

Reporting Verbs

Verbs

Verbs are words in a sentence that tell us that some *action* is occurring. Reporting verbs tell us that action is being carried out by someone else. In the university context, these 'actions' usually involve someone—a scholar—adopting an idea or applying a theory (they are both reporting verbs!).

In academic writing, reporting verbs are used to a) outline, state or describe literature; b) comment on the ideas of others; c) evaluate and d) critique work or to e) endorse work. Their use is critical in reporting academic information.

Here are some examples of each, in which the reporting verb is underlined:

Using reporting verbs

Stating ideas in literature	• Jones (1989) <u>claims</u> that ... Smith (2000) <u>asserts</u> ...
Commenting on literature	• Jones (1989) <u>defines</u> X as ... Whereas Smith (2000) <u>disputes</u> ...
Evaluating literature	• Jones (1989) <u>accepts</u> the idea that ... • Smith's (2000) work <u>represents</u> the ...
Critiquing literature	• Jones (1989) <u>argues*</u> that ... however, this can be disputed as ... • Smith (2000) <u>makes*</u> the point that... By contrast, this can be ... • Henderson (1999) <u>asserts*</u> that ... However, this is debatable as... *NB: it is important to state the idea before disagreeing with it.
Endorsing literature	• Jones (1989) correctly <u>notes</u> that ... • Smith (2000) <u>applauds</u> ...

Types of reporting verbs

There are three main types of reporting verbs. They:

- Follow the reporting verb with a preposition (*of, in, by, between, from, towards, under, etc*).
- Follow the verb with a noun or gerund (the 'ing' form of verb, e.g., '*analysing*').
- Follow the verb with the word 'that'.

Strength of reporting verbs

Reporting verbs have various degrees of *strength*. A verb form can provide a strong position, a neutral position and a weak position. It is important to choose the right degree of strength for your purpose.

For example, if you say '*Smith (2028) notes that X*' it is neutral with respect to whether Smith's endorses X or not (it can be made less neutral by adding '*correctly notes*'). By contrast, if you write '*Smith (2028) applauds the use of X*' or '*Smith (2028) points out that X*' you are making it clear that Smith endorses X (very strongly in the former case). By contrast, if you say '*Smith (2028) questions the veracity of X*' it is clear that Smith is doubtful about X, i.e., it is weak endorsement.

Ask yourself when reporting on literature:

- a) Have I varied the use of reporting verbs?
- b) Have I chosen the most appropriate reporting verb?
- c) Have I considered the *strength* of the reporting verb?



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Common reporting verbs

The most common examples are in **bold**.

Verb + 'ing' form + Noun		Verb + Preposition	Verb + That	
analyses 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 scrutinises studies supports underscores uses validates verifies	AS defines ...as... proposes ... as ... determines ...as ... know ... as ... mentions ... as ... labels ... as ... declares ... as ... establishes ... as ... leaves ... as ... TO alerts ... to... alludes to ... compares ... to ... objects ... to... subscribes ... to ... challenges ... to ... exhorts to... forbids ... to ... warns ... to ... agree to... claim to ... attempt to ... appear to ... OF accuses ... of warns ... of ... approves of ... thinks of ... WITH confuses ... with... contrasts ...with... disagrees with ... concurs with... interferes with ... FOR apologies for... blames...for ... criticises ... for Note. This is <i>not</i> an exhaustive list. Other prepositions are 'on', 'in', and 'towards', 'under', etc.	admit accept acknowledge adds advise advocate agree alert allege announce argue articulates asserts assures believes boasts claim clarifies comment complain concede conclude confirms feel find forget guarantee guess hypothesis imagine imply indicate infer inform	insist justify know maintain note observe persuade points out posit postulate promise propose questions realises reasons recognises recommends remarks reminds reports reveals shows speculates states stresses suggests suspects tells theorises thinks understands urges warns
Examples using noun and gerund substitutions* ... analyses X in respect of <u>analysing</u> the best approach to assesses the claim that <u>assessing</u> X's theory in terms of attacks the assertion that <u>attacking</u> the view that considers the approach of <u>considering</u> the view that contradicts X's assertion that <u>contradicting</u> the view that critiques the theory of X in terms of <u>critiquing</u> X's claim that debates the view that <u>debating</u> the assertion that describes the theory of X in terms of <u>describing</u> the approach of discards the view that <u>discarding</u> previous views of				

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