

# A Quick Guide to Referencing

(Smith, 2004)

This is a **free** report

You are free to send it onto anyone else you think would benefit, providing you don't make any changes to it.

Preferred referencing systems may vary, and you should always check with your tutors to ensure you meet their own requirements.

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## Why Reference?

If you've ever been asked to include a list of references in an essay, you may have wondered why you need to go to all the effort. Surely it's what you write that matters, not what you read.

**Referencing** (also called **citing**) someone else's work is important for four main reasons:

- 1) It shows how much reading you did, and that you didn't just use a single source to form your conclusions
- 2) It **gives credit** to the person who did the original research, and makes sure you don't get accused of trying to pass someone's work off as your own (this is called plagiarism)
- 3) Lets the reader **check if you are misquoting** the source, or taking what they said out of context
- 4) Lets the reader **find out more** information on the topic

## Basic Principles

The basic rule of referencing is that you should give enough information for the person to **find the original source**, and verify your use of it.

There are standard ways of writing, including the **Harvard System** (also known as parenthetical referencing) and the **MLA System**.

Regardless of the system you are asked to use, there are certain pieces of information you need to provide. These include the author, title, edition, page numbers and date of publication.

It's important that you remember to collect these at the time you gather the information, rather than trying to go back later at do them all at the end. You don't want to be in the position where you have returned the library book before doing writing your bibliography, only to discover you don't have enough details.

## How to Reference

We're going to be using the Harvard System here, so you should check the standards you need to use.

There are two parts to referencing.

The first part is when you add references **within the main text itself**. These are shortened versions of what appears in your bibliography, usually just containing the author and year of publication.

...Not everyone agrees with this statement, and around 10% of the medical community disagree (Smith, 2005)...

If you mention the author's name in the main text, you don't need to include this in the brackets:

...Smith (2005) demonstrates that this is not the case...

And, if you used more than one book by the author in the same year, you can add a letter (a, b, c, d) to the year.

...Smith (2005b) showed that this link was strong...

The second part is the **bibliography**, which goes at the back of your report. This is a complete list of all the resources you used, arranged alphabetically by the authors' surnames. Each reference has its own line.

Smith, A (2005). *History of Chemistry*. 2nd ed.  
London: Jones & Weston. p45-56.

## Free Online Tool

Rather than spending a lot of time learning the exact formatting, you can use a free online tool to help build your references for you.

Just visit:

<http://www.neilstoolbox.com/bibliography-creator>

Choose the type of source you are trying to reference (e.g. book, website, etc) then provide the details. You can then highlight and copy the result into your bibliography.

Remember to arrange your references in alphabetical order (by the author's surname) and add the shorter versions of the references within your text next to where you used them to form your conclusions.

### Harvard Reference Generator: Book

[About This Tool \(below\)](#)

**Reference a Book (Monograph)**

Fill in all the details below.

Author:  e.g. Smith, A

Title of Book:

Year of Publication:

Place of Publication:  e.g. London

Publisher:

Edition:

Pages:  e.g. p34-56

**Get Result**

Reference: [Book](#) | [Chapter of a Book](#) | [Journal Article](#) | [Web Page](#) | [An e-mail](#)

## Online Sources

Referencing websites and webpages is more complex than books, as sites often change at short notice. The website author may go back and update an article in a way that invalidates the point you were making.

For that reason, it's important that you:

- 1) let the reader know the date that you accessed the page
- 2) keep a copy of the article on that date (either save the page to your hard drive - bookmarking is not enough - or print it off)

## Other Considerations

A few things to remember:

Using someone else's work without citing them as the author is called **plagiarism** (academic theft). If you are a student you are **NOT** expected to come up brilliant new ideas from scratch, so you should never need to cheat in this way. Instead, what your teacher/lecturer is looking for is that you were able to carry out research to get a wide range of views and ideas, then form reasonable conclusions from these.

You should only cite **original sources**, where possible. A secondary source would be a book explaining Albert Einstein's theories. The primary source would be Albert Einstein's own works.

An example of people getting this wrong is by referencing Wikipedia. Wikipedia makes clear that it is NOT an original source of information, and many educational institutions will mark you down for citing it. However, Wikipedia is a great way to find original sources that you can use. Just scroll down to the bottom of the article, and you should find a list of references to other sites or books.

And, finally, don't "citation-stuff" your bibliographies to make you look like you did more reading than actually was the case. Everything you read should be used somewhere in your text. It would be quite embarrassing if one of the books you supposedly used in your research turned out to completely contradict your own conclusions.