

Referencing and paraphrasing

Why reference?

Universities are based on a culture of research. As students at university, you are expected to read what researchers in your discipline have written, and refer to it when you are writing assignments. You do this to demonstrate that you have studied the topic, you are aware of the current knowledge about the topic, and to provide support for the argument you have developed in your assignment.

To differentiate your thoughts from those of the experts, you need to provide a reference for any material or ideas that are not your own. This reference must follow the conventions of the recognised referencing system stipulated by your course examiner.

What is paraphrasing?

To paraphrase means to express someone else's ideas in your own words. It is more than substituting phrases here and there. You must completely alter the sentence structure and rewrite the passage in your own words, otherwise it is not a paraphrase but a quote.

How do I paraphrase?

Try the following strategy. When you make your notes:

- Record the page numbers
- Do not copy out or cut and paste the passage verbatim
- Make a note of the passage's argument or main points

Hint: always write notes in your own words. This approach will help you to avoid copying the original text.

When you use the notes in your assignment:

- Convert the ideas from your notes into full sentences
- Provide a reference, including page numbers
- Go back to the original to ensure that (a) your paraphrase is accurate and (b) you have truly written things in your own words

Direct quotation

A direct quote is when you copy words directly from someone else's work. Avoid using direct quotations to explain a point you are making. You should only use direct quotes as a way of emphasising a point you have already expressed in your own words. It is best to avoid the use of too many direct quotes, especially in a short assignment. When you include the use of data or statistics, this can be considered a direct quotation as these are a direct copy from another source, even if no other words are copied.

Paraphrase/indirect quotation

Paraphrasing involves expressing someone else's ideas in your own words. When you paraphrase part of a text and the exact words of the source are not used in your quote, the reference is called an indirect quote or paraphrase. When paraphrasing, you still need to attribute the information you have used to the writer or writers who influenced your thinking. As with a direct quote, an indirect quote gives credibility to your ideas.

Hint: don't copy the section to be paraphrased into your notes. This makes it harder to write it in your own words.

So ... what referencing system do I use?

At USQ, the majority of courses require you to use Harvard (AGPS), AGLC or APA styles, in accordance with university policy. You will be informed of the referencing system in your course specifications and in your course materials.

What support is available?

You will find a wealth of support available to you on the library website. The library has a comprehensive set of guides on referencing and on using the Endnote referencing software. The library also lists many of the different types of sources you may have used, such as a journal article, text book, web document, study notes and it shows you exactly how to reference them, so all you need to do is follow the examples. Make sure you always refer to the library site to check that you are referencing correctly.

<http://www.usq.edu.au/library/referencing>

Hint: don't try to remember how to reference – look it up each time to make sure it is right.

If you are directed by your course or faculty to use another system, they will provide all the support you need. If you experience any difficulties finding this support, contact your lecturer or Study Support, USQ Library.

Need more help?

Study Support, USQ Library can help you to develop your academic learning language and maths skills for success at university. Consultations are available face-to-face, via video chat, by phone or email.

Web: www.usq.edu.au/library/study-support

Email: library@usq.edu.au

