

Referencing essentials

The what, why, when and how of referencing

Written work at university requires correct referencing. But what does this mean? Evans (1995) defines referencing as “the labelling of material you have drawn from other writers with enough information for the reader to be able to locate the source” (p.52). Note that there is a range of related words academics use to refer to this process including **citing** and **sourcing**.

Why reference?

In an academic context, referencing is important because it:

1. is an acknowledgement of others’ work in the area you are writing about.
2. provides evidence that you have given thoughtful consideration to the topic of your writing.
3. allows readers of your work to locate and consult the sources that you have relied upon in your work or incorporated into your assignment.
4. places your work in the context of current research.
5. avoids *plagiarism* (the representation of another’s work as your own) by accurately acknowledging the originator of information or ideas that are not your own. (See the Academic Skills flyer ‘*Academic Honesty*’ for more information on this.)

Essential components

Referencing means indicating which information or ideas are derived from an ‘outside’ source and providing details about that source.

Thus, there are usually two parts to any reference:

- An indicator within the text which points out that material has been drawn from elsewhere (often called an **IN-TEXT** reference).
- Detailed information about the source(s) at the bottom of the page (often called footnotes) OR at the end of the paper (often called **END-OF-TEXT** or **BIBLIOGRAPHIC** referencing)

Identifying sources

References must be:

Complete: Full details including *author, title, source or URL, place and year of publication, publisher and page numbers* may all need to be given* if available for end-of-text referencing. (*depending on publication type)

Correct: Your reader won’t be able to locate the source if your reference is inaccurate.

Appropriate: Referencing legitimises and supports your claims. It also prevents accusations of plagiarism.

Consistent: One writing task requires a single referencing style to be used throughout.

Keeping track of the referencing details should be a routine step in producing a draft for an assignment.

Different referencing styles

There are many different referencing systems in use in the University. Some Faculties will only use one style while others require students to use a different style depending on which Department or School they are studying with. Even within a Department there may be no agreed style as individual lecturers have different ideas about which style is most suitable for their subject. This creates some difficulties for students although some Faculties/Departments produce Referencing Guides for students to use. Check your subject outline or consult your Lecturer or Tutor about which referencing system you should use.

Referencing systems

Referencing styles can be categorised into three main systems: **author-date**, **footnote** and the **numeric** system.

1. Author-date

An author-date reference is made by citing in-text the author(s) of the work(s), publication year and – if you have it – the specific page number(s) for the information or ideas presented. The remainder of the essential details of all works cited in the paper are presented at the end in a **Reference List** (sometimes called ‘**References**’ or ‘**Works cited**’), in *alphabetical order* according to the family name of the author.

Some commonly used examples of Author-date systems are **APA** (American Psychological Association), **Harvard** and **MLA** (Modern Language Association). The following is an example of Harvard style.

- Example of an in-text reference:

...the potential applications as outlined previously have only recently been explored in more detail (Wang, Svenson & Giacomo, 2003).

- Example of the Reference List entry for this work:

Wang, L., Svenson, K., and Giacomo, V., 2008, 'Possible applications of Calculon (Tournesolite) in fusion reactors', in W Petrov (ed.), *The future of high temperature resistant materials and coatings* (pp 53-89) New York: Science Press.

Explanation: With the in-text reference, the reader can instantly identify the originator of the ideas or information presented. However, in-text citations can be disruptive when multiple sources need to be cited at a single point in the text. If the reader wants to find out more about the source, they need to consult the Reference List at the end of the paper.

(**Note:** if you are using a direct quote, you always need to give the page number reference with the in-text citation.)

2. Footnote

Footnote systems use an in-text note identifier (usually a small raised number at the end of a sentence). This number refers to a footnote placed at the bottom of the page or an endnote at the end of the paper. In general, footnotes and endnotes are used in academic writing to shift non-essential material from the main text.

Some commonly used examples of this referencing style are **Chicago**, **Oxford** or **Vancouver**. Examples using Chicago style follow:

- Example footnote in the text

...until Kent's theory initiated a renewed interest in the topic.² However, it has since been argued that Kent's conclusions were based on false suppositions.³

- Example footnote/endnote with full bibliographic details

² Kent, Gerald. *From candles to fibre optics: the impact of space technology on Christmas tree decoration* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

³ Helga Keller and Anita Rivera-Torres. "Artificial Christmas trees in Pennsylvania during the 18th century." *Journal of Yule Studies* 28 (1999): 113–127.

If the same references are used again, they can be shortened. The repeated reference usually gives just the name of the author(s) and a shortened title.

Bibliography at the end of the paper

Since all bibliographic information is given in the footnotes, a Reference List is not necessary. However, most footnote styles recommend including a **Bibliography** or **Reading List** which is arranged alphabetically by author surname and can include sources not directly referred to in the text, but relevant to the subject. Bibliographies are always longer and more exhaustive than Reference Lists.

- Example Bibliography:

Keller, Helga and Anita Rivera-Torres. "Artificial Christmas trees in Pennsylvania during the 18th century." *Journal of Yule Studies* 28 (1999): 113–127.

Kent, Gerald. *From candles to fibre optics: the impact of space technology on Christmas tree decoration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

3. Numeric

The number refers to a list at the end of the paper which gives full details of the sources used in order of their first appearance in the text. Numeric styles are also called **Numbered**, **Citation-sequence** or **Author-number** styles. They are usually only used in some medical and engineering disciplines.

Where can I find models of effective referencing?

Some Faculties / Departments and have referencing guidelines listed on their website. However, if your department does not have a style guide for referencing and your subject outline doesn't state a required referencing style, find out the name of the style generally preferred by the Department or ask your lecturer which style you should use. Then find an electronic or print publication written using references in that style and use it as a model of how you should reference. University library websites often give examples of how to reference using different systems.

Works cited

Evans, D. (1995). *How to write a better thesis or report*. Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press.

Further resources

Monash University Library. (2006). *Citing and referencing*. Retrieved Sept 6 2011 from

<http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/tutorials/citing/>

University of New South Wales. Learning Centre. (2010). [online Academic Skills resources – *Referencing & Plagiarism*]. Retrieved Sept 6 2011 from

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/olib.html#7>

University of Melbourne. University Library. (2011) *Re:cite*. Retrieved Sept 6 2011 from

<http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/recite/index.html>

See also Academic Skills flyers '*Incorporating sources*' & '*Academic Honesty*' at

<http://cms.unimelb.edu.au/student-services/asu/>

Academic Skills