

# Referencing essentials

## What is referencing?

Most written work at university requires correct referencing. But what does this mean? Evans (1995, p 52) defines referencing as 'the labeling of material you have drawn from other writers with enough information for the reader to be able to locate the source'.

## Reasons for referencing

Referencing allows the reader to assess the quality of your research and your understanding of the ideas and information gathered. In academic writing, it is expected that you do more than repeat ideas and information from textbooks, journals or your lectures.

Referencing will help to:

1. Show your understanding of academic requirements
2. Demonstrate the breadth of your research and provide your work with credibility
3. Legitimate and support some of your claims
4. Place your work in the context of current research
5. Allow readers to locate and consult the sources you have relied on in your work or incorporated into your paper
6. Avoid plagiarism (the representation of another's work as your own) by accurately acknowledging the originator of information or ideas that are not your own.

## 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.
- Detailed information about the source(s) at the **bottom of the page** or at the **end of the paper**.



## Identifying sources

A reference will need to give sufficient information to guide a reader to the original source. For printed publications, the reference needs to identify the **author**, the **title**, the **publisher**, the **year** of publication (and edition), the **volume number** (where applicable) and the **page number(s)** if a specific part of the work is referred to or quoted. For example, the full reference for (Evans 1995) is:

Evans, D.G. (1995). *How to Write a Better Thesis or Report*. Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press.

[NB: Punctuation, formatting and order vary depending on the required referencing style.]

For other sources (e.g. audio-visual material, electronic resources, interviews, legal and public documents, newspaper articles, performances and unpublished works) different information might be required. Consult the relevant style guide.

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

## Find the appropriate referencing style

The requirements for referencing differ between academic disciplines. There are more than 700 legitimate referencing styles in use and therefore it is not possible to describe all of the rules and variations. It is important to locate a referencing guide for the style appropriate to your subject and apply it **accurately** and **consistently** in your work.

The order, punctuation and organisation of a reference will be different for each style and must be followed to the smallest detail.

## Two referencing systems

There are two main referencing systems: the **parenthetical (in-text) system** and the **documentary-note system**.

### 1. Parenthetical system

An in-text reference is made by citing the author(s) of the work(s), the year of publication, and – if applicable – the specific page number(s) for the information or ideas presented. The essential details of all works cited in the paper are presented at the end in a reference list (usually called *References* or *Works cited*), in alphabetical order according to the surname of the author.

Some commonly used examples of this referencing style are APA (American Psychological Association), Harvard and MLA (Modern Language Association). The following is an example of the Harvard style.

#### In-text reference

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

### Reference List at the end of the paper

A Reference List is a record of all the references that are directly referred to in the paper. It does not list any sources that were not directly referred to in the text.

Wang, L., Svenson, K., and Giacomo, V., 1998, 'Possible applications of Calcilon (Tournesolite) in fusion reactors', in W Petrov (ed.), *The future of high temperature resistant materials and coatings*, Glencoe, New York, pp 53-89.

**Explanation:** 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 reference point. If the reader wants to find out more about the source, they need to consult the reference list at the end of the paper.

### 2. Documentary-note system

Note 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, notes are used in academic writing to shift non-essential material from the main text. Note systems have a similar role and allow all referencing information to be shifted from the main text to the bottom of the page or the end of the document.

Some commonly used examples of this referencing style are Oxford, Vancouver and MLA. For example (following Chicago A style):

#### Note identifier in the text

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

#### Footnote/endnote with full bibliographic details

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

<sup>3</sup> 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. Several referencing styles use short references for all notes, including the first.

### Bibliography at the end of the paper

Since all bibliographic information is given in the footnotes, a reference list is not necessary. However, most note 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. The style for bibliographies is similar, but not identical, to the notes.

## 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.

A variation of the note system is the **citation-sequence system** (also called 'numeric system'). Like the note system, this system uses reference numbers in the text, but each number refers to a single source listed in a numbered reference list. Therefore, a reference number can appear more than once in the paper and several reference numbers can appear together at one point in the text.

**Explanation:** With a note referencing style, the reader has to look elsewhere to find any information about the source that has been referred to. This can be inconvenient but it can reduce the level of disruption to the reading process.

## Faculty referencing guidelines

Some departments and faculties have referencing guidelines listed on the library website. If your department does not have a style guide for referencing and your subject reader or the assignment sheet doesn't nominate a referencing style, find out the name of the style generally preferred by the department or ask your lecturer which style you should use. Find a printed or electronic guide and use it to organise the essential referencing information.

## References and Resources

Evans, D. (1995). *How to Write a Better Thesis*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.

Gibaldi, J. (2003). *MLA handbook for writers of research papers*. New York: Modern Language Association of America.

*Style manual for authors, editors and printers*. (2002). (6th ed.). Revised by Snooks & Co. Milton, Qld: John Wiley & Sons.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. (2003). (15th ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Referencing style guides, as recommended by faculties and departments:

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

For referencing in Law subjects, consult the *Australian Guide to Legal Citation* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Law Review Association, 2002):

<http://mulr.law.unimelb.edu.au/aglc.asp>.

LLSU website on referencing:

<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/lisu/resources/referencing/referencing.html>