REPORTING VERBS

In academic writing, it is necessary to refer to the research of others using reporting verbs. Reporting verbs help the reader understand the relevance of the sources in your writing and can help you to strengthen your argument. However, students can sometimes get caught repeatedly using ‘states’ or ‘reports’; there are many other reporting verbs that can show your interpretation of the research and the way the authors view their own research.

Common reporting verbs

Tentative reporting verbs
- admit
- caution
- concede
- consider
- hypothesise
- imply
- postulate
- propose
- question
- recommend
- restate
- speculate
- suggest

Neutral reporting verbs
- assume
- comment
- contrast
- demonstrate
- document
- examine
- explore
- found
- indicate
- list
- note
- point out
- reflect
- report
- show
- study
- use
- categorise
- compare
- define
- describe
- discuss
- explain
- focus on
- identify
- interpret
- mention
- observe
- present
- regard
- reveal
- state
- take into consideration
- view

Strong reporting verbs
- acknowledge
- affirm
- assert
- believe
- condone
- confirm
- contend
- declare
- dismiss
- disregard
- emphasise
- establish
- ignore
- insist
- misinterpret
- object to
- presume
- recommend
- refute
- stress
- substantiate
- support the view that
Using tenses when reporting

Note, the tenses used when reporting published research can indicate much more than simply when something happened; the tense shows if the ideas are current. Tense use can vary a little with subject areas, so check the literature in your field for guidance. Here are some general patterns of tense use.

Present tense
Use present tense to discuss findings from the literature that are generally considered factual and current.

Trang (2011) emphasises that this is not the case.

Present perfect tense
Use present tense to give the general background of past research and to show that previous research still influences current thinking.

Research has indicated that economic factors are a major influence on the outcomes of planning strategies (Kendall 2013; Steadman 2012).

Past tense
Use past tense:
• when referring to previous research that was completed as part of the methodology
• when referring to information that was relevant to a specific study but is not generalisable to the current situation.

Smith (2014) used a quasi-experimental methodology …

Lee (2013) found that resource provision was …

Activity: Reporting structures and attitudes to knowledge

Task: Fill in the empty cells in the table by matching the attitude with the example and comment (answers below):

1. There are new views identified by a particular author
2. Showing controversy
3. The cited writer’s perception might be challenged
4. The cited writer’s perception is acknowledged
5. Acknowledges (potential) controversy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitude to knowledge</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and harder to detect have been reported by Martin (1994).</td>
<td>The term ‘have been reported’ tells the reader that there might be new ways of understanding the problem. The cited author tells us that he found the forms.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>b) It has been suggested that there are other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and are harder to detect (Martin 1994).</td>
<td>This also indicates that not everybody sees the situation this way. The word ‘suggest’ is not very persuasive.</td>
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<td>c) It has been argued that there are other forms of plagiarism which are more sophisticated and are harder to detect (Martin 1994).</td>
<td>There are different academic opinions on this. The term ‘argued’ indicates clear positions.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>d) Martin (1994) studied instances of plagiarism and found that… Martin’s analysis reveals that…</td>
<td>Putting the writer’s name in the text lets your reader know that this writer did significant work.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>e) Martin (1994) claims that…</td>
<td>The term ‘claim’ can imply that others could have a different perception or that the claim might not be verified</td>
<td></td>
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Answers
1. (a); 2. (c); 3. (e); 4. (d); 5. (b)

Study Tips: Reporting verbs 2

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