

Referencing: Principles and Practice

Author-date (or Harvard)

This guide provides an overview of the principles of referencing and the format used in the author-date (or Harvard) style. It follows the version of this system set out in *Cite Them Right* by Richard Pears and Graham J. Shields (see 'Recommended Resources' section). **Please note, it is recommended that you consult your module handbook for information on the referencing style required for your assessment.**

What is referencing?

Referencing refers to the practice of acknowledging the sources of the information you have used in producing your own work. In the author-date system, a reference is placed within the text of your work and includes the author's surname and the year of publication between a set of brackets. This information is linked to a 'References list' at the end of your work, which includes full bibliographic details of each item used.

Why should I use references?

References are one of the defining features of academic work. In addition to being ethically appropriate to acknowledge the work of another author if it has influenced your own work in any way, referencing also fulfils several other important functions.

A successful piece of academic writing will display in-depth knowledge of a topic that has been acquired through research and reading. At the same time, by assimilating, analysing and evaluating this information, it will clearly demonstrate comprehension of the subject matter.

The application of sound referencing practices forms a key part of these processes. Referencing should therefore be seen as something more than a tool for avoiding plagiarism. If used properly, it can actively enhance the quality of your work by demonstrating the level of your engagement with the existing literature related to your topic.

References are therefore used in order to do the following:

Acknowledge

the work others, which is ethically appropriate.

Demonstrate

criticality and higher order cognitive skills, such as synthesis and evaluation, which shape and bring to the fore your disposition on a particular topic or issue.

Highlight

the breadth of your reading and research, as well as your use of key texts, which adds depth to your work.

Facilitate

further research in your topic area by providing bibliographic details for a range of sources, which is the essence of research.

When should I use references?

References are used in the following circumstances:

- when you use or summarise an idea or you make a specific reference to the work of another author;
- when someone else's work has been critical in developing your own ideas;
- when you use a quote (i.e. using the *original words* of an author – in quotation marks – without changing the order or meaning);
- when you paraphrase (i.e. *rewording* the words of an author without changing the meaning);
- when you summarise (i.e. *condensing* the arguments or ideas of another without changing the meaning);
- when you use a table, graph or image created by someone else.

Anything that is deemed to be 'common knowledge' is not referenced. If you are in any doubt whether or not to use a reference then you should always do so.

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What does a reference look like?

An in-text reference – also known as a citation or abbreviated reference – is included within the body of your writing to acknowledge the source of a specific piece of information at the point at which it appears in your text. The in-text reference gives the reader an immediate indication of the provenance of the information used, which can then be identified in the references list.

Here is an example of an in-text reference:

It has been suggested that in order to become an independent learner you need to be a reflective learner. It is only through reflecting on your own study experiences, that you can develop an insight into the ways in which you learn (Northedge, 2005, p. 20).

In a 'References list', which is positioned at the end of your work, the reference is written out in full. Remember, the purpose of a references list is to allow an interested reader to identify and locate the sources you have used in order to pursue their own research interests. Therefore, it is necessary to include all of the bibliographic information for each source.

The reference above would appear in the references list as follows:

(Extract from references list)
Northedge, A. (2005) *The Good study guide*. Milton Keynes: The Open University.
McIlroy, D. (2003) *Studying @ university*. London: SAGE.

Note that the items are listed in alphabetical order by author surname. The references list should only include the items you have cited in your work; it is not necessary to add all of the sources you have read or consulted.

What do I need to remember?

1. Follow the referencing guidelines provided in your module handbook.
2. Gain an understanding of the principles behind referencing before trying to create a reference.
3. Appreciate the difference between quoting, paraphrasing and summarising.
4. Embrace referencing as a way of enhancing your written work more broadly.
5. Have an awareness of the core elements of an in-text reference.
6. Appreciate the function of a references list.
7. Understand the principles behind structuring an in-text reference.

Plagiarism

This guide does not specifically cover the issues surrounding Academic Honesty and Plagiarism. For further information please refer to the Regulations and Procedures contained in the [Academic Handbook](#).

Recommended resources

- Academic Skills Site: [Referencing](#)
- Pears, R. and Shields, G.J. (2013) *Cite Them Right: the essential referencing guide*. 9th edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (Also available as an e-resource in Cardiff Met Databases A-Z)

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