

## Taking Notes for a Research Paper

### Introduction

Taking accurate notes and understanding and using referencing systems are an important part of your academic reading and writing. Referencing can be defined as acknowledging the author or source of information in a text. Referencing is a valuable tool for any academic writer because:

- ☞ understanding referencing can help you to find additional information for your research.
- ☞ it gives credibility to your interpretations because you can demonstrate how they fit into the field of knowledge about which you are writing.
- ☞ NOT ACKNOWLEDGING the ideas or information of other authors is called PLAGIARISM. This can result in you receiving back an unmarked assignment or, at worst, exclusion from your course.

### Types of Reference Systems

The main reference systems used at UNBC include:

- ☞ MLA – Modern Language Association (used in English and other areas of humanities)
- ☞ Chicago – (used in History, Political Science, and most social sciences)
- ☞ APA – American Psychological Association (used in Psychology, Education, Social Work, and other areas of sciences)

### Taking Notes

List your bibliographic details. You may wish to copy these on to *index cards*. When you do take notes from a text, note the author(s) and the date of the publication on the top of your page. If you use the same author and the publication date is the same, code your references so you do not confuse the text from which the quote or reference came.

When taking notes, either photocopy the direct quotes you wish to use or copy them (write/keyboard) directly from the text, including page number. When you come to use the author's idea you then have the opportunity to use the quote directly, or to paraphrase, or to summarize the idea. This way you will not inadvertently plagiarize someone's work. If you do choose to summarize, make a note that you have indeed done that. You can then choose how you incorporate this information into your work.

## Using Quotations

You use referencing in your assignment writing when you refer to quotations and ideas from your sources of information. The sources of information that you take your references from are listed in your Reference List at the end of your assignment. The textual references you make within your assignment must be consistent with the information in the Reference List. Make an in-text reference when:

- ☞ directly quoting a source (**always** make a reference);
- ☞ you wish to define a term;
- ☞ you want to support and validate your argument;
- ☞ you are using ideas from a particular source;
- ☞ you need to demonstrate that you have researched the subject adequately.

In-text references (citations) require the **author's surname** and the **year of publication**. **Page numbers** are always shown for direct quotes or passages that are paraphrased, but not necessarily for referring to general ideas you have summarised. The referencing style you use must be consistent.

### Referencing In-text Quotations

The **in-text references** direct the reader to the bibliographic entry for the source material, in your Reference List. **Quotations** are the exact words taken from any published or unpublished material. If the reference (or citation) is a **direct quote**, it is written in **single quotation marks**. Short quotations are written within the text, while longer quotations (40 words plus) should be set as a separate passage.

*For example:*

Health research is an important concept for the health profession. However, for health research to be acceptable 'the health researcher must use considerable ingenuity in designing valid investigations, while maintaining ethical values' (Polgar & Thomas 1995, p35). As Polgar and Thomas indicate, ethical considerations play a definite role in research planning.

When quoting 40 words or more you need to use a free-standing, indented block and omit the quotation marks. Start the block quotation on a new line:

*For example:*

Polgar and Thomas state that:

A responsible investigator is required to take into consideration ethical principles and to plan research projects accordingly, so that no harm is caused. Therefore, the health researcher must use considerable ingenuity in designing valid investigations, while maintaining ethical values. One of the roles of ethics committees is to guide investigators on complex issues, and to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with accepted community principles (1995, p. 35).

Quotations can be used to give a **definition of technical and key words or concepts** you will use in your assignments. Usually definitions appear early in the assignment in the

introduction or first few paragraphs. A definition may be quoted either using the idea first or referring to the authority first.

*For example:*

Culture is defined as ‘non-biological phenomena that are acquired after birth, shared with others and learned during social interaction in society’ (Short, Sharman & Speedy 1993, p.7).

or

Short, Sharman and Speedy (1993, p.7) define culture as ‘non-biological phenomena that are acquired after birth, shared with others and learned during social interaction in society’.

Quotations and paraphrases can also be used to **restate or elaborate on a main idea or generalization**. Usually these are placed in the middle or near the end of a paragraph.

*For example:*

Other outside factors, such as the government's decision on routes and fuel costs, and economic factors such as recession, would hit airlines hard. ‘The sobering fact was that an airline could be extremely well managed and still not make money’ (O'Brien 1995, p.72).

You can also **illustrate your generalizations with examples**. These may be in the form of quotations or a summary.

