



Finding and Including Evidence

Study Development Factsheet

In academic writing, your claims should be supported by reliable evidence. Evidence gives your writing authority and allows your reader to evaluate the basis of your assertions.

Where do I find evidence?

It is important that you read relevant books and articles in the early stages of planning your assignment, so that your evidence informs your argument, rather than being tagged on after you have written your whole piece. A good place to start finding resources is your reading list, but you can also look beyond this.

When evaluating whether or not to use a resource, consider the “Three R’s”. Your sources should be:

- **Relevant:** *What topic am I trying to explore? What questions am I trying to answer?*
- **Reliable:** *Are my sources peer-reviewed?*
- **Recent:** *Is this information outdated now? Has this theory been debunked?*
(You can and should still include older resources, as you may need these to discuss background information or because they have influenced later works – but try and keep subject knowledge as up to date as possible).

The Academic Liaison Librarians can provide you with support, teaching and training in finding resources: you can access further information and book a session on the [Academic Liaison Librarian webpage](#).

How should I organise my evidence?

How you take down notes is up to you, but it is very important to keep a written record of the evidence that you think is relevant and will help you answer your question. Remember: when you are researching for an assignment, you are not reading to learn everything.

When you have found a resource that is relevant, and that you hope to use in your assignment, you should take notes. There are a number of ways to organise your notes, but there are some key notes you should make from each resource you read:

- 1. Reference:** It is important that you keep note of the full reference when writing notes from it.
- 2. Key points:** Write down relevant information from the article in your own words. What is the main argument? What are the main conclusions? Take notes of the key points which you can use to build an argument.
- 3. Quotations:** If there are phrases that stand out as being particularly interesting, or that are difficult to rephrase in your own words, write these down as direct quotes. You will need to use quotation marks and write down the page number.
- 4. Key words:** Write down key words that describe key themes/main topics covered in the reading.

The majority of your notes will likely be in the Key Points section. Writing down the important points from a resource in your own words can be difficult. Try not to rephrase each sentence individually. Instead, read whole paragraphs or sections and try to focus on main points or ideas, and take notes of these. If you find you are mostly copying sentences straight from the article, try reading the relevant sections more than once, making sure you fully understand what the author is saying. Then, try covering the resource and writing out the key points from the text without looking. You can compare your version to the original text afterwards, and check to make sure your version is faithful to the original meaning.



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How do I incorporate evidence into my writing?

There are 3 main ways that you can incorporate evidence:

1. Paraphrasing: reporting an author's ideas/findings but using your own words.

Look at your notes and focus on the key points you have written. Check with the original resource to make sure what you have written is correct, but in your own words and not the author's. Paraphrasing is not simply changing the odd word here and there – it is reporting the ideas of the author in your own words.

2. Quoting: citing the exact words from the source, indicated by quotation marks.

Direct quotations can be used when it is not possible or suitable to paraphrase, such as when the author has used phrasing that is especially interesting, effective or concise. Try to avoid using too many quotations - most of your essay should be written in your own words.

3. Summarising: condensing the content of longer passages, or even several different sources that come to the same conclusion.

Through your reading, you will have likely pulled out key themes, arguments and conclusions from across multiple sources. Summarising is a way to present a brief and simple overview of these key points.

The following paragraph demonstrates all 3 methods:

The question of good writing is one of crucial importance to anyone involved in academia. According to one recent survey, 55% of overseas students stated that they find academic writing difficult (Jones 2008). This finding is supported by Fitzpatrick (2003, p.208), who maintains that academic writing is 'one of the biggest challenges that overseas students face, and yet there is little support provided to them'; this viewpoint echoes the general trend of the literature (e.g. Kenyon 2007; Clarke and Wood 2009). Support with academic writing thus has an important role to play. The next part of this essay will examine how effective support can be provided. (adapted from Sowton 2012, p.79)

Checklist for including evidence:

Checklist

- Where you have made a claim, have you included a reference to support it?
- Is that reference reliable?
- Have you been faithful to the author's original meaning?
- Have you included a clear in-text reference?
- Have you included full details of the reference in your reference list/bibliography?

Support

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