

## How to write and cite like an academic

University level writing is writing about real issues that matter. Even undergraduates have access to and are often expected to research in articles from specialist academic journals that represent the cutting-edge in thinking about/knowledge of the issue they are dealing with. There are conventions for how we manage the material we find and represent as evidence for our claims about the world, and you are expected to follow those conventions.

However, it is not wholly a strange way of thinking. Imagine a conversation in which you are recounting to a friend something someone told you about someone else, another friend perhaps. Maybe you also say something that a third friend told you. You might say something like the following:

**Dave said that Tina has got a place at Harvard. It's the best university in the world according to Xiao Fan. Tina's grades suggest she will do well.**

There are several interesting things about these sentences.

Firstly: we have a clear sense of the individual speaking, and yet we have not used the first person. When you say something like "Harvard is the best university in the world," it says pretty much the same thing as "I believe that Harvard is the best university in the world." So dropping the "I" is often very straightforward. Sometimes, in some situations, in some kinds of assignments, though, you do need it, and unless your prof has ruled it out, feel free to use it, rather than forming some awkward-sounding alternative. E.g. **What I found challenging in this chapter was...**

Also, you are **reporting** on what someone else, Dave, has said, and **you tell your audience who that was**. You then add some information that **clarifies the significance** of the original information you are passing on, and you give a source for that too. Then with a third piece of information you have access to (Tina's grades), you **draw your conclusion** from this data. This is what we do all the time, and it is a good way to think about what to do in academic writing: we give our sources, and combine what **they say** with what **I say**.

Note too that all this reporting has been done without quoting. If you imagine the conversations behind this information they were probably much longer and may never have included exactly these words. You are **summarizing** the significant elements of what has been said, delivering just enough to make clear what has been going on to your audience. APA (the American Psychological Association, who have established a set of standards for the sharing of research, the standards that several VIU faculties prefer you to use) prefers such summary to quotation. Only quote when you really need that original language, and quote no more than you need. But remember: I may be summarizing, not quoting, but I still give my sources!

Notice too that the **tenses** are quite complex (which is OK - you use a complex set of tenses in your speech all the time). The reporting verb is in the simple past tense: **Dave said**. That's good for you because that's the tense that APA conventionally likes you to use. Note that, if you think about it, it's not obligatory in English grammar. I *could* have written it in the present tense: **Dave says that Tina has got place at Harvard**, and it would still make sense [And for those of you taking classes in the humanities, the body that sets the standards that they use (MLA, the Modern Languages Association) prefers that you use the present tense for reporting verbs]. The statement about Harvard, however, *is* in the present tense; that is what Xiao Fan said, and it is a fact about the world that remains currently true (Maybe MIT or Cambridge might dispute it!). Here's another example: **Kate observed that Toronto is the biggest city in Canada**. The final sentence makes a prediction about a current indicator: **Tina's grades suggest** (present tense) and steps appropriately into the future tense: **She will do well**. So don't get too hung up about tense: use the appropriate tense in the way that should come naturally to you, while remembering that APA likes reporting verbs in the past tense.

If you are struggling with tense, come and see us in the Writing Centre, or, especially if English is not your first language, go and see the tutors in International Academic Support opposite the check-out counter in the library.

Presumably in this case you and the person you are talking to know who Dave and Tina and Xiao Fan are, and know how to get hold of them, and are able to make some judgment about their reliability: ***Dave! That dufus! He always gets hold of the wrong end of the stick. I'll believe it when Tina tells me so herself. And, you know, her grades aren't so great. You were only in English with her: her science grades are no better than mine.*** But in the case of academic writing your audience will not know your sources or how to find them, so you need to give them more information.

APA uses a two-part system for providing the information we need in order to find the sources used (which we can call the **citation**). It can form a verb too - **to cite**. I *cited* Dave as support for my claim that Tina is going to Harvard). It's the answer to the question "**how do you know this?**" *Dave told me*. And it's a perfectly reasonable question to ask. So your academic citations answer the question, *How do you know this?* And that's a question academics are always interested in, and one which you should always be able to answer.

