATE**: Referencing enables you to demonstrate that you have made effort to read widely, interacting with a range of ideas and concepts. You can provide evidence of the depth and breadth of this reading through your citations. By referencing works beyond your reading list, you demonstrate your understanding in your subject, which can then help further develop and support your original insights. |
| **Badge 3 with solid fill** | **SEPARATE**: Referencing enables you to separate your ideas from the ideas of others. You will often be marked on your ability to assess, compare, contrast, critically analyse, and evaluate different arguments. Accurate referencing will help to make it clear which parts of your writing are based on the word of others and which are your own analysis and evaluation. |
| **Badge 4 with solid fill** | **REINFORCE**: Referencing enables you to reinforce your own arguments. Referring to the work of experts in your subject area illustrates that you are basing your own arguments on established evidence from high-quality sources. Your references can thus lend credibility and authority to your own ideas. |
| **Badge 5 with solid fill** | **ACKNOWLEDGE**: Referencing enables you to acknowledge contributions from others, placing your writing in the context of existing work on the topic. This helps others to understand your work and helps you to avoid academic malpractice such as plagiarism. Referencing also allows readers to distinguish your own ideas and analyses from those of your sources. |

**When do you need to reference in your work?**

Add a reference to your work when you refer to the unique ideas of other people, whether that is an author’s research results, report statistics, or a paraphrased version of their main argument. If you are unsure about whatever you should put a reference in your work, add one just in case so that you can acknowledge where you have retrieved the information from, and avoid plagiarism within your work.

**Referencing styles**

Below are a few examples of different referencing systems (also called “styles”). Make sure to check your department guides, as each department has guidance for their different requirements for referencing styles!

* [Harvard](https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-harvard) – on the official website, Politics (and maybe a few others)
* [American Psychological Association](https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-apa) (APA)
* [Modern Language Association](https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-mla) (MLA)
* [Oxford University Standard for Citation of Legal Authorities](https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-oscola) (OSCOLA)
* [Vancouver](https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/referencing-vancouver)
* [Modern Humanities Research Association](https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/mhra) (MHRA)

For more information visit the Library’s [Referencing Guide](https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing/styles).

**How do you reference?**

A reference list is a crucial component. The reference list at the end of a piece of work provides the reader with information about the sources you used in your research and gives credit to the original authors.

Your references will usually comprise a mixture of printed, physical and electronic sources. Some referencing styles may require you to highlight that an electronic source was used. The specific format and style of references may vary depending on the referencing style you are using.

When creating references for a piece of work, make sure you consider the following elements for the resource type:

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| **Common elements** |
| **Author(s)**  List the names of the individuals or organization responsible for creating the content. Include the author’s full name (or names) if available or use the username or screen name for social media sources. |
| **Year**  The year of publication or the date the content was created or last updated. |
| **Title**  Include the title of the specific work being referenced, such as the title of the article, webpage, book chapter, or online document. Depending on the referencing style and type of resource, the title may appear in italics of inverted commas. |
| **Issue information**  Volume/Part (when available) for journal articles. |
| **Page range**  If you are referencing a specific chapter in a book or an article from a journal (printed or electronic), include the page numbers where the relevant content can be found. |

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| **Other elements** |
| **Publisher**  For books, include the name of the publisher. For academic journals, include the journal’s name. |
| **Publication location**  For books, include the city and state (if applicable) where the book was published. For academic journals, this is not necessary. |
| **Editor (if applicable)**  For some types of resource, such as contributions to edited collections of essays, you may need to provide the name of the editor(s), as well as the author(s). Where you refer to the entire edited work, rather than a specific contribution, the editor name often appears in place of the author, usually followed by “(ed.)” |
| **Translator (if applicable)**  For sources that you have read in translation, give the name of the translator(s). If relevant, you may want to give the title of the word in its original language and original publication date. |
| **Edition (if applicable)**  If the source is a specific edition of a book or a version of a document, include the edition number. |

