The Writing Center
Reporting Verbs

What are reporting verbs?

In academic writing, you will often need to refer to the research of others. *Reporting verbs*, also known as *referring verbs*, are used to *discuss/refer* to another writer's work within your own or to *report* on the findings of others. When discussing other people's work, we use reporting verbs to identify when information is coming from a source. Additionally, reporting verbs can demonstrate our assessment of /position on information as well.

There are many different reporting verbs that you can use to both avoid repetition and be more precise in your writing. This handout will introduce you to some of the most common reporting verbs.

Reasons for using reporting verbs

There are many reasons for using a reporting verb. Common uses of reporting verbs include when writing a summary, paraphrasing, or integrating a quote. They are also helpful when you need to comment on someone's work, agree or disagree with someone else's study, or evaluate someone's ideas. In general, usage depends largely on whether you are focusing on the:

1. Aim of the study
2. Results of the study
3. Opinion of the study

The grammar of reporting verbs

Reporting verbs have simple basic grammar. However, it can be confusing because there are two basic patterns. Some reporting verbs belong to one pattern, some to the other, and some to both. Remember that the verb tense you use for your *reporting verb* will depend on your style guide (MLA, APA, etc). Some styles prefer present tense (MLA) while others prefer past tense (APA).

Pattern 1: Verb + Noun (noun phrase)
- Smith and Jones **debate** *the devastating results of this policy* (12). [MLA style]
- Gillard (2012) **outlined** *her negative opinion of Abbott's proposal*. [APA style]

Verbs followed by a "noun" or "-ing" form (gerund)

analyzes, applauds, appraises, assesses, attacks, considers, contradicts, critiques, debates, describes, discards, disclaims, discounts, discusses, dismisses, disregards, evaluates, examines, explores, expresses, extols, forbids, highlights, identifies, ignores, illustrates, investigates, justifies, lists, opposes, outlines, praises, presents, questions, refutes, rejects, restates, scrutinizes, studies, supports, underscores, uses, validates, verifies.

Pattern 2: Verb + That + clause (i.e. sentence)

- The authors **show that** *this policy had devastating results* (Smith & Jones 12). [MLA style]

- Boynton **warns** the reader **that** ordinary chocolate is "too frail to withstand heat, moisture, and proximity to baked beans" (14). [MLA style]

- Gillard (2012) **argued that** *Abbott's proposal was untenable in her opinion*. [APA style]

Verbs followed by "that"

accepts, acknowledges, adds, admits, advises, advocates, agrees, alerts, alleges, announces, argues, articulates, asserts, assures, believes, boasts, claims, clarifies, comments, complains, concedes, concludes, confirms, feels, finds, forgets, guarantees, guesses, hopes, hypothesizes, imagines, implies, indicates, infers, informs, insists, justifies, knows, maintains, notes, observes, persuades, points out, posits, postulates, promises, proposes, proves, questions, realizes, reasons, recognizes, recommends, remarks, reminds, reports, reveals, shows, speculates, states, stresses, suggests, suspects, tells, theorizes, thinks, understands, urges, warns.

Pattern 3: Verb + preposition

- Hanks **defines** an idiom **as** an expression whose "meaning . . . is distinct from the sum of its parts". [MLA style]
- Some people **subscribe to** the idea that chocolate is unhealthy, but Boynton refutes this claim. [MLA style]
- Smith (2005) **disagreed with** Fry (2003) when she **maintained that** many students have trouble with reporting verbs. [APA style]

Verbs followed by a "preposition"

defines x **as** y	subscribes **to** x	blames x **for** y
accuses x **of** y	challenges x **to** do y	criticizes x **for** y
warns x **of** y	exhorts x **to** do y	confuses x **with** y
alerts x **to** y	forbids x **to** do y	contrasts x **with** y
compares x **to** y	warns x **to** do y	disagrees **with** x
objects **to** x	apologizes **for** x	concurs **with** x

Below is a list of commonly used reporting verbs in formal academic writing.

	Weaker position	Neutral position	Stronger position
Addition		adds	
Advice		advises	
Agreement	admits, concedes	accepts, acknowledges, agrees,concurs, confirms, recognizes	applauds, congratulates, extols, praises, supports
Argument and persuasion	apologizes	assures, encourages, interprets, justifies, reasons	alerts, argues, boasts, contends, convinces, emphasizes, exhorts, forbids, insists, proves, promises, persuades, threatens, warns
Believing	guesses, hopes, imagines	believes, claims, declares, expresses, feels, holds, knows, maintains, professes, subscribes to, thinks	asserts, guarantees, insists, upholds
Conclusion		concludes, discovers, finds, infers, realizes	
Description	confuses		
Disagreement and questioning	doubts, questions	challenges, debates, disagrees, questions, requests, wonders	accuses, attacks, complains, contradicts, criticizes, denies, discards, disclaims, discounts, dismisses, disputes, disregards, negates, objects to, opposes, refutes, rejects
Discussion	comments	discusses, explores	reasons
Emphasis			accentuates, emphasizes, highlights, stresses, underscores, warns
Evaluation and Examination		analyzes, appraises, assesses, compares considers, contrasts,critiques, evaluates, examines, investigates, understands	blames, complains, ignores, scrutinizes, warns
Explanation		articulates, clarifies, explains	
Presentation	confuses	comments, defines, describes, estimates, forgets, identifies, illustrates, implies, informs, instructs, lists, mentions, notes, observes, outlines, points out, presents, remarks, reminds, reports, restates, reveals, shows, states, studies, tells, uses	announces, promises
Suggestion	alleges, intimates, speculates	advises, advocates, hypothesizes, posits, postulates, proposes, suggests, theorizes	asserts, recommends, urges

Table from University of Adelaide

References

Office of Student Success 2010, *Reporting verbs*, Australian Catholic University, http://students.acu.edu.au/office_of_student_success/academic_skills_unit_asu/academic_referencing/reporting_verbs/

Writing Centre 2009, *Common reporting verbs for academic writing,* University of Adelaide, http://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/learning_guides/learningGuide_reportingVerbs.pdf