

What is Academic Writing?

Here is an example of a *paragraph* written by a student in response to the question:

Success at university is simply a matter of being organised. Discuss

In this paragraph we can see all of the components of competent academic writing: clear structure, fluent writing, accuracy in terms of spelling, grammar and punctuation and appropriate use of source readings. Most importantly, like all good paragraphs, it makes *one* point clearly.

Take particular note of the way the sources are acknowledged. This is called referencing and each instance is called a citation. There are different models of referencing. The following examples use the **Harvard** style. There are other styles, so check with your lecturers and tutors regarding their preference.

While organization may be the key to success at university, it is not the only factor that affects that success. Numerous other things in life can contribute. All students, regardless of their differences will experience a transition when first starting University. The University of Queensland Student Services (2010-2011 p. 15), state that, 'Successful students are those that can recognise, accept and adapt to the transition.' However, this adaptability is not the only additional attribute of a successful student. In a study comprising of 264 students and 238 academics from varied degrees and departments conducted by Ditcher & Tetely (1999), three key factors were found that attributed to students academic success: self motivation, fair and appropriate assessment and well structured presentations by lecturers

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This is a direct quote, using the **exact words** used by the author, so it is placed inside **inverted commas**.

'.....'

Both are **referenced**.

Here the student has included the findings of research but has written it in her own words. This is a **summary**.

The next thing the writer must do is provide full details of the citations included in the text. This is called a Reference List and it allows the reader to check the accuracy of the information/ideas/concepts cited.

Reference List

Ditcher, A & Tetley, J 1999, *Factors influencing university students' academic success: what do students and academics think?*, University of Canterbury, New Zealand, viewed 02 October 2013, <http://www.herdsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/conference/1999/pdf/Ditcher.pdf>

The University of Queensland Student Services 2011-2012, *Transitioning into University: a new guide for students transitioning into the University of Queensland*, University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus, viewed 29 September 2013, http://www.uq.edu.au/student-services/sites/default/files/Transition_Guide_1.pdf



No stars in your essays please!!! This was just to show you.

What is the point? Hmm? Why all the fuss about referencing?

We all have opinions. We all 'know' things. At university, your opinions and knowledge are only useful when you can back them up. You back them up by referring to the writings and research of those who have already made it through university. Think of them as your back-up singers: it is *your* song, but without them it will sound pretty hollow.

You will read a lot over the course of a semester, and your assessment is likely to require you to write academic essays using information and research you have read. But you can't pretend that this is *your* information or research. You must acknowledge the work of those who did the research and wrote the books and journal articles. (You will notice that they also acknowledge their sources. This never stops!)

The reason that **your writing must be referenced** is so that your reader/marker can *clearly see* where you have gained this information/concepts or ideas. The academic value of your writing can then be evaluated and if they wish, your marker can go back to the *original source* to find out whether you have been honest and accurate in your use of data, ideas and information.

So when do you get to say what you think? Often you don't. *Opinions are not always required* by the question or task. (Be careful here. Drifting towards opinion writing is a common error). The thing is that often you can *select your sources*. You can decide which research or which writing to cite and in that decision, you will have some control of the opinion expressed. Again, be careful and read the task instructions/topic and be sure that you know exactly what it is you are being asked to do. Often you will be told which research or journal to use and in this case you must use these prescribed readings.

There are several methods of incorporating scholarly information into your writing.

Paraphrasing	Summarising	Quoting
You rewrite the idea/concept or information in your own words . This will be approximately the same length as the original	You include the idea/concept or research into your essay in a way that gives the gist, or essence, of the idea/concept or information in your own words . This will be much shorter than the original.	You include the exact words from the original text in your writing. You must acknowledge that this is a direct quote by placing inverted commas around it. Direct quotations must be used sparingly .



Each of these inclusions **must be acknowledged** by including a citation that allows the reader to locate that exact idea/concept/information in the original text.

