

Referencing - Acknowledging and Supporting your ideas during Research

What is Citation and Referencing?

- **Citation** - A citation is a brief acknowledgment within the text showing where information was taken from.
- **Referencing** - A reference is a full bibliographic description of the source, listed at the end of the document in a reference list.

Academic writing relies on more than just the ideas and experiences of one author. It also uses the ideas and research of other sources such as books, journal articles, websites, etc. These other sources may be used to support the author's ideas, or the author may be discussing, analyzing, or critiquing other sources.

There are two elements used in referencing:

1. A citation inside the body of the assignment
2. An entry in a reference list or bibliography at the end of the assignment

1. Citing - Mentioning the work of others in your own work.

Referencing is used to tell the reader where ideas from other sources have been used in an assignment.

The reference list is a list of all the sources used (and cited) in an assignment. It is usually alphabetized according to the names of the authors. Each entry in the reference list contains detailed information about one source. There are many reasons why it is important to reference sources correctly:

- It shows the reader how your argument relates to the entire perspective on a situation or issue

- It properly credits the originators of ideas, theories, and research findings
- It shows the reader that you can find and use sources to create a solid argument.

e.g The more involved or consulted people are, the greater will be their commitment in its implementation and sustenance of the projects. (Mulwa, 2002).

In this example, “(Mulwa, 2002)” tells the reader that this information has come from a source written by Mulwa, which was published in 2002. This is a signpost, pointing the reader to the reference list.

Referencing styles

Referencing is a formal system: there are rules and standards to follow when formatting citations and references. Many students find referencing quite intimidating at first. Like any skill, it takes time and patience to learn.

The examples above use APA style, a format created by the American Psychological Association. It is the most common referencing style used at the University of Embu.

Other styles include MLA style, Oxford style, Harvard style, and Chicago style.

Referencing tools

The following are the recommended software and tools that help with creating or managing references.

- **Mendeley** - is a reference manager and academic social network. It is also a free pdf manager, take your own fully searchable library in seconds, cite as you write, and read and annotate your PDFs on any device
- **Zotero** - Zotero helps to collect, organize, cite, and share research sources. You can add PDFs, images, audio and video files, snapshots of web pages, and really anything else. Zotero automatically indexes the full-text content of your library, enabling you to find exactly what you’re looking for with just a few keystrokes.

N/B Failure to properly acknowledge sources is called plagiarism, and it can carry significant academic penalties.