*For Example:*

Language is much deeper and wider than the spoken or written word. It includes ‘gestures, facial expressions and other body language’ (Pease 1992, p.155).

Using Paraphrases and Summaries

**Paraphrases** and **summaries** contain the original meaning but have been reduced (summarized) or reworded (paraphrased) and do not require the use of quotation marks. Use a combination of direct quotes, paraphrases and summaries so your work appears more mature and more interesting to read.

Take the ideas from the book entitled, *Body Language: How To Read Others' Thoughts By Their Gestures*, by Allan Pease, page 155:

A direct quote would appear as:

“Smoking is an outward manifestation of an inner turmoil or conflict and has little to do with nicotine addiction” (Pease 1992, p.155).

or

Pease (1992, p.155) points out that “smoking is an outward manifestation of an inner turmoil or conflict and has little to do with nicotine addiction”.

When paraphrased, the ideas could be written as:

Smoking is not totally a result of nicotine addiction, but could be a sign of inner feelings (Pease 1992, p.155).

or

Pease (1992, p.155) points out that smoking is not totally a result of nicotine addiction, but could be a sign of inner feelings.

So you have a choice, you can quote directly or paraphrase (use your own words) to present ideas. **If the information comes from more than one page then the pages are abbreviated as follows: pp. 24-26.**

The following examples of referencing are taken from the Trade Union section in *Australian Encyclopaedia* on 'Problems and Change' pp. 2892-2893.

**Quoting directly** from the section will look like this:

In recent years, unions "have not sought increased wages to the exclusion of all else" (Ross, Gollan & Davis 1988, pp. 2892-3).

or

Ross, Gollan and Davis (1988, pp. 2892-3) comment that in recent years, unions "have not sought increased wages to the exclusion of all else".

or, you could **paraphrase the points** (in your own words), and refer to the source.

In recent years, unions have taken on broader interests, restructured their organisations, and involved more women in unions (Ross, Gollan & Davis 1988, pp. 2892-3).

or

Ross, Gollan and Davis (1988, pp. 2892-3) have stated that in recent years unions have taken on broader interests, restructured their organisations and involved more women in unions.

**A summary** takes on a different character and relates the key points only of the information you are citing. Summarising is a spoken or written account of an event, text, section of text, or visual, in which the main idea is given, but details, examples and formalities are left out. Summarising is used with longer texts and primarily aims to reduce or condense a text to its most important ideas. Compare the following text and its summary.

### **Original Text**

From Peters, P. (1985). *Strategies for student writers: A guide to writing essays, tutorial papers, exam papers and reports*. Queensland: John Wiley & Sons. p. 88

"The evaluative connotations of words are of considerable importance as you develop an argument or put forth an interpretation of some facts. Just a few are enough to signal your perspective in an otherwise neutral presentation of data. By introducing someone's proposition with the work "claim" or "assert", you imply a real possibility of challenging it and invite the reader to reserve judgement about it, if not to view it sceptically. (Such words are unfortunate if you really mean to endorse the proposition.) But appropriately used they prepare the reader for your counter arguments long before you get to them. By describing a set of predictions in passing as either "optimistic" or "gloomy", you can very simply indicate both your criticism of them and the direction in which you think they err. The connotations

of words can provide an interim commentary in a discussion before you communicate the ultimate evaluation or argument."

### **Example Summary**

According to Peters (1985, p.88) words not only carry meaning but they also carry a positive or negative tone. She also explains how this aspect can be exploited by the writer to signal a judgement or opinion about the data or source material. It can also assist in laying the ground work for the upcoming arguments by acting as a preliminary discussion.

#### *Analysis of the Example Summary*

In the first sentence the source and main idea of the original text has been restated. The second sentence simplifies the original second and third sentence by omitting the examples and detailed explanations. While the last three sentences of the original text have been condensed by leaving out examples and simplifying detailed explanations, an important point is retained in the final sentence. The writer has used a variety of synonymous words and phrases to keep the original meaning (evaluative connotation = a positive or negative tone) and to accurately reflect the relationships between ideas (not only ..., but also..., also ...).

### Avoiding Plagiarism

If you are going to include a summary or paraphrase in an assignment there are two ways to ensure you do not plagiarise or misinterpret the original text:

1. Remember to acknowledge the source as you are presenting another author's idea.
2. Do not rely on just changing one or two words as the text will result in an inaccurate plagiarised version. Moreover such a narrow approach to your thinking and writing will guarantee little development or demonstration of your understanding of the information.