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| **Elements of digital resource types** |
| **Digital Object Identifier (DOI) or Uniform Resource Locator (URL)**  When referencing online sources, include either the DOI (preferred for academic articles) or the URL where the source can be accessed.  **Access date (for online sources)**  For online sources, especially webpages, include the date you accessed the source to indicate its availability.  **Format (optional)**  For electronic sources that may not fit into standard categories, such as podcasts, videos, or online presentations, indicate the format of the source (e.g. MP3, video file, or Powerpoint presentation). |

Remember to follow the guidelines of the specific citation style you are using carefully, as the format and order of the elements may differ. Consistency and accuracy are crucial when creating your reference list to give proper credit to the original authors and sources you’ve used in your work. Always double-check your references to ensure they are complete and correctly formatted, using the [referencing guide](https://subjects.library.manchester.ac.uk/referencing) for the style you are using to find out what you should include within your reference.

A person reading a book and a cup of coffee

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**Referring to other people’s ideas in your work**

Academic writing, at all levels, involves building on (and challenging) the work and ideas of other people. Those ideas can be used to support your argument, by providing evidence in agreement with the point you are making.

Other writers' ideas can help you to provide an overview of the state of a topic or issue, in the form of a literature review. Referring to others' ideas can allow you to demonstrate your critical thinking skills, by demonstrating the connections (both agreements and disagreements) between different perspectives on an issue.

There are different ways to include another person's ideas in our own writing. The way that you incorporate ideas might depend on how you want to use the ideas and different methods are appropriate in different situations.

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| **Quoting** | When you use the same words as the original source. |
| When to use | When the exact wording is important, such as scrutinising a statement; when those words add impact to the point you are making, such as illustrating or providing an example. |
| When not to use | When you could be more succinct, by picking out the main point that the author is making, rather than repeating their words in whole; when quoting doesn’t demonstrate an understanding of the idea, such as where it is not followed up with analysis. |
| Think | Anyone can find a relevant source on a topic and pick out a quote – only someone who understands that topic can put it into their own words or explain why the idea matters! |
| Exanple | “Climate change is a pressing global issue that is primarily caused by human activities emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Extreme weather events including heatwaves and droughts are directly caused by climate change “Ahmed, 2020, pp. 76-77. |

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| **Paraphrasing** | When you take a specific idea and describe it in your own words, in the context of your own writing and in relation to your own ideas. Your reporting of the idea will often be of similar length to the original source though there might be times when you can be more concise than the original author without losing the sense of their idea. |
| When to use | When you can describe an idea in your own words without changing the meaning; when you want to demonstrate your understanding of an idea. |
| When not to use | When changing the wording either changes the meaning or lessens the impact of the idea; when you don’t need to go into detail on every individual idea and might summarise the argument as a whole. |
| Think | Paraphrasing offers you the opportunity to describe an idea in your own words and in your own writing style which quoting doesn’t. |
| Example | According to Ahmed (2020), extreme weather events are a result of the significant global concern of climate change arises predominantly from human actions that release greenhouse gases into the air. |

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| **Summarising** | Where you take just the main idea or theme of a source and signpost your reader to it. This is a great way to synthesise ideas – when you can point to multiple sources that support the same point. |
| When to use | When you want to demonstrate your breadth of understanding on a topic without going into much detail; when you want to demonstrate broad agreement or disagreement on an issue by synthesising evidence; when selecting only ideas that are relevant from a longer passage. |
| When not to use | When an idea is important enough to be explored in greater detail; when your reader might need more context to understand why a point is important. |
| Think | Summarising can help you to write more concisely while showing the breadth of your research. ‘A (2023) said this’. |
| Example | The link between climate change and extreme weather events has been established (Ahmed, 2020). |

**Summarise or paraphase?**

Watch [this video](https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learning-objects/videos/paraphrasing-and-summarizing/paraphrasing%20and%20summarizing.mp4) where Michael explains the difference between summarising and paraphrasing and when you would use them.

