Building References Into Your Writing

Referencing is the academic practice you use to show the source of things learnt in your research. By referring to these sources in your writing, you support your understanding of a topic, and give authority to your work. Your writing will be more accomplished if you can use a variety of ways to refer to sources: not just direct quotes. Examples here use Harvard style.

Original text

The development and growth of universities in the nineteenth century in Europe and the USA resulted in the mass examination of student knowledge by way of essays and examinations. There was a rigorous testing of knowledge and, as part of this, students were expected to cite the sources of ideas and offer detailed analysis and interpretation of sources. Citing and analysing the works of authors became a way for students to demonstrate their scholarly engagement with a text.


Paraphrasing

By paraphrasing you take an idea that you originally found in a source and explain it in your own words. It can help to show your reader that you have understood your reading.

Neville (2010, 13) notes that referencing first became important with the growth of European and American universities in the nineteenth century.

Direct quotes

Only use a direct quote if it is essential to use the exact words or (especially for long quotes) if you are going to analyse the quote in depth. If your quote has 40 words or more: indent and single space it; do not use quotation marks; add the citation on a separate line at the end, unless it has already been given in an introductory phrase.

The “rigorous testing of knowledge” introduced in the developing universities of the nineteenth century was a key factor in the growth of referencing as an academic practice. (Neville, 2010, 13.)

Neville (2010, 13) has argued that it was in this period that “Citing and analysing the works of authors became a way for students to demonstrate their scholarly engagement with a text.”

Direct and indirect mentions

You may want to refer to the larger ideas or overall work described in a source rather than specific notions. You can do this directly (by name) or indirectly.

In Neville (2010), the importance of understanding the purpose of referencing is emphasised.

Writers have emphasised the importance of understanding the purpose of referencing. (Neville, 2010; Sinfield and Burns, 2012.)

Remember:
However you use a reference, it will always require a citation to show the source.