#### *Original Text:*

From Peters, P. (1985). *Strategies for student writers: A guide to writing essays, tutorial papers, exam papers and reports*. Queensland: John Wiley & Sons. p.88.

"The connotations of a word are aspects of its meaning that are implied in its use (as distinct from the word's core meaning. This is its denotation, what it denotes, or refers to)."

#### *An Example of an Incorrect Plagiarised Paraphrase:*

The connotations of a lexical item are views of its meaning that are suggested in its use, and are different from its central meaning. This is called denotation, what it describes, or indicates.

#### *Analysis of Incorrect Plagiarised Paraphrase:*

There are a number of problems with this paraphrase: The sentence structure is virtually identical, the synonymous words are not appropriate and result in an unclear statement and there is no reference acknowledging the source of information. Perhaps because the original text is rather abstract, a better paraphrase would be longer so as to include a more detailed explanation of the concept 'connotation'.

## Hints on How to Summarise and Paraphrase

Before you can summarise or paraphrase you must decide which text or section of text you will use in your assignments. If you experience problems with locating main ideas or relevant information can you complete these sentences?

This is a list of.....

The cause of.....results in.....

The problem is.....The solution offered is.....

This is a comparison of.....

## Ten Top Tips

If you find the underlying pattern used by the author you can usually unravel the main idea and by following these 10 points and practising the advice you will increase your understanding of a written text and be able to write a good summary or paraphrase.

1. Identify the purpose of the summary/paraphrase: Is it for your notes, for a critical review, to include as evidence supporting your understanding of a topic?
2. Read the original carefully. Check the meanings of words you are unfamiliar with. Read the text at least twice or until you are certain you understand it.
3. Select the important idea/s and information by highlighting the original or taking separate notes. Select important definitions of key terms that you may need to include.
4. Select the main claim/thesis of the text to be summarised/ paraphrased. Even if this is not explicitly expressed, try to write your own understanding of the author's claim.
5. Gather groups of details, examples and minor ideas under more general terms, a phrase or single word.
6. Do not include repeated ideas/information from the original.
7. Include the attitude of the authors. Are they critical, praising, certain, uncertain?
8. After writing a summary or paraphrase, check that the meaning and attitude of the original text is unaltered.
9. Use quotation marks (" ") for unique/specialist phrases you have retained from the original.
10. Always keep accurate bibliographical details for in-text references/footnotes and your Reference list.

While you will spend most of your study time alone (reading, re-reading, taking notes forming interpretations, writing and re-writing) do not neglect opportunities in tutorials and after classes to talk about your ideas or raise questions about the course material. Being able

to verbalise ideas and their relationships further improves your understanding of the course material which will make the task of summarising and paraphrasing much easier.

(Source: Pam Mort 1997)

### Some Essential Language Skills

The following language aspects are presented separately for clarity and demonstration purposes. However; the key to writing an accurate, non-plagiarised summary or paraphrase lies in manipulating all the grammatical resources so that while the text is still acknowledged as essentially another's meaning, it truly is – in your own words.

#### **Using Synonyms**

Synonyms are words or expressions which have a similar meaning in a particular context. The following word pairs are usually synonymous:

- professional/high standard
- assignment/submitted work
- expect/anticipate
- independent/self-reliant

Used in isolation this technique is very limited and can result in confusing sentences. Remember that words can have multiple meanings and positive or negative connotations. It is essential to always check your synonyms in a good English dictionary and consider the context of the ideas you are summarising or paraphrasing.

#### **Changing the Voice**

The 'voice' of a sentence can be 'active' or 'passive'. Active sentences allow the focus to be placed on whom/what is making things happen. Passive sentences allow the focus to be on who/what is affected by the event/ process.

(Q) What is different about these two sentences?

Sentence 1 – *Active Sentence*: The lecturers expect students to demonstrate a professional approach in their assignments.

Sentence 2 – *Passive Sentence*: Students are expected to demonstrate a professional approach in their assignments.

(A)

- The order of information has changed. (The Object in the first sentence [students] becomes the Subject in the second).
- The verb form has changed from active to passive ('expect' becomes 'are expected').
- The subject of the active sentence [the lecturers] is not mentioned in the passive sentence.