**Bringing out your own voice and why this is important**

Although referencing enables you to acknowledge the ideas of the author clearly and consistently, it is also important to bring out your own voice when writing your work. Your voice is your overarching argument, as well as the analysis of the data and words of others in your assignment. As you are building upon the research of other thinkers, adding elements of your own ideas is essential in contributing originality to what already exists within the scholarly research.

The technique “It says, I say, and so…” may help you in the process of bringing out your own voice while referencing.

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| **It says**  This is the information from researchers that you have used as a foundation for your own ideas. Making sure to reference this, the information can come in the form of ideas or data, such as the quotations you have used and the paraphrasing and summarising of other’s work. |
| **I say**  This is your analysis of the data and references. Ask yourself ‘What do I think about the data or reference?’ |
| **And so**  This is one of the most important steps in bringing your own voice (and thereby originality) to your work. Some questions to help guide you are:   * Why is this information significant? * So what: how does this reference relate to the wider context and how is it significant to the point you are making in this paragraph? * How does your analysis help you to answer the assignment question and build your argument? |

By using this technique, your written paragraphs can act as building blocks to answering the main objectives of the assignment question. In your research, you may have seen this strategy applied to paragraphs as well!

Below is an example of the **It says, I say, and so** technique in action, where the writer is answering the essay question “Should higher education be free?” with the Harvard referencing style that uses in-text citations:

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| **It says**  “Jones (2016) noted that a lack of awareness and understanding of complex grant and bursary schemes provides a further financial barrier in the United Kingdom for higher attaining young people from lower participation schools.” |
| **I say**  “Complex student loan and bursary schemes, added to high levels of debt on graduation, all contribute towards a sense that a university education is too expensive for many young people.” |
| **And so**  “Higher education should be free to all as ‘debt aversion’ can lead to those who would benefit (both themselves and society), from attending university choosing a different career path.” |

Next time you are writing, use the **It says, I say, and so** technique to structure your work to ensure that you find the right balance of the voice of others and your own voice. Markers are interested in knowing what you think, so it is important to be clear about this difference.

**Using evidence to improve your writing**

Using evidence – in this case, other people’s ideas – is an integral part of writing academically. Whether you are trying to persuade a reader of our position or argument, or demonstrate your understanding of a topic, you need to present evidence in your writing. You can show your critical thinking skills in the way you use evidence.

* Using an idea to support your own argument or point.
* Presenting an idea that you disagree with, allowing you to present an opposing argument.
* Showing opposing ideas, allowing you to weigh up each side of an argument.

Different types of academic writing, and writing in different disciplines, might require you to use evidence differently. You would be expected to use other people’s ideas more frequently in a literature review than you would in a reflective piece. That said, evidence remains important in reflective writing – you just need to choose where to support a point with evidence to maximum impact while ensuring your reflective account and voice has space. See the section on ‘[Bringing out your own voice and why this is important’](https://rise.articulate.com/preview/k3lSemQurSQoitu67Z1U14jpttjZzTyL#/lessons/6tAILomBdt6G_jT2cFQLbM5AJq1SuU9p) and the ‘It says, I say, and so’ strategy to help you understand where to bring evidence into your writing.

**Summary and further support**

Below are some related guides and resources that will help you further develop your skills in this area:

* [Library support for writing](https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learning-objects/mle/packages/writing/) – This resource brings together all of our resources on writing and includes how to arrange an appointment with our Royal Literary Fund Fellow, who can provide feedback and guidance on your writing.
* [Start to finish: Referencing](https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learning-objects/sls/packages/referencing/) – This resource brings together all of our guidance and learning resources on referencing including style guides and how to get help through chat or drop-in sessions.
* **A graphic design of various objects

  Description automatically generated with medium confidence**[Avoiding plagiarism and academic malpractice](https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/learning-objects/mle/avoiding-plagiarism/) – this guide looks at various types of malpractice and how good academic practices such as effective note making strategies and referencing can ensure you avoid them.