The first part of the system we can call the "in-text" citation, and in APA -style papers this should include the author's surname and the year of publication (Hill, 2010). I will focus here on APA, but MLA is very similar --- the in-text citation is author and page (Hill 22). Chicago style would use a foot/end note. There are two ways of doing this in-text citation. We can use the author's name in a signal phrase with the date in parentheses beside it OR we can combine both name and date in the parentheses:

1. Smith (2015) argued that Harvard's status as the best university in the world reflects an overemphasis on the humanities by the assessors.
2. Harvard's status as the best university in the world reflects an overemphasis on the humanities by the assessors (Smith, 2015).

You will notice these are NOT quotations (or they would be contained in quotation marks); I have summarized Smith's argument in my own words. If the information you are using has a specific location in the text (and if you are quoting, it always will have), you should also give a page reference too. Here's a couple of examples using quotations.

1. Smith (2015) argued that Harvard's much-touted status as the best university in the world "is due to the assessing organizations archaic and excessive reliance on data from the humanities and their tendency to downplay the significance of results from fields such as the social sciences and the sciences" (p. 23).
2. Harvard's much-touted status as the best university in the world "is due to the assessing organizations archaic and excessive reliance on data from the humanities and their tendency to downplay the significance of results from fields such as the social sciences and the sciences"(Smith, 2015, p. 23).

The name and the date give you just enough information to take you without ambiguity to the right entry in your list of references (titled "**References**") at the end of your paper. This is where you list all the sources that you have cited in your paper, giving enough details for your readers, whom you can think of as your fellow researchers in your field, to be able to find those works for themselves. How do we do that? Well, you can think of it as combining four factors: **Who** is mainly responsible for this material? (usually, the author); **When** was it written? (usually, the year of publication); **What** is it called? (usually, the title, and when appropriate, the title of the thing it is contained in ie article IN a newspaper, article IN a journal, authored chapter IN an edited anthology); **How** do you find it? (usually, the publisher's details, or in the case of electronic sources the doi - digital object identifier number - or the URL you retrieved it from. And that's it really. There are however some APA conventions as to how you arrange this data. I'll give you a couple of examples, but you can easily look this up in the APA section of the Broadview writer's guide (which you should have if you have taken an English class), or you can look online: our library has an APA guide available, or you could go to The OWL at Purdue, an authoritative and detailed online source for such matters (Purdue is a big American University).

## Examples

These would all be listed in alphabetical order by first author's surname under the title **References** (bold and centred) on a separate page at the end of your document. We do not organize according to kinds of document – i.e. we don't put all articles together, followed by all books etc. NOTE: you can see that after the first line of each entry, the subsequent lines are indented. This is called a "hanging indent," and Word has a tool for formatting this under the paragraph section of the home tab: expand it with the little arrow to the right of the word "paragraph". Open the drop-down menu labelled "Special", and select "hanging," and any text in your document that you had selected will convert to a hanging indent.

### Online journal – with doi

Holt, N., L., Tamminen, K. A., Black, D. E., Sehn, Z.L. Wall, M. P. (2008). Parental involvement in competitive youth sport settings. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 9 (5), 663-685, doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2007.08.001.

### Online journal – without doi

Tsai, E. H., & Lena, F. (2009). Parents' experiences and decisions on inclusive sport participation of their children with intellectual disabilities. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 26(2), 151-171. Retrieved from <http://journals.humankinetics.com/journal/apaq>

**Unauthored corporate/government report found online.** Note – we are treating the organization as author here, and this is what MUST go in your in-text citation as well, because that's how we make the link. If NO author, then title comes first, and again, that's what appears (abbreviated) in your in-text citation.

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2015) *Health behaviour in school-aged children in Canada: focus on relationships*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/publications/science-research-sciences-recherches/health-behaviour-children-canada-2015-comportements-sante-jeunes/index-eng.php>

### Book (print)

Smoll, F. L., Magill, R. A., & Ash, M. J. (1988). *Children in sport* (3rd ed.). Champaign, Ill: Human Kinetics Books.

### eBook

Alexander, K., & Stafford, A. (2011). *Children and organised sport*. Retrieved from <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzQyMDI0NV9fQU41?sid=a9e39a29-8d2b-49ed-959c4fbb1e6feb2a@sessionmgr4010&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>