In some sentences it is not possible to change from active to passive voice because of the structure of the word groups or phrases. It may also not be possible to change from passive to active if who/what is making/made things happen are unknown.

Sentence 3 - For you to try! - How would you rewrite sentence '1' so that it starts as follows?

A professional approach in assignments .....

### ***Changing the Word Form***

Many words have more than one grammatical form such as; noun, adjective, verb or adverb (expectation, expectant, expect, expectantly). Changing the word form is not as simple as it appears because by selecting a different grammatical form of a word, other changes occur. A thorough understanding of phrase and clause structures is required as the sentence structure will be different depending on the word form chosen. Furthermore, you need to check the words in a good dictionary because the meaning and spelling of the word may also change.

Sentence 4: The expectations of lecturers include that students demonstrate a professional approach in the assignments. (Compare this to sentence 1 above).

### ***Packing/Unpacking Word Groups***

Often one word is inadequate to describe a thing, process, or circumstance. However English grammar allows us to combine words into groups so that one idea is more precisely expressed. In sentence 5 the groups are in brackets.

Sentence 5: (By demonstrating a professional approach in assignments), students (will meet) (their lecturers' expectations).

\* Compare sentence 1 and sentence 5. The simple word groups 'lecturers', 'expect' and 'students' have been packed into a larger group 'their lecturers' expectations'.

Sentence 6: Lecturers anticipate that students will ensure their submitted work is of a high standard, adopts recognised conventions, answers the question and is free of spelling and grammatical errors.

\* In sentence 6 the term professional approach has been expanded and defined.

Being able to combine words into groups or 'unpack' their meaning into simpler terms is a valuable skill for summarising and paraphrasing. It requires a good understanding of how grammar relates ideas to other ideas. This ability to manipulate vocabulary and grammar can also assist in reading comprehension.

*(This section on summarising and paraphrasing has been extracted from instructional materials used in the Online Learning Resources, Learning Development Centre, University of Western Sydney, and has been written by Pam Mort.)*

### **Grammatical Aspects of Referencing**

When using quotes, paraphrases or summaries to report others' ideas you need to choose the appropriate verb to accurately convey the intended meaning. The verbs you use may be positive, neutral or negative and with the help of auxiliary verbs (may, should, could, must...) will range modality from certainty to uncertainty. Your choice of verbs also allows your evaluation of the material to be known. So, when you read, notice the verbs that the author selects.

**Neutral verbs:**

- ❖ states                    ❖ adds                    ❖ outlines                    ❖ explains
- ❖ illustrates
- ❖ describes    ❖ presents ❖ informs    ❖ comments on    ❖ summarises

*For example:*

Collerson (1994) comments on the need to understand language from a functional perspective.

**Positive verbs:**

- ❖ agree                    ❖ praise                    ❖ confirms                    ❖ concurs
- ❖ acclaims                    ❖ approves                    ❖ commends                    ❖ encourages

*For example:*

He also encourages those who teach English to use a functional approach (Collerson 1994, p.viii).

**Negative verbs:**

- ❖ fail                    ❖ claim                    ❖ contends                    ❖ maintains
- ❖ dismiss                    ❖ declares                    ❖ alleges                    ❖ criticises

*For example:*

The failure of education systems to teach grammar successfully warrants a new approach.....(Christie et al. 1990)

**Uncertain verbs:**

- ❖ doubts                    ❖ questions                    ❖ suspects                    ❖ wonders at
- ❖ hesitates                    ❖ queries                    ❖ doubts

*For example:*

Brown (1982, p.18) suspects this was due to the fact that there was no...

Emphasis: Author vs. Idea

Depending on where you position the author in a sentence, you can place emphasis on the author or on the information/idea.

This is a choice each writer continually makes whenever including evidence from sources. This will depend on where and how the evidence fits into what has already been written and what will come after. Notice how journal and text book writers in your discipline/field use quotations and references.

If you want to place emphasis on the author then place the author at or near the beginning of the sentence.

*For Example:*

Gifford (1990, p.13) states that the development of a disease in healthy individuals is not necessarily a culturally shared concept.

If you want strong emphasis on the information then place the author, the year and pages inside brackets and closer to the end of the sentence. Now the focus will be on the information rather than the author.

*For Example:*

Competition may well lead to higher costs in the form of duplication of facilities, heavy advertising outlay and other selling costs (Donaldson 1992, p.148).

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