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## Section A

# What is referencing?

**Referencing** is the process of acknowledging other people's work when you have used it in your assignment or research. It allows the reader to locate your source material as quickly and easily as possible so that they can read these sources themselves and verify the validity of your arguments. Referencing provides the link between what you write and the evidence on which it is based.

You identify the sources that you have used by citing them in the text of your assignment (called **citations** or **in-text citations**) and referencing them at the end of your assignment (called the **reference list** or **end-text citations**). The reference list only includes the sources cited in your text. It is not the same thing as a **bibliography**, which uses the same referencing style, but also includes all material (for example, background readings) used in the preparation of your work.

### Why reference?

There are a number of important reasons why you need to reference. Referencing allows you to:

- ◆ Demonstrate that you have read widely on the subject and considered and evaluated the writings of others
- ◆ Show your tutor the evidence of your research, and thereby appreciate your contribution to the topic
- ◆ Establish the credibility and authority of your ideas and arguments

- ◆ Enable the reader to locate the original material you used
- ◆ Give credit to the original author/creator
- ◆ Enable the reader to form their own views on the value of your sources and how you have interpreted them
- ◆ Distinguish between your own ideas and opinions, and those of others
- ◆ Highlight relevant points by quoting, paraphrasing or summarising from the original text (see Section C)
- ◆ Achieve a better mark or grade
- ◆ Avoid **plagiarism** (see 'What is plagiarism?' on page 4)

Every academic institution requires its students to reference in their work, and your tutors will expect you to do this accurately, clearly and concisely. Your university or institution should issue you with guidelines on how they expect you to reference in your particular subject area. Follow these guidelines carefully.

### When should you reference?

You are expected to reference every time you use someone else's work or ideas in your own work. There are no exceptions to this rule, and it applies to all your work, including assignments, essays, presentations, dissertations, and other research or publications. It is very important that when undertaking your research, you systematically record and save full details of all the resources that you have used, and it is vital that you save these sources at the time that you use them. Otherwise, it can be very difficult (or even impossible) to locate these resources again at a later date.

### What should you reference?

You should reference *all the sources* that you use for your assignment or research and maintain records for all of them. Any

information that you copy and paste, repeat word for word, paraphrase or summarise must be acknowledged by referencing it. This includes all information available on the **internet**. Students commonly believe, erroneously, that because it is available online, they are not required to acknowledge it. There are numerous reference management software tools available (some free) that can help you to manage the referencing process. Be aware, though, that even if you use these tools, you must still double-check your citations and references to ensure that they appear in a consistent style and follow your institution/tutor's guidelines.

Your aim should always be to reference reliable sources of information. These may include books (printed and ebooks), journal articles, web pages, conference papers, newspaper articles, lecture notes, government publications, videos, legal material and reports. This list can be extended, depending on the subject you are studying and the nature of the source material in your area.

In the era of 'fake news', it is vital that you consider how reliable the sources are, because newspaper and magazine articles, websites, blogs, tweets, wikis, and popular or social media can be unreliable or weak sources of information. They may simply offer someone's opinion on a topic, but may also be deliberate misinformation to mislead or change your opinion. Always try to locate academic sources that substantiate the original material. In many cases, this may be peer-reviewed books or articles (also referred to as 'refereed' or 'scholarly'). This means that they are written by experts in their field and then reviewed by several other experts (or an editorial board) to ensure quality and accuracy before the

material is published. All of these scholarly sources will have references to show you where the authors sourced their evidence. If a written or online source does not have references, think carefully before using it in academic work. Scholarly publications will also provide details of the author's experience, and in many instances which institution they work for, enabling you to check that they are who they say they are.

Students often struggle to understand which version of a source they should reference. *You should always reference the version of the information source that you have actually used* (see also 'What about secondary referencing?' on page 3). The reason for this is clear – a journal or newspaper article may appear in both print and electronic formats, and the two versions may vary. If using visual sources, be clear to your reader about what you have seen: a painting in a gallery is seen as the painter intended, but if reproduced in a book or online it may have been cropped or digitally altered. If you saw the image online, cite the online version.

When looking at sources online, it can sometimes be difficult to identify what kind of source you are looking at. This is particularly true if you have retrieved results from internet search engines, which can provide direct links to PDFs. The PDF is not the information source; it is only one means of delivering information to you online. You will need to determine if you are looking at a journal article, a book chapter or a section of a larger report by checking for authors, section or chapter headings, or page numbers, then use the appropriate format for citing the source.

If you have included an appendix in your assignment or research, it should be clearly labelled with a letter (A) or number (1). If it

contains information from other sources, these should be cited in-text in the appendix, with full references given at the end of the appendix as a separate reference list.

## What about secondary referencing?

In some cases, you may want to refer to a source that is mentioned or quoted in the work you are reading. This is known as **secondary referencing**. It is important that, whenever possible, you cite and reference the primary source of your information. For example, if you read about a study by Harvey (primary source) in a book by Lewis (secondary source), you should try to locate and read the original work by Harvey. This will enable you to check for yourself that Harvey has not been misinterpreted or misquoted by Lewis. If you cannot locate the primary source (in this case Harvey), you cannot include it in your reference list. You can only cite it in your text. In your essay or assignment, you should cite both sources and use the phrase 'quoted in' or 'cited in', depending on whether the author of the secondary source is directly quoting or summarising from the primary source.

### Harvard examples

Harvey (2015, quoted in Lewis, 2018, p. 86) provides an excellent survey ...

White's views on genetics (2014, cited in Murray, 2018) support the idea that ...

### APA example

Harvey (as cited in Lewis, 2018) provides an excellent survey ...

You then include Lewis and Murray in your reference list (and Harvey and White only if you have read them).

Once again, if you are unable to read the primary sources, you can only cite them in your text (as in the examples).

## What about referencing common knowledge?

There is no need to reference things that are considered **common knowledge**. This is generally defined as facts, dates, events and information that are expected to be known by someone studying or working in a particular subject area or field. The information or facts can be found in numerous places and are likely to be widely known (for example, that London is the capital city of England). Such information does not generally have to be referenced.

However, as a student, you may have only just started to study a particular subject and be unaware of what is regarded as common knowledge. In order to decide if the material you want to include in your work constitutes common knowledge, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ Did I know this information before I started my course?
- ◆ Did this information or idea come from my own brain?

If the answer to either or both of these questions is 'no', then the information is not common knowledge to you. In these cases, you should cite and reference the sources. So, if you are unsure whether something is common knowledge, it is always advisable to cite and reference it.

# Index for the Harvard referencing style

**NB To avoid confusion when referencing, this index does not list items specific to the alternative referencing styles (Sections F–L).**

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